



## **AVLIC Official Position – Deaf Interpreter**

Deaf interpreters (DIs) use their expertise in their native sign language (American Sign Language (ASL) or la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)), along with gesture and other communication strategies, to foster culturally and linguistically appropriate interpretation for Deaf consumers<sup>1</sup> that hearing interpreters are generally not able to provide. They do so in a wide range of settings and situations. Some of these settings are ones where the outcome may have serious consequences, such as medical, legal, employment and mental health, among others. Consumers who benefit from the services of a DI include, but are not limited to, non-native signers (i.e. newcomers and/or visitors to Canada) who use another signed language; Deaf and hard-of-hearing people who have developed their own unique way of using a signed language (sometimes referred to as “home signs”); individuals with a physical disability that affects their ability to produce a signed message; Deafblind community members; and individuals with a cognitive challenge. In addition, hearing interpreters benefit from the DI’s expertise when working as part of a team in complex situations.

Deaf interpreters work effectively in complicated communication situations with children and youth, because of their ability to “...accurately assess the interpreting needs of a minor, taking into account age, educational and life experiences, exposure to [ASL or LSQ,] emotional state, and familiarity with communicating via an interpreter” (Russell, 14).

Deaf consumers with fluent language also may benefit from the services of a DI because DIs have native comprehension of Deaf life experiences, which may be unfamiliar to the hearing interpreter.

DIs are more frequently working at conferences and international gatherings, in order to ensure an accessible message for audience members. They may also be the interpreter on video messages

relaying information to the Deaf community.

DIs may work as part of a team with a hearing interpreter to ensure that the spoken language message reaches the Deaf consumer in a form that he or she can understand, and that in turn the Deaf consumer's message is conveyed successfully. A Deaf Interpreter may also work alone, without a hearing interpreter, by providing translation services between written language and signed language, or by interpreting from one signed language directly into another.

Deaf interpreters are members of the professional association, AVLIC, and maintain professional boundaries with consumers while abiding by the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct.

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Composed by the AVLIC Deaf Interpreter Ad-Hoc Committee  
Ratified at the June 27, 2015 AVLIC AGM.

## **REFERENCES**

Russell, Debra. (2011). *Interpreting in Legal Discourse and Working in Legal Settings: An AVLIC Position Paper*. [www.avlic.ca](http://www.avlic.ca). AVLIC, 2011. Web. 7 March 2015.

During the development of this paper the following websites were reviewed:

- National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers - Deaf Interpreters.  
[www.interpretereducation.org/specialization/deaf-interpreter](http://www.interpretereducation.org/specialization/deaf-interpreter)
- Canadian Hearing Society - About Deaf Interpreting. [www.chs.ca/about-deaf-interpreting](http://www.chs.ca/about-deaf-interpreting)
- Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Deaf interpreter.  
[www.widhh.com/services/is\\_definition.php](http://www.widhh.com/services/is_definition.php)

While none of the references in the bulleted list above were quoted directly, they were valuable resources for this work.

## **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>i</sup> ASL and LSQ are the national signed languages used in Canada. In addition, two regional varieties are in use: Inuit Sign Language (ISL), and Maritime Sign Language (MSL)