

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Essential for Court Interpretation: American Sign Language (ASL)

The following knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) essential for court interpretation are applicable to ASL interpreters. KSAs apply to all ASL interpreters, except where specifically noted to apply solely to Deaf or hearing interpreters.

ASL-English interpreters (ASL interpreters) can hear and interpret from spoken or written English to ASL and back again. ASL-Deaf interpreters (Deaf interpreters) are Deaf and interpret between ASL and whatever communication method is necessary to achieve effective communication with the Deaf individual.

ASL-Deaf interpreters may be referred to as “intermediary” or “relay” interpreters. When needed, the ASL-Deaf interpreter(s) and the ASL-English interpreter(s) function as a team.

Section 1: Linguistic skills:

- 1A Native-like proficiency, in all working languages.
- 1B Ability to accommodate the linguistic and communication needs of a variety of Deaf individuals.
- 1C Knowledge and use of a broad range of vocabulary, including legal terminology, subject-specific terminology, and slang.
- 1D Knowledge and use of cultural nuances, regional variations, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms in all working languages.

Section 2: Interactive skills:

- 2A Ability to use the proper pronunciation, diction, and intonation in all working languages, signed and spoken.
- 2B Ability to communicate with a neutralized accent in all working languages.
- 2C Ability to project and/or speak/sign softly.
- 2D Ability to ignore auditory and visual distractions and focus on the message.

Section 3: Listening comprehension skills for hearing ASL-English interpreters:

- 3A Ability to listen to and comprehend different rates of speech in English.
- 3B Ability to listen to and comprehend various regional accents and/or language varieties in English.

Section 4: Reading comprehension skills:

- 4A Ability to read English and comprehend overall meaning and specific details of a written text.
- 4B Ability to read and recognize various written contexts, including formal and informal text, subject-specific vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms.
- 4C Ability to read and understand quickly and with little preparation.

Section 5: Interpreting skills:

- 5A Ability to concentrate and focus.
- 5B Ability to process linguistic information quickly.
- 5C Ability to make quick linguistic decisions regarding word choice or terminology selection.
- 5D Ability to apply short-term memory skills in retaining small units of information.
- 5E Ability to think analytically.
- 5F Ability to utilize predictive thinking skills to anticipate incoming messages.
- 5G Ability to convey meaning.
- 5H Ability to provide transference from one language to another.
- 5I Ability to preserve accuracy.
- 5J Ability to select appropriate equivalent for vocabulary or phrases.
- 5K Ability to conserve intent, tone, style, and utterances of all messages.
- 5L Ability to reflect register.
- 5M Ability to self-monitor and self-correct.

Section 6: Behavioral skills:

- 6A Ability to practice and follow professional judicial ethical standards.
- 6B Ability to conduct business in a professional manner.
- 6C Knowledge and awareness of cultural aspects and bias that affect the interpretation.
- 6D Ability to work in various settings, situations, or conditions.
- 6E Ability to project self-confidence and self-awareness when interpreting.
- 6F Knowledge and continued learning of social, technological, and legal changes that affect interpretation and best practices.
- 6G Knowledge of how and when to petition judicial officers and court staff when requesting adjustments to standard operating procedures in order to establish effective communication.

Section 7: Skills Specifically relating to Deaf ASL Interpreters including comprehension skills:

- 7A Ability to facilitate effective communication with a variety of individuals who use atypical signed communication by employing gestures, signs and other communication approaches or tools, which may not be part of standard ASL.
- 7B Ability to see and comprehend different rates of signing in ASL and gestural communication.
- 7C Ability to see and comprehend various regional accents and/or language varieties in ASL.

Section 8: Additional Knowledge Skills:

- 8A Knowledge of protocol, legal procedures, and court systems and how they operate.
- 8B Knowledge of the distinctions between the role of a counsel/table interpreter and a proceedings interpreter.
- 8D Knowledge of the role of an interpreter as part of a team, when additional interpreters are required for effective communication.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Essential for Court Interpretation: American Sign Language (ASL) were adopted on January 4, 2018 by the following ad hoc national advisory which included Deaf community representatives, educators, academics, certified Deaf interpreters, certified court interpreters, people from diverse backgrounds (including people of color and Children of Deaf Adults (CODA)), court administrators, and test development managers.

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