Systems Thinking for Interpreters by Witter-Merithew Anna
January 27, 2014

>> OK. So are we ready to begin?
>> No, it looks like CM is trying
to get a little bit of technology support
can you give her just another second, please? And Carrie,
while we're waiting did you send my PowerPoint with the
notes to the captioner?
>> I did send your PowerPoint to the captioner.
>> With my notes?
>> I believe I sent your original.
>> It is clear to me, CM.
>> Lenay said there is still technical issues. So
we're just waiting.
>> I think we're going to need to go ahead and begin,
Carrie. You might want to mention --
>> Yeah, it is -- there will be a variation in the
interpreting video quality due to Internet service at
home, how they're connected in, how much traffic on the
Internet, that kind of thing.
>> OK.
>> OK. Well, thank you, everyone, for coming to our
webinar tonight on system thinking for interpreter by Anna

Witter-Merithew. I'm Carrie White. I will be emceeing tonight. I am the program coordinator out of Colorado. Captioning and interpreters are provided. Windows can be enlarged. If you want to enlarge the video window, click on the side and drag it out to make it bigger. If you are going to utilize the interpreters, you may need to enlarge the window for the interpreter, which may interfere with the ability to see the PowerPoint. If you have not printed the PowerPoint sent to you earlier today, you can access the PowerPoint through the attendee material blank

and sent it or get it from the attachment through the e-mail sent out earlier today. The captioning will appear at the bottom of the screen. If you have technical issues, please refer to the help website and phone number that were sent in the e-mail previously today. If those do not work for you, please use the chat function and an MARIE staff member will try to assist you. Today's questions for the presenter will be in the chat function, please write down your questions and wait for Anna to answer the questions, and at that time, when she asks for your questions, type them in the chat function. All attendees are muted. You can only use the chat box function for your questions. After the webinar, I'll talk

again about how to apply for CEUs and a few housekeeping

things so stay tuned after Anna finishes her presentation. But for now, I would like to turn it over to Anna and let her start her amazing presentation that she has for us tonight.

>> Thank you, Carrie. Good evening, everyone. So this is the first in a series of 10 webinars that the NCIEC is going to be hosting, addressing various aspects of interpreting in vocational rehabilitation settings. This evening's webinar is not specific to VR, it is really a foundation presentation on the topic of system thinking and it will serve as the foundation for next month's seminar, which looks at vocational rehabilitation as a system. So as I mentioned, the series of webinars is hosted by the national consortium of interpreter education center. Next slide, Carrie.

Thank you. So there are six centers that comprise the NCIEC. We need to go back one slide, Carrie. So I'm hoping that you're going to get to see a slide that has a map of the United States and shows the -- where the six centers are located that comprise the NCIE C5 of them are

that next slide now, Carrie. [Chuckling]

Folks we are using a new platform this evening. We sometimes have been conducting webinars through the national clearinghouse for rehabilitation training materials, and that particular service is not going to be available to us long-term. So we are trying to work with a new platform that is called go to training. We're trying to incorporate all the various pieces of captioning, filming this so we can archive it, showing you the PowerPoint, making sure that you can see the interpreter, and that you can also see the speaker, so we ask for your indulgence as we're still working to pull all of these pieces together, because we have to manage all of

these functions that at one time were managed through this

other entity. So in order to make all of these pieces come together, Carrie is having to manage my PowerPoint,

so, it may be, from time to time, that we're having to negotiate which slide is being shown. So thanks for your patience.

So the mission, the overarching mission of the consortium is to increase the quantity and quality of interpreters nationwide. And to achieve that mission, we

collaborate with lots of different stakeholders, including interpreter education programs, interpreter educator, practitioner, consumers, government agencies, such as administrative offices of the Courts, or commissions for the deaf, entities like vocational rehabilitation and other stakeholders as well. And we provide a variety of services that are indicated on this slide, such as technical assistance, we offer education programs, like this one tonight as well as online and other forms of delivery of more long-term training events. We develop and distribute training resources. Research, and other related activities to support the field of interpreting and interpreter education. So as the regional centers engage in services like technical assistance in their region, but we collaborate in cross-center collaborations on projects that have a national impact. So one such project relates to interpreting in vocational setting, vocational rehabilitation settings. As part of that project, the NCIEC has developed a series of five professional development modules that are currently being offered online through the MARIE center. You can learn more by visiting the NCIEC or MARIE website. If you find this content from this webinar and subsequent webinars of interest, they are much more fully explored in the

modules. So the content for this webinar and the future webinars is drawn from those modules that we have developed for online delivery. Next slide.

So the purpose of this webinar is to provide you with a framework for systems thinking. So you can better appreciate how systems thinking impacts our work as interpreters. Systems thinking offers us another way to think about what we do and another way to approach our work. And it offers us a much more expanded less interpreter-centric view of our work. One that enables us to better understand the way that organizations and agencies, institutions work, how they function, and how we can better fit in with the system, as it is. Next slide.

All of the information isn't on the slide, Carrie.

I'm looking for the graphic. There it is, great. So why do we need other ways of thinking about our work or talking about our work? Well, we know that systems thinking, another with other approaches is one of current contributions to our field. In an effort to help us more fully conceptualize and fulfill our role as interpreters. It is because practitioners have long struggled with managing our roles. The way we have historically conceptualized our role, and the way that that conceptualization actually fits within the midst of human

interactions has not always proved effective, not proved to be one that results in the outcomes that we want to achieve. So we know at the core of interpreting is relationships, right? We're present to allow consumers of our services to connect and to interact with one another to achieve whatever goals they have set for that interaction. Yet often our behavior restrict our interaction between us and consumers. Both hearing and deaf report interpreter as aloof, disengaged, detached. In 2005, Dr. Johnson and I published a text that is called torts competent practice, a conversation with stakeholders. This book, which is published by the RID reports on data and a research project that we engaged in to collect information from various stakeholders about what they thought of the skills, competencies, knowledge, that interpreter needed to have in the field. [Audio skipping]

and we were surprised to find out particularly how deaf people and employers perceived interpreters. This notion of us being aloof, disengaged, detached, even sometimes from their perspective, flat-out rude. So it seems that there are times when we find ourself working so hard to remain nonobtrusive -- nonintrusive, and to sustain the appearance of neutrality, to such a degree that we create

unnecessary distance between ourself and consumers. And

consequently, between consumers with one another. So then

as a result, we find ourselves at odds with members of the

general society. Particularly those who are unfamiliar

with deaf people, their life experience, and our work as

interpreters. This is some of what we lead to this

antagonistic or hostile way of relating to the broader

society that sometimes is evidence in the work of

interpreters. Next slide.

Certainly, you know, the lack of awareness by

society in general, regarding how we work, what our work

is about, it is a source of great frustration, right? It

is not uncommon to hear interpreters talk about how fed up

they are with hearing people who just don't get it, or

when meeting with resistance to some entity to provide

interpreting services, we're very quick to counter with

reference to the ADA or other legal obligations that they

have. And it is also not uncommon for interpreters to

talk about the sense of internal conflict that they have

between what they might see as needing to happen when

they're interpreting, versus what is actually

unhappening -- actually happening. There seems to be a continuing disconnect between what we feel should be a part of our work, should be a part of our role, and perceptions about what is required or expected by the profession at large. So these feelings of discouragement and conflict make it very difficult for us to manage our role effectively. Certainly it inhibits our ability to express our role or apply our role in a way that is open, transparent, fosters relationship between all of the participants within the interpreted interaction. The fact that we carry so much internal conflict about our work is one of the most telling signals that we have an incomplete or insufficient conceptualization of what our role should be. So we continue to grow as a field and explore deeper ways of understanding our work we seek a more accurate and

effective way to conceptualize, understand what it is that we do. And systems thinking is one of several contributions to that. Next slide.

We were there. There, that's the one, Carrie.

Thank you. As we begin to conceptualize -- earlier when we began to conceptualize the role of sign language interpreters, we relied on the prevailing view of interpreters articulated in the law, you know, because --

like, for example, court interpreting or that was applied to the field of spoken-language interpretation. In the case of court interpreting, there is one that is considered the equal fighting doctrine. The equal footing doctrine stipulates the interpreter is to provide a level of access to a non-English speaking person that puts them on equal footing with someone who speaks English. They should provide no more and no less. Although, I believe that equal footing and even that definition of equal footing could be much more broadly interpreted. What it generally means, historically is a pretty literal interpretation where you take what has been said and you just restructure it into the target language. Now, this view of interpreting may actually work in some situations where the non-English speaking person, whether that person
is deaf or just speaks a language other than English, it certainly could work for someone who grew up with a native
language and had gone through an educational system that
they accessed by or through their native language, and, you know, delivered by individuals who were competent in their native language. And with whom they shared a

natural language with members of their family and their extended community. However, it's not a view that is compatible with the experience of most deaf people. Because most deaf people do not typically come from families that know sign language. There is always the issue of delayed diagnosis of an individual's deafness. We know that deaf education is fraught with many issues regarding the communications competence of teachers, of interpreters in mainstream settings. So we can see that the -- although the concept that the interpreter is nonintrusive, that the interpreter behave as if they were there, so that the interaction would happen as if the interpreter were not there, we can see that in some instances, it may have been logical. But the concept and then the application of that concept to our work has really resulted in great conflict for us, because it doesn't work. It is inconsistent with what we know about deaf people, what we know about languages within the Deaf

community, what we know about human interaction, what we

know about cultural norms, particularly within the Deaf community, and even cultural norms within the general society. Because for employers or consumers to see

interpreters as rude, that perception was not restricted just to deaf people. It was actually more frequently a statement by individuals of the broader society who found this aloof, detached, disengaged, the interpreter sitting in a chair, reading a magazine or reading a book, waiting on something else, waiting for someone to come, they found

the level of detachment counter to professional interactions and collaborated interactions, centered in communication and relationship. So certainly, some of our perspectives on interpreting have been faulty and more recent, more emergent views of interpreting as a practice, profession, and some of the work that has been done, particularly in the area of spoken-language interpreters in the healthcare setting, that talk about the interpreter as a coparticipant all seem to encourage us to look more deeply and to conceptualize more fully what is interpreting? What is that process in the midst of the human interactions? And how might we foster a greater collaboration? Next slide.

The impact of this -- of some of those historical roots is that -- and also, I think it comes in part from our own efforts to be so clear about who we were, to establish ourself and become clear about our practices

and
our professional acts, it is that we come to this place of
where we have a very interpreter-centric view of our work.
And unfortunately, that interpreter-centric view limits
our access to a broader range of options, of strategies
that are available to us for improving relationship, for
building relationships, for improving our decision-making,
for improving job satisfaction. And even when we may be
open to some of these more current views of the work of
interpreters and how to create a more collaborated
context, that is more open and transparent, even when we
are open to that, our ways of behaving are so deeply
ingrained in us that this -- you know, the shadows of
invisibility, our efforts to remain invisible or detached
or to behave as if we weren't really there, seem to
continue to permeate what we do. Next slide.
So as I mentioned, systems thinking is one of the
things that can help us move beyond this
interpreter-centric view of our work. And to look at our
work as an important part of broader process, a bigger
process. So let's begin by talking about, then, what is a
system. As indicated on the slide, a system is a
collection of parts that function together,
interdependently to achieve an overall goal. Systems can

be simple, like riding a bike, or they can be very complex. Like nature. And systems thinking recognizes that if one part of the system is not working right -- so for example, the gearshift on a bicycle. Then the entire system is going to be affected. As interpreters, we often engage in a single part of a system in which we are working. Like we're at that individual doctor appointment. Or we're going to court and we're handling what's before the Court in a particular case on that day. Or we're the student interpreter in a classroom that is talking about subject matter that on that day, but in each one of those instances, whatever is happening in that moment is tied to something bigger. Pried to prior content, prior events where information-gathering was happening, or other appointments were occurring. And often the situations we go into are building on one another. As well, whatever's happening in the one events that we're a part of has impact for other parts of the system. So a systems thinker, we're certainly looking at the individual part of the system in which we find ourself, and we consider what's happening in that moment.

But we also seek to understand and appreciate how that part of the system works together with other parts of the

system. Interdependently. And how the other parts of the system might be affected or how those other parts of the system affect what's happening in that moment. Next slide.

So there is different kinds of systems. And for the purpose of our discussion, for the purpose of interpretering, we're focused on human systems that are represented by organizations or entities that are sociopolitical in nature. When I use that term "sociopolitical" what I mean is the socio part means it is of society, it relates to society. It is a system that is serving the interest of society. And the political part is that because it is a part of society and serving the interests of society, in the system that typically has negotiated standards of operation. Often that includes government regulations, it often includes the necessity to comply with certain laws. And it also has a hierarchy of social relationship and that hierarchy of social relationship has powers and lines of authority. And in the next webinar, we will look specifically at vocational rehabilitation as one of these sociopolitical systems. But other examples of sociopolitical systems are like the educational system, K-12, higher ed, healthcare system, legal system, social service system. So as an interpreter

when we enter the system, we often expect the system to adapt to us, accommodate us. Certainly we want them to change their way of being, because we're there. And certainly, the inclusion of interpreters and deaf people may have implication on how the communication process regularly happens. But in reality, the interpreter is much more likely to have ongoing or regular contact with systems than the system is likely to have contact with deaf individuals or sign language interpreters. Right? So it is important to have better collaboration with those that work within the system that we should understand the system more effectively and we should seek

ways to fit more naturally, more authentically into the system. So in other words, it is equally, if not more important for us to understand the system and how it functions, than it is for that system to understand us or our work. We wind up being a small part of what that system typically is dealing with. As opposed to that event that we're in, in the moment comprises all of what we're there to focus on. All of what we're there to do. Interpreters who think from this perspective are able to navigate their entry into and through the system much more seamlessly and able to create better

collaboration with the individuals in the system. So again, systems thinking expands the options that are available for us for how to behave, how to integrate and how to work with the challengeses of system. If you are familiar with the schema, it works with the demands, and challenges that might arise in interpreted events. Next slide.

Oh, it looks like we lost the interpreter. HMM!

Carrie, should I just wait for a bit? Or should I continue?

>> Hold on a moment. We will put in a call, and I will be right back to you.

>> All right. Thank you for being patient for just a moment so we can see if we can reconnect with our interpreter. OK. Great. Interpreters are back.

OK. So these sociopolitical systems are comprised of three primary components. People who do specific jobs and hold specific responsibilities and have varying levels of authority for the work that they do. Structures that form the overall organization of the system. And so by structures, I'm talking about like the personnel within the system, how it is organized are the tasks in the system organized around departments or work teams or what's the structure by which it operates? And the third

component is the processes and the processes refers to the
ways in which the work of the system is accomplished. And
you think about policies and procedure. And again,
because in sociopolitical systems, the processes are often
guided by external standards, government standards, by
laws that the rules and regulations for the policy and
procedure that dictate how people function and behave
within the system. But the -- so often, you'll -- the
processes can show up just by observing the way people
function and the way the personnel in the system behave
through their acts and through their practices, that will
give you insight to policies and procedures that may exist
in a book that's sitting on a shelf somewhere.
So I'm going to talk about each one of these,
people, structures, processes a bit more. Next slide.
So think about all the people that you might
encounter within a single healthcare assignment. Each of
those individuals that you encounter have training that is
specific to what they do. So you're with a deaf patient
who the doctor has senate to have an extra. Likely, you
have already had contact with the front desk, you had
contact with the nurse, you have had contact with the

doctor. And now you make your way to the X-ray -- to where the X-ray technologist is located. And he or she has authority to take those pictures. But he or she may not or does not have the authority or training to read those X-rays and to report the findings. That work would be done by a radiologist, right? Understanding the role and responsibility of the personnel within the system in which you work can help you interface with them more effectively and should you need to ask for some type of assistance or to request certain information, then it can help you to identify the right person to whom you should make your request.

Sometimes, as you mentioned earlier, interpreters are overly concerned that system personnel understand our

role and our responsibility. And perhaps this is tied to our efforts to restrict what people expect from us, out of our concern that someone may want us to do something that

we perceive as stepping out of our role. Because sometimes when we explain our role, it seems that we focus

on all the things that we don't do, and we don't spend a lot of attention talking about what we do, do. In a

simple, clear way. Right? Because in reality, as I said earlier, it is much more common for us to be interfacing with these professionals within systems than it is for them to be interfacing with us. So I think if we demonstrate more systems thinking, because we understand

the system more, we can find more authentic ways of guiding people into what it is that we do, and helping them to appreciate and understand the nature of our work. You know, so, for example, the extra technologist greets you and the deaf person. Maybe this is their first encounter with a deaf person and interpreter. So as often people do, they -- she or he says something to the effect of: How, how is this going to work? What do I need to do to make this work? And this question offers a natural segue into a brief and useful description of how we can collaborate with them in the implementation of their role. So we might respond by saying, well, while you are explaining to the patient the procedure and what it is you need them to do, I'm going to be very focused and I will be taking what you say and conveying that in sign language. As the patient has questions that they need to ask you about the procedure or about the outcome or what happens next, you know, I will be paying attention and

taking that information, and conveying it to you. And should I have any questions, I'll let you know. You know? And so much more authentic than saying, you know, starting

off with, let me tell you this is what my role is. We embed of what it is that we do, with what they do, as a way to say I appreciate your work and it will happen the way it always happens for you. And if something out of the ordinary comes up, I'll let you know. I'll take responsibility for that. Next slide

So I guess some of you may just be on the phone, versus actually seeing what's on the screen, so I should say the reason that I'm pausing is because I'm trying to allow time for people to read the PowerPoint. So again, then, the structure refers to the framework, typically the hierarchical organization. The way information is lined up from one area to another area. And understanding who has the authority or the expertise or knowledge to make decisions or convey information that an interpreter may need, like getting prep material or authorizing a team interpreter or asking for clarification about a particular procedure as part of your preparation. That can help us, and it also helps members in the system, because it takes time. That will assist you with that. Also, as the slide

says, one of the aspects of structures is how information flows between levels of the system. So paying attention to this aspect, how is data collected, is a very important piece of insight that you can gain into systems, and the way that it is structured. So for example, I'm thinking about in those -- in the organizations that I identified earlier, a system, like schools, hospitals, healthcare systems, the legal system, et cetera. Just think about the role of paperwork, the role of forms the structure is such that the paperwork becomes like a record, and it flows from one part of the system to another part of the system. And whether I follow a particular individual through all the various contacts they may have in a system, or not, for sure that paperwork, will, right, the record will. So appreciating the importance of the record, the importance of it being accurate is very helpful to us in the moment I'm interpreting and one of the forms needs to be filled out. If I can think beyond the immediacy of that event to how the paper will be used as part of the system as a whole, then I can make more informed decisions that hopefully will impact my practice. Such as, offering to provide sight translation and being prepared to do sight translation. That means it's part of my prep, I might want to explore what types of forms can

possibly come up in the assignment and making sure I'm familiar with the information within the form, so I'm ready to provide insight translation. So certainly there is requirement that a deaf person use our sight translation services. My experience in offering it a culturally appropriate manner is almost always taken advantage of. Consumers appreciate our willingness to do that. I personally see it as integral to the work as interpreters and certainly a more system-oriented approach

Next slide.

Another thing about structures -- the structure of the organization is it can be centralized or decentralized. This is where the lines of authority within the system can become more apparent. So, you know,

they can be organized around either of these. In a centralized approach, the ultimate authority or the decision-making is concentrated in the top layer of the organization. You know, so let's say you take a small commission for the deaf person sample. Any kind of fiscal commitment made in a smaller organization, it is going to be centralized and there is only one, maybe two individuals that would have the authority to make up a

fiscal commitment or other type of commitment. Like committing the organization to do something, to provide a particular type of service, for example.

In a decentralized system, then typically, the lines of authority -- people have more autonomy. And it could be that they have the authority that goes along with making those kind of decisions. So I work in higher education, and you know, certainly what I do in directing the MARIE center is decentralize. In that I have my own budget and I know what money and funds are available for doing the work that is to be done, and I can make decisions about expenditures. If I go outside of my budget and it impacts the university's budget or impacts other centers, then of course, it would no longer be decentralized. I would have to go to others and have them participate in the decision-making. So again, appreciating whether you are working within a centralized or decentralized system can help you to appreciate the amount of time it may take to get a decision about something. You know, for example, as

I said earlier, to have the team interpreter or rescheduling an appointment or, you know, any number of other things. The next slide.

So processes. Each system has approved policies and

procedures that it must follow to remain in compliance with standards and regulations to should the system is [indiscernible]. Depending on the nature of the system, the standards and regulations can be those set by the government. Or in the case of my institution which a state university, not only the government, but external accreditation standards. Accreditation agency, law, among other sources. This is a concept that really is familiar to interpreters in that although we apply discretion in our decision-making, our decisions are still expected to conform to the ethical standards within the profession. Within the range of decisions we make, they all have to be acceptable within that ethical framework that surrounds our decisions, right? So this notion of having processes that we have to refer to or certain standards that we have to refer to as we are lim elementing our job should be relatively familiar us to. If we fail to comply with ethical standards of practice, there is a system within our system -- our larger system of interpreting services. There is a system where COMBREEFances can be filed, interpreters can be reprimanded or disciplined for breaches. Again, understanding the processes of the systems in which you are working is really essential for systems thinking because it allows us to more fully

appreciate where the personnel in that system behave in certain ways or engage in certain acts and why certain structures exist within the system. So just a very simple example is the act of healthcare professionals washing hands before having contact with the patient. Or putting on gloves. That one act right there is grounded in the policies and procedures that exist because of law or standards that exist regarding safety. Safety not only of patients but also of practitioners. Next slide.

Again, why is this important to us as interpreters.

If we embrace the idea that our work as interpreters is socially constructed, meaning that it occurs within the context of human interaction, and it's impacted by all of the factors that exist in a particular context in which our work is happening, then the more we know about that context, about the situations in which that context occurs, then the more effective we can be in managing the range of variables that are available to us. So systems thinking is a perspective that helps us see the events that occur within a system and the pattern in that system in a new light. And we can respond to them in a higher manner, because we understand the leverage, we understand

the source. As we much the individuals that are within

that system and we watch how they problem-solve and navigate through the system, we can replicate that behavior and utilize that in a way that expediates our own navigation through the system. In the next few slides we will have pictures that illustrate some of the systems that you might work. This is what it is, it is a webinar, informational, foundational in scope, but -- so we can't really interact around these slides, you know, to any real degree. So really, what I'm trying to do by showing you these pictures is to stimulate your thinking about these elements that we've been talking about. So the first slide.

So, in this first slide we have got a classroom setting, and it represents a scenario that involves a deaf Latino student who attends a residential school for the deaf, but is mainstream for a high school chemistry class. And so just take a moment to think about these questions. People who are part of this educational system, think about all the people who you might encounter, and what does each of them do? Not only those that you see in the picture, the teacher for example, but also those involved but not in the picture. And how does the personnel interface with one another to accomplish the goals of that classroom? And how does what's happening in that

classroom relate to what's happening within the broader system? How does it relate to what happened in that classroom with these students the day before, a week before? How might it relate to what's coming up later? How would you, as the interpreter, fit in most effectively with the people that are within that system? What is the structure of that system? Both the structure within that classroom and the broader structure in which the classroom

exists? How is the fact that the student, for whom you're interpreting, moved in and out of this particular system, the public school system, because they're also schooled in the residential school? And what are the implications of that transition from the one school to the other? What's the implication for that student? What's the implication for the classroom that they're in right now? What's the implication for you as an interpreter? What process is in place in the evidence and policies and procedures that people seem to be following? And how might what the teacher is teaching -- how might that be tied to curriculum standards? Regulations in the system in which he's operating, and what's the implication for that for this student? How does it implement their behavior, their actions? And how do they potentially impact you as an

interpreter. So considering these kinds of questions and the related answers, expand your awareness of the system,

how it operates? And gives you a deeper appreciation for what things may influence what happens within your work and how meaning is created? But also how you can fit in more effectively with the goals of the system.

The next picture.

So this scenario represents one -- no, we need to go back one, please. Thank you. So this scenario represents a scenario that involves an interpretation that is being delivered repeatly through technology. This is a remote-interpreted event, and it represents a deaf person at a small I.T. firm, and the focus of the meeting is the employer's annual performance evaluation. Consider what you may need to know or learn about the personnel that are

involved in that meeting and the structures that are implemented the processes that are followed in that evaluation. Consider how each of the elements interface and are interdependent, and the implication of all of that for your work as an interpreter. Next slide.

So in this scenario, you are going to be

interpreting for a deaf patient. A first-time mom, first

time she's ever had an ultrasound, and the physician had some concerns about the development of the baby. So again, think about the three elements of people, personnel who are involved, the structures that exist, the processes that are guiding the behavior and actions of the people that are involved in that system.

One more slide. The next one. One more picture. And this final scenario you are interpreting for a preliminary hearing in a civil case, and you are interpreting for the plaintiff. Right? So again, you can consider all three of those elements, what is happening in that moment how it

relates to the broader structure that exists. How the processes in that moment relate to other processes that are going to occur, and you can expand your appreciation for how to function and navigate by paying attention to the way the people in that system relate to one another, relate to the policies and procedures, et cetera. So again, looking at these kinds of pictures are ways that can stimulate our thinking. Next slide.

How does that change what we do? Our role is invented human action. So our ability to exercise decisions is relational. It is bound to the context and how we fit in. Not just conceptually, but pragmatically,

what is happening in the moment? And how it comes together within that particular context? And as we apply a systems perspective in approaching our work, we can begin to see patterns in various systems and we can gain a

deeper appreciation for the interconnectiveness between different aspects of the system. We can better appreciate why the personnel in the system behave and act in certain ways. We can view the processes that are followed from a broader perspective. We learn that what happens in one part of the system almost always has implications for another part of the system. Instead of seeing our work from the limited perspective of the moments that were there immediately, we begin to understand how what happened in the moments that we are interpreting has implications well beyond the immediacy of that event. And this has implications for our ability to create meaning to generate clear, coherent interpretation. And it opens up our awareness, high-leverage intervention, because it collaborates -- it fosters our ability to collaborate with members of the system. So instead of having these low-impact reactions to what's going on, because we don't understand it, and we feel somehow it is counter to what we need to happen, we look for ways to fit into the

system, to collaborate, to navigate in the same way that the others in the system navigate. And therefore create higher leverage ways of solving problems. And, in the process we're much more open, transparent and authentic in

how we to our work. Next slide.

So returning again, to the historic view, versus the emergent views of our role, approaching interpreting from a systems perspective allows us to approach our work in a much more contextual manner. One that allows us to focus

on the settings in which we work with an expanded realization of how to fit in, and more awareness of the resources and the solutions that would be available to us. And this shifts us again from that position of reacting and trying to defend this very narrow and limited view of our work to seeking ways to fit in the context so that we are back to doing what we should have always been doing,

and that is fostering relationships and connections between the people that rely on our services.

We are constantly, instead of talking about being detached or aloof, which leaves people thinking that our uninvolvement means we're not paying attention. We

communicate something just the opposite of that. We are very actively engaged and paying very close attention to all that's happening, and using our thinking our systems thinking, to anticipate how what's happening right now relates to other pieces. And how we can foster better collaboration and problem solving. Next slide.

And so, this then can actually impact our own professional practices and our own professional acts. Because it allows us to continually assess if what we're doing makes sense or if it fits within the system. Right? So by learning to adapt to and adopt much more of the system behavior, as much of the system behavior as possible, for example, the jargon, the value and respect for its processes, the knowledge of how things work and why, then we can serve the needs of deaf people more effectively. As well, the same ability enhances our ability, as I said, to convey meaning and nuance so deaf people can also more effectively navigate the system themselves. Next slide.

Two important systems I want to enforce as we start to bring this to a close. First, a reminder that the system's overall behavior depends on the overall structures. The more complex the system is, the more formal the behavior is going to be. Right? And the more

formal the behavior, the potentially greater demand that we're going to encounter. So that's why I think we're seeing more and more people seeking to specialize in our field. It takes a long time to really understand the nature of systems, right? And how a system operates. So people who specialize tend to work more predominantly in one setting or one or two settings than others. So, you know, it could be legal interpreting, healthcare interpreting, educational interpreting. The movement of specialization gives further experience to thoroughly knowing how a system works so you can be most effective within that system. The second principal is that there is a circular relationship between the overall system and its part. Look for what creates -- when you go into the system, look for what creates that circular nature. Earlier, I mentioned the role of paperwork. That's an example of circular. Meaning that paperwork moves within the individual through the system, and it comes back again, it shows up again. It is added to overtime. It needs to be updated from time to time consider what other things foster this relationship. Next slide. So then back again to the classroom. So think about the role of scaffolding that occurs in K-12 curriculum and how an elementary grade for 1st grade to 2nd grade to 3rd grade.

The same subjects are repeated year after year, but always
an a deeper level as students move from 1 grade to the next. Think of how that content builds on previous content and previously established concepts. That is another example of circular qualities to a system. Think about what others might exist in a classroom setting or in an educational setting. Next slide.

Annual appraisals, other employee assessments, provides a circular element in the H.R. system. Used as a reference point for where an employee is in reference to their job expectation and expectations of that job. They frame what expectations will be used to assess an employees' assessment and often tied to a system of pay increases. So again, think of what other circular elements might exist within the system. Next slide.

Think about this healthcare scenario and what creates the circular nature of the type of healthcare appointments, again, thinking about the record. How will the results of this test that is being administered be reported. Figuring out what constitutes the circular nature and keeps elements of the system tied to one another, again, will give you insight into the patterns that are inherent and help you anticipate what is

happening in the new system -- you go back into the same system for a new appointment or new assignment. Next slide.

Again, this is the courtroom. What are the circular patterns? You know, I certainly think in the criminal justice system, the legal portion of the justice system, I think about how often an individual's rights are referenced, and how proceeding after proceeding in a larger criminal proceeding or appearance after appearance

in a broader criminal proceeding will reference those rights. Sometimes as interpreters, we might want to think, well, they have heard this before, so I don't need to treat it with as much attention this time. I would suggest that, that circular nature gives us an opportunity to one more time look for ways to be explicit in conveying information. Because in my own experience even though something may be repeated again and again, someone may

understand it, in a way they didn't understand it before. So again, you can use pictures like this one and the previous ones to stimulate your thinking about systems, about the three elements of people, structure, processes as well as identifying what about the system is circular

and what about this scenario represents how this event that is happening right now is tied to the broader system in which it is situated? Next slide.

I mentioned earlier that our autonomy, meaning our authority over our work is relational, and it's true, that much of our -- it is relational because much of our authority, in actually how we implement our role is directly tied to the system in which we're working. You know, for example, legal interpreters are designated as officers of the Court. And K-12 interpreters are considered part of the educational team. So, again, systems thinking is a way in which we can more fully appreciate our decision latitude. So I'll give another example that illustrates it even more. So we go all the way in the legal setting, we may see our role the same no matter where we are. The system doesn't, right? Because I just talked about the Court viewing the interpreter as an officer of the Court. And as an officer of the Court, the interpreter is treated equally to attorneys. So it means I could approach the judge, I could ask to interrupt the proceedings to make comments to the judge, to ask for

assistance from the judge, it also means I have a duty to support that is very different -- it involves much more

than how I might see my duty as an interpreter according to the code of ethics. So if there were any barriers to my being able to do my job, I would have a duty to report that to the Court. Right? I would say that K-12 interpreters have a similar -- they're a part of the educational team. They're employees of the school. So they, too, have a duty to report anything that is a barrier to their work. Conversely, you go to video relay services, and the level of autonomy, the level of authority the interpreter exercises over their work is once again, determined in part -- it is relational. So we know that there are SCC standards and there are corporate

company standards that determine the degree of latitude that the interpreter has to make decisions. So all of this is, again, supports the notion that we need to better appreciate systems the way they work, and how we fit in with those systems. Next slide

These are the take-away messages that you hope you will leave with. Systems thinking can empower interpreters to recognize that our role is socially constructed and define new ways of appreciating and relating to the systems in which we work. It expands our options or our control. Because it includes not only

things that we have thought of as interpreters, but the range of system-based practices and acts that professionals in that system use to resolve problems and to navigate the system, and we can use those in addition to those interpreter-centric acts. Next slide.

So again, systems thinking provides us with another way to think about -- certainly not the only way, it is another way to think about and talk about and approach our

work, it is a perspective that gives us a bigger picture orientation to what we do. And in our next webinar, on Monday, February 24, we're going to look at vocational rehabilitation as a system, and the implication of that system or how we function as interpreters within that system. So I'm going to open it up to questions and

And I also encourage all of you to participate in the next webinar on February 24. Carrie, are you going to be facilitating the questions? Or do I read them? How is that part --

>> I can, or you may read them and read them out loud, whichever one you would like to do.

>> I'm trying to see, can you scroll back and see if there were questions that have been asked.

>> There was only one question that was asked

previously. And that was ...

How would this change if you were the ongoing interpreter,

versus the subinterpreter or one-time interpreter?

>> Yes, I think systems building approach works for both. I think if I'm the one-time interpreter that moves into the system, if I can enter it with a systems thinking approach, I will be better prepared for whatever happens. So if I'm that one-time interpreter. If it helps me only to the extent that I can appreciate what is happening right now, relates to the rest of the system, how other things may have happened that informed what's happens right now, and how what's happening right now may have a

life beyond my being there, right? Then it's going to help me to hear information differently and understand the meaning differently, perhaps to ask for clarification more readily, and to seek to create an interpretation that fits dynamically into the system as a whole. So if it only helps with how I construct meaning in that moment, it's a great tool. If you're the long-term interpreter and seeking ways to make sure that services to deaf people are

as streamlined as possible and that there is continuity of

care, continuity of services, for sure, on many levels it will be a great position.

I also saw a question -- could you back it up a bit, Carrie, I thought I saw an earlier question that was something about allies.

>> That question is: Do you think another way to become less interpreter-centric is to find an ally deaf or hearing within the system? He or she may not necessarily understand what we do, but would be able to understand some questions, lend some technical support, such as [indiscernible]?

>> Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, so for example, if you think about K-12 interpreters, you know, a fairly common complaint is that they don't get prep materials from the teacher. But if I, as the interpreter, demonstrated to that teacher that I more fully understood the role of lesson planning, the role of state standards, in terms of what gets taught in the classroom, and I appreciated, I could demonstrate appreciation for what that teacher has to do to meet those standards, then my request for prep material is a natural part of the educational process, the educational planning process, in the same way the teacher has to prepare if my job to support what the teacher is doing, I have to prepare. So

it becomes a collaborated planning between the two of us, rather than this isolated request that comes from me and almost seems like a demand. It seems autonomous from what

the teacher is doing, right? And then certainly, in terms of finding an ally -- being an ally [chuckling] to that person in terms of helping them segue into serving deaf people and seeking an ally to help you navigate the system

and understand the system better, that's great. What you are calling an ally I think of as what I was referencing as a more collaborative model of interpreting. We use the term "ally" in a lot of different ways as interpreters. We have even coined the term in our field of an "ally model." Interpreter as ally. I understand what that looks like and what that means when I'm not interpreting, but we don't have a lot that has been written or talked about or studied about what does that look like in application? I think some of what we have been talking about in terms of system thinking tonight could apply to this notion of being an ally as an interpreter, but I wouldn't want to mislabel this as interpreter's ally. That's the model I'm talking about. I'm talking about just the concept in systems thinking and how it can help

us. And I'm hesitant about the use of the word "ally" because I'm not sure we all share a common understanding
of what it means or what it looks like when we do it. I think we have time for one more and I need to turn it over to Carrie to ...
Wrap up.
>> Earlier you said in the example of the radiologist asking the interpreter how does that work, that we explain it. Some deaf consumers would prefer to explain our role to the system people themselves. How is it best handled when it is explained like a conduit model, interpreter model, something like that?
>> Yes. So then, you know, that would be great to know in advance, right? If they're a consumer you worked with regularly and you know that, that is perfect, all the interpreter has to do is interpret that, the deaf person starts explaining it, and the question is answered either way, right? So perhaps checking in with the deaf person beforehand to find out what their preference is, if they want to do those types of explanations or if you didn't check in beforehand and it is happening right now, you sort of look to the deaf person, you interpret it, wait a second to see if they want to respond, and if they don't,

then you go ahead and respond.

Well, OK -- let me say that you can contact me at Ann.Witter-Merithew@UNCO.edu. And I will be happy to answer any questions that remain. I'll ask Carrie if there are other questions to remain, maybe we can sort of post that generally so everyone has the benefit of those answers. I thank you for your time this evening. I want to let you know that the NCIEC and our activities are funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education, rehabilitation services administration. And and Carrie, I'll let you wrap it up.

>> Well, thank you, Anna, for amazing information that you presented tonight. I'd also like to thank our interpreters CM and HALL, and our captionist Rochelle. And of course the entire NCIEC team that made this all possible.

For CEUs there is a survey link, and I will send it out tomorrow morning. You need to know that I will be checking on participants who show up and the time that they are logged in to the CEU request. So it is very important that you log in for the entire webinar. If there are technical issues, we do record these webinars, and the information is there for you to access at another time if technology did not allow you to view the whole

webinar. For individual viewers, like I said, the survey will be sent out in an e-mail tomorrow morning or you can find the link there in the column where all the information is listed. And you will see under material it is. The survey includes the evaluation and CEU questions. If you watched for a group, please forward it to the group so everyone can fill out the survey. The registration form will be matched up to participants like I said before. It can take up to eight weeks to have it show up for credit for the event. If you watched as a group, please have everyone sign in on the sign-in sheet, even if not requesting CEUs help please have inch fill out a survey as soon as possible. Fill it out and return to me by Wednesday, 5:00, mountain time. Individuals earning CEUs will be e-mailed a certificate of completion within two weeks to go on the form. You can request it. If you are not filling out a group form and you want a certificate of completion, please e-mail me and I will send you a certificate. And I think that's it. I hope to see all of you next month. If you have any questions e-mail me. Thank you very much for your time tonight. >> Thank you, everyone. Goodnight.

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