

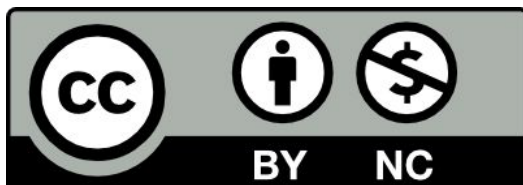


Improving Rural Interpreter Skills

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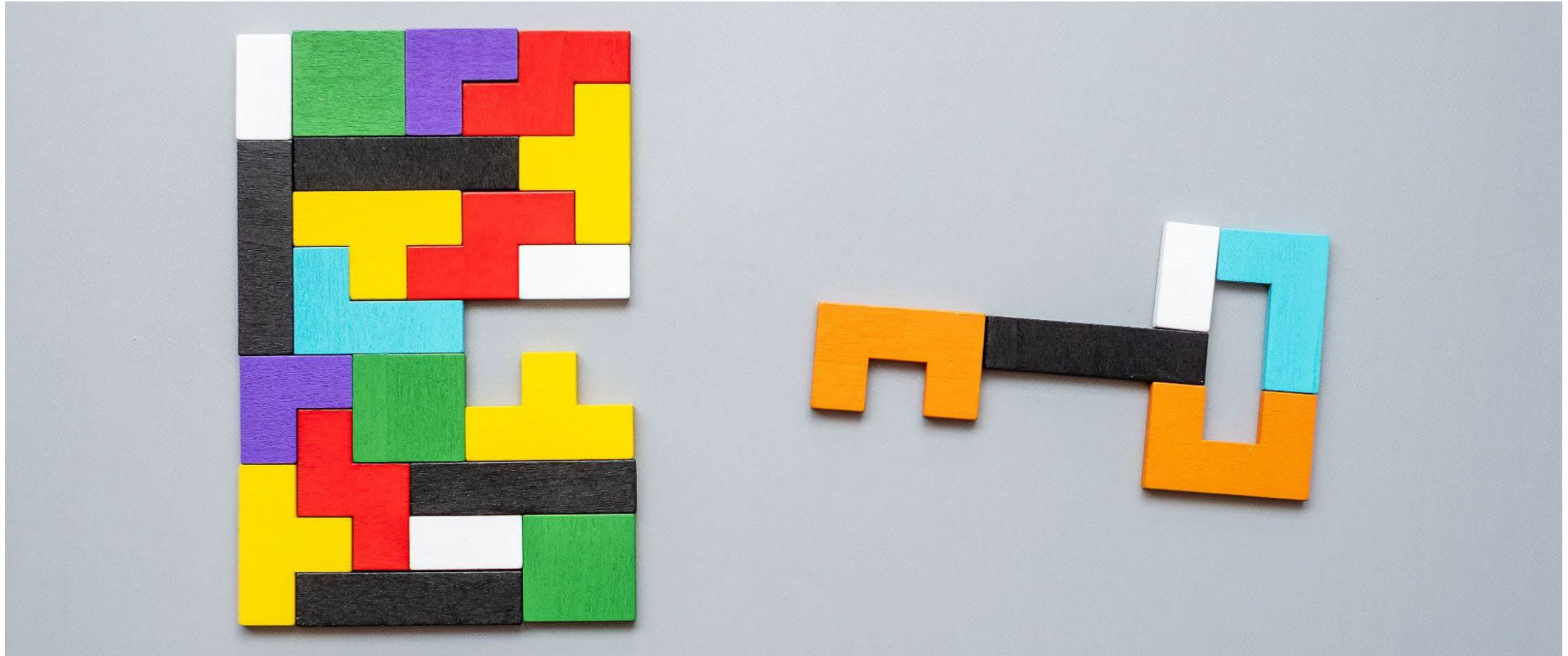
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Module 1: Business Practices



Module content developed by Naomi Sheneman & Kelly Decker

[ASL lecture](#) by Naomi Sheneman



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Overview & Objectives

Overview: This module offers an in-depth look at the sixth tenet of the RID-NAD Code of Professional Conduct in regard to business practices.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon Completion of this module participants will be able to:

1. Explain each illustrative behavior listed under the sixth tenet.
2. Describe scenarios that they have experienced in their work as interpreters that are tied to the sixth tenet.
3. Reflect on how ethical business practices can impact their work as interpreters and their relationship with deaf people.



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Introduction

Interpreting has two parts: interpretation and ethical decisions which are often intertwined. Most of our ethical decisions are made on the spot *during* interpreting. As we previously learned in the *CORE Module 5: Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks*, some control options or alignment approaches can be made *before* or *after* interpreting. One area that requires attention is our ethical decisions surrounding our business practices. Watch the introductory overview of [Business Practices](#) by Dr. Naomi Sheneman.

Decisions pertaining to business practice fall under the sixth tenet of the Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD)'s Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) tasking interpreters of maintaining ethical business practices.

This module will address each of the illustrative behaviors under this tenet. You are encouraged to consider how those illustrative behaviors can be applied to your interpreting work and relationship with deaf people.

You can review the [CPC 6.0 in print](#) on pages 6-7 or watch the [ASL version](#) of CPC 6.0 (starting 15:30 through 17:18).



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GoReact Discussion: The Guiding Principle of CPC 6.0



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

The guiding principle of the sixth tenet states the following:

“Interpreters are expected to conduct their business in a professional manner whether in private practice or in the employ of an agency or other entity. Professional interpreters are entitled to a living wage based on their qualifications and expertise. Interpreters are also entitled to working conditions conducive to effective service delivery” (p. 6-7)

Original post directions:

Share what this guiding principle means to you and your interpreting work, and how it impacts access for deaf people.

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.



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CPC 6.1, Part I

CPC 6.1 is written as follows: *“Accurately represent qualifications, such as certification, educational background, and experience, and provide documentation when requested”* (p. 7).

You will *always* be asked by hiring entities to highlight your qualifications, typically in a resume. You will have a chance to develop and/or revise your resume here in *Module 7: Portfolio Building*. Proof of certification will be requested by both hiring entities and consumers to verify your credentials. RID announced in 2022 that they would no longer be issuing digital .pdf copy of the RID membership card (see image below). Members in the past were allowed to submit a request for actual plastic cards. Instead, RID has contracted with Credly to provide [digital badges](#) which are automatically updated. In Module 7, you will learn more about what digital badges are and how to incorporate them in your resume or email signature.



(RID membership card circa 2022)



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CPC 6.1, Part II

An RID staff explains why they have made the switch to digital badges. There were instances in which individuals would alter their .pdf copy of the RID card to show updated dates or change from Associate to Certified. This is an example of how individuals *misrepresent* their qualifications which impacts deaf consumers. Thus, this was a breach of the business practices tenet, specifically 6.1.





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CPC 6.1, Part III

Often, it is thought that interpreters represent their qualifications only to the hiring entities. In this [video](#) by Dr. Naomi Sheneman, *how you introduce yourself to the deaf consumer(s)* is one way to represent your qualifications and connect with them. Showing up without a proper introduction is a violation of a basic deaf cultural norm which is to identify yourself and where you came from (agency or direct hire), and does not allow them to follow up with hiring entities about your services.

Potential additional requirements

Some agencies may ask you to fulfill additional requirements and maintain documentation such as background checks, clearances, vaccinations, and professional liability insurance.



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CPC 6.2, Part I

CPC 6.2 is written as follows: *“Honor professional commitments and terminate assignments only when fair and justifiable grounds exist”* (p. 7).

When you accept jobs, it is your responsibility to make sure those go into your calendar whether it is a paper one or a digital one (such as Google Calendar, Outlook, or iCal), and complete those assignments. Of course, life happens such as bad weather, traffic, and sickness that may prevent you from seeing those assignments through. Those are examples of fair and justifiable grounds. Sometimes, you will need to terminate assignments if you realize you are not a good fit for those particular deaf consumers. There may be some situations you will need to terminate for your own well-being and safety.

Termination of assignments should not be based on monetary reasons. Sometimes, interpreters would give back their original assignments to accept jobs from agencies that had higher pay or offered more hours.



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CPC 6.2, Part II

Scenario #1 for consideration

This is a common infraction of the 6.2: An interpreter accepts a job that is about an hour long (with a two-hour billing minimum) and is offered later on an all-day job. This interpreter decides to give back the shorter job. As you have seen in Dr. Naomi Sheneman's video from the previous slide, interpreters are in charge of establishing their brand. Giving back a shorter job is not representative of reliability or commitment. Agencies do keep track of interpreters who often give back jobs without justification (i.e. emergency, family issues, etc) and can stop working with them.

Another key phrase in the 6.2 is *honor professional commitments*. This means being there from start to end (or until you are dismissed). If you are dispatched to a place with numerous deaf consumers such as an educational setting, organization, or medical clinic, you may be asked to start with a particular deaf consumer(s) and be reassigned to work with a different deaf consumer(s) until you have completed the whole time frame you were assigned.

Scenario #2 for consideration

This is another infraction of the 6.2. Sometimes, interpreters are assigned to longer, ongoing assignments, typically classes. Some interpreters would find that those long assignments are not intensive nor dense and would agree with their team to just show up for half of the time and bill for the whole time while their team shows the other half and bills for the whole time.



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CPC 6.3

CPC 6.3 is written as follows: *“Promote conditions that are conducive to effective communication, inform the parties involved if such conditions do not exist, and seek appropriate remedies”* (p. 7).

This is also covered in other parts of the CPC. Your responsibility as an interpreter is to ensure that effective communication access is being provided and *continuously* make modifications during interpreting (e.g. change where you are sitting/standing, asking people to speak louder, clarify what is being signed). If interpreting is not going well, this needs to be communicated early on, so you all can work together as a team in identifying remedies internally.

Ultimately, you may not be able to understand the consumers or be understood by them. In some situations, external remedies would be needed. This is when you need to recommend a different solution such as requesting a different interpreter that would be a better fit or bringing in Deaf interpreters, meaning the appointment would need to be rescheduled. This may generate a strong reaction from deaf consumers. For some of them, they waited so long for an interpreted interaction, and to have that put off is frustrating. You need to be very transparent about what you can and cannot do plus what you are going to do to make sure the next time is more effective for them.



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CPC 6.4

CPC 6.4 is written as follows: *“Inform appropriate parties in a timely manner when delayed or unable to fulfill assignments”* (p. 7).

As mentioned earlier, life happens. Be very transparent and communicate early on when you know you are unable to be timely nor present. If you are sick, notify the requestor as soon as *you know* you would be unable to fulfill the assignment.

Scenario for consideration

There are warnings of an upcoming storm. You know this may impact your ability to arrive at a job site in a timely manner (i.e. the roads are not safe to drive) or could impact your electricity meaning your Internet would be down making it hard to do a video remote assignment. You can start communicating with the hiring entity to give them a heads-up. They then in turn can communicate with the paying customer and consumers.



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CPC 6.5

CPC 6.5 is written as follows: *“Reserve the option to decline or discontinue assignments if working conditions are not safe, healthy, or conducive to interpreting”* (p. 7).

As mentioned earlier, you need to consider your own safety and well-being. There are some temporary and permanent reasons to decline assignments. For example, an interpreter who experienced a miscarriage may find it difficult to accept assignments interpreting for deaf pregnant patients for a period of time. If you know for sure you cannot provide effective interpretations for specific assignments, you are within your right to say no. If an assignment is taxing to you physically or mentally, that is a reason to discontinue. Some deaf consumers may not treat you appropriately (e.g. flirting or not respecting your boundaries), which is also a reason to discontinue.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel comfortable doing this assignment?
- Do I think I can be impartial and provide effective communication access?

If your answer is no, then do not accept nor continue with the assignment.



CPC 6.6

CPC 6.6 is written as follows: *“Refrain from harassment or coercion before, during, or after the provision of interpreting services”* (p. 7).

As discussed in the previous slide, you need to consider your own safety and well-being. You also need to consider the consumers’ safety and well-being around you as well. It is within your professional duty to not cause harm. Keep in mind that the preamble of the CPC emphasizes that interpreters “do no harm” (p. 2). You must refrain from any form, albeit covert or overt, of harassment or coercion before, during, or after interpreting assignments.

Scenario

This is an example of how 6.6 was violated in a covert manner. An interpreter provided service to a deaf consumer in a medical setting. After the appointment, the deaf consumer walked to the check-out desk with the interpreter to book a follow-up appointment. The deaf consumer was not fully content with the interpreter, but the agency did not have their preferred interpreters available. The check-out person asked if they wanted this same interpreter again. Before the deaf person could respond, the interpreter indicated to them directly that they were struggling financially, could possibly lose their home, and really needed the work. The deaf consumer felt obligated to say yes.



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CPC 6.7, Part I

CPC 6.7 is written as follows: *“Render pro bono services in a fair and reasonable manner”* (p. 7).

Pro bono is derived from Latin’s original phrase, *pro bono publico*, which means “for the public good” (ABA, 2021). In the sign language interpreting profession, this means interpreters should be willing from time to time to provide services without expecting a form of payment. We must first assess the value behind the idea of volunteering your time to provide communication access.

This is an act of reciprocity. Back in the day, interpreters were part of a bartering system within deaf communities. Unfortunately, the increased demand for interpreters due to major legal mandates identifying interpreters as needed for communication access for deaf people, the practice of bartering is now very rare as interpreters expect something from deaf people in exchange for interpreting. Mala Poe, author of [Giving Back: Have Sign Language Interpreters Forgotten Their Roots?](#) emphasizes how reciprocity impacts our relationship with deaf people. In the CORE curriculum, we talked about the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with deaf people in *Module 8: What’s my relationship with the deaf community?* Poe's article served as a springboard for a business meeting motion for RID to consider pro bono hours as part of their continuing education credits (CEUs). There was a motion (C2015.06) made during the [2015 RID business meeting](#) to establish an ad hoc committee to figure out a mechanism to tie pro bono hours with CEUs. This mechanism has yet to be established.



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CPC 6.7, Part II

The value remains. If deaf people see you are willing, they see you are willing to be invested in them. In the next module, we will further explore the value of community engagement.

Now that we have discussed the value of giving back to the community by offering pro bono interpreting services. There are some guidelines to consider. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Sec. 12182. Prohibition of discrimination by public accommodations), no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation (USDOJ, n.d.).

A failure to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the entity can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden.

Some examples of situations where pro bono services would be rendered outside of the requirements of the ADA (1990) may include private weddings, family reunions, parties, play-dates, and holiday gatherings.



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CPC 6.7, Part III

If you know that a potential entity is identified as an organization with a legal obligation to provide and pay for interpreting services as highlighted in the ADA (1990), do not accept the work as pro bono. The following resource offers guidelines to consider when determining whether to identify a potential assignment as a pro bono service:

- [Guidelines to help interpreters when doing pro bono work](#)

We recommend the following additional considerations:

- What are the potential impacts of accepting pro bono work on the profession and the deaf community?
- Consider your own skill level before accepting this pro bono work. Even if it's voluntary, the quality of interpretation should still be at the same level as how you would perform for paid work, Keep in mind that this is deaf people's access.
- Would accepting this pro bono work support an ongoing relationship with the hiring entity that could come up with funding for interpreting services in the future?



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CPC 6.8, Part I

CPC 6.8 is written as follows: *“Charge fair and reasonable fees for the performance of interpreting services and arrange for payment in a professional and judicious manner”* (p. 7).

“Charge fair and reasonable fees”

We recognize that the process of establishing your rates can be a complicated undertaking. There may be a rate differential for times of the day/week, method of delivery (over-video versus in-person), holidays, and types of specialty work based on your expertise. There are also various billing criteria to consider (e.g. appearance fee, cancellation policy, and billing increments). As you have seen in Dr. Naomi Sheneman’s video in the introduction of this module, you will need to learn the general guidelines for your local area. Potential places to start this exploration are the following:

1. State-based rates in your region. If your state has state-based contracted interpreting rates, review those and compare across states in your area of the country (e.g. [Massachusetts](#), [New Hampshire](#))
2. Research overall interpreter rates in your area (e.g. colleges, courts, hospitals, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc...). For example, the [Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) and the [Nebraska Supreme Court](#) has some general guidelines on how they pay interpreters
3. Talk with trusted colleagues and mentors about their terms of service, and the general market rate in your area.
4. Reflect on your own life experiences, expertise, training, education, and working languages (this means the languages you work between, for example, ASL & English or Spanish & ASL).



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CPC 6.8, Part II

Scenario for consideration

There have been some instances in which an interpreter was notified that their team is no longer available to do an assignment and there has been no luck in securing a sub interpreter. The solo interpreter then bills either 1.5X or double the actual rate of the job to justify that they worked the whole assignment alone. Consider what possible ways make this practice not fair or reasonable.

Parting Thoughts

Since interpreting is a form of communication access, you need to consider what it means to be fair and reasonable with your rates. You could be priced out of work (meaning you are charging agencies too much and are not in line with other interpreting colleagues' work). Consider how this creates a long-term impact on the services for deaf people. For example, there are ongoing conversations within the DeafBlind community about how some interpreters are charging an additional fee to provide services to DeafBlind people. The higher rates make hiring interpreters more expensive; therefore, creating another barrier for DeafBlind individuals requesting access.



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CPC 6.8, Part III

“Arrange for payment in a professional and judicious manner”

You could follow the hiring entities’ invoicing procedures or submit your own invoices to collect payment within a reasonable period of time. Invoices need to include pertinent details. This is usually established within your terms of service/conditions (e.g. net 30) with a clear clause on late fees, if any. Although, agencies may have their own schedule for paying all interpreters at once (e.g. biweekly or monthly).

More and more agencies prefer to arrange for payments via direct deposit. This benefits both ends. Payment is processed and received quicker. Some agencies prefer to send a paper check for the first payment.



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Synchronous Session



This module **requires your attendance** at a synchronous session. Your facilitator(s) will share the exact details of the date and time of this session.

Preparation for the meeting, in your journal, make note of your thoughts to the following points:

1. After reviewing CPC 6.0 Business Practices what is one illustrative behavior that you would like to discuss further with your COL?
2. If you have any examples of a scenario tied to the illustrative behavior you selected above, bring that to analyze with your COL.
3. How can ethical decisions related to business practices have positive and negative impacts on deaf consumers?

GoReact Discussion: Putting it All Together



NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Now that you have reviewed each of the illustrative behaviors under the sixth tenet, create an original post addressing the following questions:

1. What does this tenet mean to you? as an interpreter?
2. Why is the sixth tenet important as an interpreter?

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.



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Additional Resources, Part I

Sample Terms of Service

In alignment with the NAD-RID CPC 6.0 Business Practices, you may elect to develop your own standards for how you practice, what you charge, and overall terms of service when entities hire you for interpreting services. Below are some examples of other individual colleagues' terms of service. Review them on your own time, especially in consideration of CPC 6.8 (establishment of fair and reasonable fees and arrangement of payment).

- [Example 1](#)
- [Example 2](#)
- [Example 3](#)
- [Example 4](#)

Ideas for further consideration . . .

- Professional Practice Standards: Progress or Passé? (2-hour minimum) [ASL](#) | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)



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Additional Resources, Part II

Business identification, bookkeeping, and taxes

The following list of resources is not exhaustive but serves as a starting point for you as you navigate the profession as an independent contractor. It is recommended that you work with a licensed accounting professional to work you in identifying the best route for your work as a sign language interpreter.

- [Independent Contractor \(Self-Employed\) or Employee?](#)
- [Sole proprietorship, LLC, Vs. S Corp](#)
- [Bookkeeping for Independent Contractors: Everything You Need to Know](#)
- [Estimated Taxes](#)

Do you have further resources to share with your COL about business practices? Share them on your COL *Resources* discussion page.



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