

### Questions that were asked by did not get answered during the webinar

**Trudy...**I appreciate our need to be conscious of gender's impact. But Isn't it our job to interpret the deaf professional's communication style and leave it to the supervisor to talk with him or her if there's a need to make adjustments rather than that being our responsibility?

**Mary Jo/DI:** I agree it isn't our job to interpret the Deaf professional's communication style. And maybe I wasn't clear during the webinar. Gender becomes an issue when in cases such as mine, my "female" way of communicating comes through in the interpretation in ways that aren't in line with the DP's masculine style of communicating (women tend to use hedging, tag questions, questioning intonation, etc.). So I don't make adjustments to the Deaf professional's communication style, per se, but more so in a way that reflects his masculine style of communicating (and as an individual). The DP I work with is very assertive and not afraid to speak up. I, on the other hand, tend to be quieter and more of an observer before speaking up. This is something I have had to examine within myself. Moreover, my voice tends to be on the softer side, so again I also had to look at that (and make necessary changes) and in both cases, need to examine the impact these traits had/have on my work and the DP's interactions with others.

As you may imagine, men hold the floor and communicate ideas differently than we women do, so that is more of what I was referring to. There's a great chapter on Interpreters, Conversational Style, and Gender at Work in the book we referenced, "Deaf Professionals and Designated Interpreters: A New Paradigm" by P. Hauser, K Finch, and A. Hauser. I continue to examine gender dynamics and their impact on my work with the DP, it's a rewarding and humbling journey! I hope this provides some clarity?

**Mark:** Through on-going discussions and feedback, we have blended well, our ways of communicating gender-wise and as individuals.

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**What part of western mass?**

**Mary Jo:** I live in Easthampton, MA ☒

**Mark:** I guess you asked the location of our office...Greenfield, MA.

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**In your role as the DI, are you constantly with Mark throughout the workday i.e. share an office, lunchtime, etc?**

**Mary Jo:** Yes, for the most part, although if need be I cover assignments in other offices. Additionally, my Interpreter colleagues (13 of us statewide) and I swap offices in an effort to expand our skills/knowledge and to expand the pool of interpreters for Mark/other Deaf colleagues.

**Mark:** we haven't become sick of each other at all! ☺ I think it has a lot to do with the nature of our many responsibilities and the challenges that our roles as DI/DP bring at times. There are always new challenges, and that keeps our jobs interesting and engaging.

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### **Do you have "other duties as assigned?"**

**Mary Jo:** No, aside from coordinating teams for myself and one other office, all I do is work in the capacity of an interpreter. The Deaf Professional I work with is the manager for an office, so there is a steady need for interpreting (to include phone calls and meetings in and out of the office). He is also the statewide coordinator for Deaf Services (SCD), so our days are busy. Balancing the load is challenging at times, and when I can, I book a team. Mark understands the role of an interpreter and the fatiguing aspect of it, thankfully. As I mentioned during the webinar, communication is key, and we frequently negotiate breaks, the need for a team and everything else. This is more than you ask for but, I wanted to elaborate on why I'm not assigned other duties—there's not enough time for me to do much else! ☺

**Mark:** We do our best to balance and prioritize the DIs. As a manager, I feel it is important for MJ to take on other duties/tasks for professional skill development, for example, she participates in chairing/facilitating statewide deaf services meeting, presenting topics of her expertise, and participating on the interview team for an interpreter position, etc...

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### **Curious about the work station setup for Mark and Mary Jo.**

**Mary Jo:** we share a large office, and our desks face each other. This works well when Mark needs me to call me to interpret a phone call or when his hearing/non-signing staff come in to talk to him. And I'll add that I don't need to interpret for all of our staff (20 in total), as they've worked out ways to communicate, but if need be, I'm available.

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### **At times when I have worked in a professional situation as an interpreter, I felt there are times when I needed to take a step back and allow the Deaf worker and Hearing worker to work out a way of communication without me.**

**Mary Jo:** Yes, I agree, I do this as well. In fact, most of the staff in my office have worked out ways to communicate, and some are even learning to sign (yay!). It's great when communication happens without me, I much prefer that for all sorts of reasons. This is very difficult to know where the line is? Very true! It is hard at times and there are times when I've assumed communication was going well, only to find out that both parties would have preferred to have me interpret. I can't stress enough, the importance of communication. We all play a key role in terms of communication, and I can only do so much. We all learned from that experience and now we incorporate a combination of me checking in, and Mark/my colleagues telling me when they need me. Because some companies don't keep an interpreter everyday but only at certain times so as coworkers they

need communication between them as well. Yes, exactly. Our situation is unique in that I am here full time, every day. But as previously noted, I can only do so much, and it is beautiful all around when communication is worked out organically, rather than depending on an interpreter.

**Mark:** working out a way of communicating between the staff and me has been encouraged from the first day I became AD simply because I do not want everyone to become too dependent or comfortable with using MJ who may not always be available due to her other assignments, time leave from work, etc. I felt it was important for the staff to be exposed to learning how to communicate with me as a deaf person. I think they have accomplished it pretty well. They also know when it is necessary to use MJ or any other interpreter assigned to speak with me about something that requires deeper discussion. I also want to note that at the very beginning of my job as AD, MJ and I provided separate trainings on how to effectively communicate with a deaf person and use an interpreter as well as address interpreter's neutrality, confidentiality, and professionalism. I believe that the trainings encouraged the staff to put forth their efforts into evolving natural communication and interaction with both of us through trial and error opportunities.

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#### **How do you handle those situations discussed about do you eat or not during lunch/dinner meetings?**

**Mary Jo:** It depends on the situation, but in all cases, I talk to the Deaf Professional (Mark). We have holiday luncheons at my office, for example, and in cases such as this, Mark and I decided to get an interpreter so I can participate as part of the office team. Big meetings with a working lunch, on the other hand, are handled differently. In those cases, I have a team and we negotiate eating with Mark/Deaf colleagues as often there is more than one Deaf person at these kinds of events. In those cases, we take turns eating or make sure we eat something hearty for breakfast. ☑ In general, however, I know in advance what the meal situation will be like so we (my team interp/Mark/Deaf colleagues) work it out in advance. My work day ends at 5 p.m. each day but if there were a dinner meeting for some reason, I would handle that in the same way I handle lunch meetings. If it's a situation that involves networking/relationship building, I interpret and work out the eating situation with the Deaf Professional/my interpreter colleague.

**Mark:** MJ has a very nice boss! Truthfully, it is important for the staff to realize that she is also an integral part of the team. She is treated equally as a colleague with all of us.

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#### **Maybe I missed it, but what makes a DI different than a staff interpreter?**

**Mary Jo:** No worries, the DI/DP model is still relatively new in our field and I continue to deepen my understanding of it, as well. Therefore, I'll use the book referenced in the webinar to guide my answer. Hauser, Finch and Hauser state, "designated interpreting represents the marriage between the field of interpreting, and the deaf professional's discipline or work environment," (Deaf Professionals and Designated Interpreters: A New paradigm, 2002, p. 4.). I was originally hired as a staff interpreter for my organization and worked with Mark when he was a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD). When he was promoted to an Area Director, however, I felt my role as an interpreter shift. By that I mean that in this position I had to understand the intricacies of Mark's job position, work environment, and how to behave and perform my interpreter duties within that environment, more intricately than I had in my staff position role.

Again, I'll refer to the book, which identifies the DI as needing to become fully integrated into the Deaf Professional's (DP) workplace and become an efficient member of their work team. Hauser, Finch, and Hauser also note that "the DI membership on the professional team is not independent of the DP," (p. 6). In my position as a staff interpreter, I wasn't interpreting staff disciplinary meetings, meetings with senior management, nor did I need to understand the complexities of our organization in the way that I do now. I hope this helps! ☺

**Mark:** again, it is an evolving role for either position depending on the environment they are in or how people perceive them within their given workplace.

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**Mary Jo, do you find it natural for you to switch between your role as a Designated Interpreter and other "assigned duties" or does this cause stress in your day?**

**Mary Jo:** Other than coordinating interpreter teams for myself or another office, I don't have other assigned duties so my day is rather straightforward--I'm the DI, and that's it (well, and THAT certainly has its stressful moments!). ☺

**Mark:** maybe I caused it...smiling...MJ handles it pretty well. In my view, the stresses she has experienced are just natural just like people of other professions.

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**Hi Mary Jo! Mark you have a great employee! Mary Jo used to work for me in Minnesota...until she decided to head out East! Mary Jo, I miss your cute stick people post it notes! I am now a Designated Interpreter too!**

**Mary Jo:** Thank you! Lol, forgot about my stick people, I still draw them! What a nice surprise to hear from you Lisa!! And you were a fabulous boss!! Wow, what small world, check your email, I responded to your email. Awesome that you are a DI, too! Would love to compare notes—pls keep in touch!  
Lisa

**Mark:** Please keep your eyes open for future DI positions at MRC!