



Surrey Schools

LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

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EDUCATIONAL VISUAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS GUIDEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Interpreter training programs focus largely on training for interpreting in community settings. Interpreting in a Kindergarten through Grade 12 setting, is extremely challenging and requires adherence to the interpreter code of conduct established in the [Westcoast Association of Visual Language Interpreters \(WAVLI\) Code of Ethics](#), as well as the policies and procedures set out by their employer (e.g., [Surrey School District Policies and Regulations](#)), the Union local (e.g., [Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE\) Local 728 Collective Agreement](#)), the Ministry of Education (e.g., [BC Ministry of Education Special Education and Services - A Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines](#)), and various other provincial and federal acts and legislation (e.g., [School Act](#), [Child and Family Services Act](#), [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)).

The role of the interpreter appears to be very straightforward - to effectively facilitate communication between deaf individuals and those who are hearing. However, the complexities of the task, the types of visual interpreting, and the enormous range of qualifications brought by the interpreter make it anything but simple.

Interpreting requires a high level of fluency in two or more languages, keen ability to focus on what is being said, broad-based world knowledge, and professional, ethical conduct. Interpreters cannot interpret what they do not understand.

Interpreters serve all parties in the communication exchange. While we often think of the deaf person as the requester of interpreter services, the reality is, [where hearing people do not use ASL] all parties have an equal and mutual need for the interpreter ([National Deaf Center](#)).

What does visual interpreting entail?

Facilitating communication between a visual communicator and an auditory communicator is accomplished using a number of modalities, with the modality of choice being identified by the visual learner, in this case, the deaf individual ([National Deaf Center](#)).

American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation is the most prominent type of interpreting used today. Interpreters interpret between two distinct languages - ASL and English. In order to be effective, interpreters must be fluent in both languages. ASL interpreting occurs in two ways: simultaneously and consecutively. According to the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf \(RID\)](#), simultaneous interpreting requires interpreters to listen and sign, or watch and speak, at the same time. The interpreter begins to convey a sentence in the target language while listening or watching the message being delivered in the source language. Consecutive interpreting "...begins only after the speaker has spoken or signed a sentence or paragraph. Interpreters may take notes to help create a coherent and accurate translation" [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. \(2007\). Professional sign language interpreting](#).

Tactile Interpretation is a method of interpreting used by individuals who are deafblind. In this mode, an interpreter creates signs in the person's hand, while using other tactile cues to describe affect and the environment ([National Deaf Center](#)).

If someone knows ASL, are they qualified to interpret?

Fluency in ASL is only one of several competencies needed to effectively interpret. Interpreters must also know how to assess the communication preferences or language level of the deaf individual and then adapt their interpretation to meet these needs. They must understand the meanings and intentions expressed in one language and express those meanings and intentions in the other language. Interpreters must be able to retain information and manage the flow of the communication, most often in real time (simultaneously). They must understand and manage the cultural nuances of the environment and follow professional and ethical standards set by the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf \(RID\)](#), ([National Deaf Center](#)).

SECTION ONE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

EDUCATIONAL VISUAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS:

Foster Language, Cognitive and Social Development

EVLIs know about the development of linguistic, cognitive, and social skills in deaf and hard of hearing children. Some students who are DHH have delayed language and vocabulary compared with many of their same-age peers who are hearing, and so they often need additional support. The EVLI works as a member of the educational team to determine the type of sign language a student requires (e.g., ASL only, ASL and visual supports) and any adjustments that may be necessary for those students who require more scaffolding in their language skills. Any such modifications will be discussed with the educational team.

The EVLI will communicate with the classroom team when interpreting challenges may have interfered with the student receiving the entire communication, and re-sign the content and/or provide additional explanation as required.

All students, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing, are not always aware when they do not understand what someone is saying. This is particularly true for young students, and so educational interpreters cannot expect a young student to inform them if something does not make sense. As such, EVLIs must continually be vigilant for the subtle signs of understanding and lack of understanding, which is subsequently discussed with the student's educational team.

Teach How to Work with an Interpreter

Working with DHH students in a Kindergarten through Grade 12 setting is different from working with DHH adults. At younger ages, students cannot be expected to understand how to manage the interpreting process. As students get older, they should understand and assume more of the responsibility for managing interpreting services. They should have a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of interpreters who work with adults.

EVLIs may need to educate a DHH student how to work with, and get the most out of, an interpreter. EVLIs may also need to educate the student's hearing peers and other adults including the teachers, regarding how to interact with a deaf or hard of hearing student or adult who is using an interpreter. These learnings are key to the important interactions that foster cognitive development.

Adults who are DHH (such as the [Language Acquisition Support Worker \[LASW\]](#)) can serve as an excellent resource for students to learn how to use an interpreter to communicate with peers and teachers who are hearing.

Social interactions are an essential component of learning, and occur across the domains of academic knowledge, within the context of all interactions, including friendships. Positive social interactions strongly relate to the development of self-esteem and a positive self-concept.

Prepare for Effective Interpretation

Effective interpretation requires adequate preparation time. Accordingly, EVLIs:

- who have access to the teacher's materials and lesson plans are able to predict and produce a superior interpretation;

- need time to learn new technical vocabulary in ASL;
- may need to access several resources to prepare for a lesson.

Orientation Checklist

- School Personnel
- School Routines//Rules
- Student Specific Information (e.g., health, primary language used in the home)
- EVLI Specific Information

Are Part of the Student's Educational Team

As an active member of the student's educational team, the EVLI is responsible for working together to:

- *Implement the student's IEP:*
 - Sharing information relevant to the student's educational experiences.
 - Maintaining confidentiality (e.g., respecting student and staff privacy, limits of confidentiality) used by the other team members.
 - Upholding school and district policies (e.g., anti-bullying), and reporting infractions to appropriate personnel.
- *Communicate (proficiency required) using the modality and language determined by the educational team.*
 - The EVLI may provide the educational team with observations that may assist the team in knowing which modality and language are the best fit for the student.
 - Communication plans often evolve as the student gains proficiency in sign language or in spoken language.
- *Interpret at the appropriate language level.*
 - This may mean modifying the teacher's language to more effectively scaffold the students learning.
 - Any modifications must be discussed with the educational team, including the classroom teacher and the TDHH.
- *Ensure the goals of the lesson are clear.*
 - The EVLI needs to understand the teacher's goals for the lesson in order to interpret the information accurately.
- *Provide tutoring when appropriate.*
- *Teach the student how to effectively use an interpreter.*

For additional information about the EVLI role, please refer to the [CUPE 728 class specifications](#) and [Classroom Interpreting for Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#) (Gallaudet University).

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT BASED SUPPORT

For descriptors of school- and district-based support personnel categories including information about various other supports, teams, projects and resources available within the Surrey School District, please refer to the [Guide to Inclusive Education for Surrey Schools: Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).

COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT

For descriptors of community based support personnel categories and resources available within, and in collaboration with the Surrey School District, please refer to the [Guide to Inclusive Education for Surrey Schools: Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).

PROVINCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

❖ [Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services \(PDHHS\)](#)

PDHHS is a provincial government organization dedicated to supporting the diverse and multicultural goals of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind individuals and their families within an ASL and English environment. PDHHS creates opportunities for:

- Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals to explore and achieve their personal goals;
- Families to connect with resources that sustain strong and caring relationships;
- Communities and professionals to work in partnership in meeting the principles of human rights, equality and life-long learning; and
- Full access for all British Columbians.

❖ [Provincial Family Services \(PFS\)](#)

PFS is a program within Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services that provides integrated and immersive services that reflects a one-stop approach to supporting families with school age deaf and hard of hearing children, youth, and young adults up to age 24 through PDHHS.

❖ [Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(POPDHH\)](#)

The focus of the POPDHH is to collaborate with school districts in meeting the needs of all deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learners. Through collaborative consultation, POPDHH supports educational teams in addressing the unique communication and learning styles of individual DHH students.

To reach every students potential, POPDHH promotes goals of language development, literacy, numeracy, cognitive development, self-advocacy, and self-confidence in becoming responsible, global citizens.

Services can be requested by the District, classroom teacher, school-based administrators, or TDHHS.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [BC Family Hearing Resource Society \(BCFHRS\)](#)
- [Canadian Hard of Hearing Association \(BC\) \(CHHABC\)](#)
- [Family Network for Deaf Children \(FNDC\) & Deaf Youth Today \(DYT\)](#)



- [BC Hands and Voices](#)

SECTION TWO – EDUCATIONAL VISUAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETER (EVLI) PRACTICES

Classroom teachers and other educational staff are responsible for supporting academic and social learning. The essential principle is the same as for all educational professionals: maximize educational benefits for the student who is deaf or hard of hearing; and as a member of the educational team, educational interpreters work towards that same goal.

PRACTICE BOUNDARIES

EVLIs must practice within the scope of their knowledge and education. Interpreters have knowledge of Deaf culture and norms, American Sign Language (ASL), and ethical conduct/reasoning. EVLIs have the education to interpret; they are not educated as EAs or other educational support personnel. The EVLI can contribute to these knowledge areas when asked, however, their primary function within the District is to provide interpretation services between primary users of spoken language (English) and signed language (ASL).

ETHICAL CONDUCT

EVLIs are ethical in all aspects of dealing with staff, students, parents, and district staff. To practice as an interpreter in British Columbia, all sign language interpreters must be a member of the [Westcoast Association of Visual Language Interpreters \(WAVLI\)](#). A foundational requirement for WAVLI membership is having field specific education as an interpreter. WAVLI also provides sign language interpreters with a [Code of Ethics](#), continued professional development opportunities, a [complaints](#) and disciplinary provision, and ongoing networking.

For additional educational interpreter guidelines for professional conduct, see [HERE](#).

RESPECT

EVLIs maintain respectful and professional relationships with students, staff, and parents. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. When problems arise, they understand due process and the procedures they are to follow.

RESPONSIBILITY

EVLIs are responsible in their actions, appropriate appearance, and professional attitude. They are reliable and work independently under the direction of both the TDHH and the classroom teacher. They work with the educational team to ensure linguistic access for student learning.

COMMUNICATION

EVLIs maintain professional communication with both the classroom teacher and the Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDHH). They remember that communication with parents is the responsibility of the teacher(s). They respect the confidentiality of students, staff, and parents.

COMMUNICATION FACILITATION

EVLIs facilitate inclusion of students who use sign language as their primary means of communication by interpreting peer-to-peer dialogue, and by providing the optimal level of linguistic support needed for students to achieve their social, emotional, and individual educational goals.



PARENT INTERACTIONS

During the course of a student's day, EVLIs naturally come into contact with parents of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. When meeting a student at the door or when delivering the student to the caregiver, casual conversations are typical. As the classroom teacher is responsible for the development, implementation, assessment, and reporting of the student's educational program, should these topics be broached, the EVLI should refer parents to the classroom teacher or the TDHH. EVLIs should not be placed in a position or assume a position that interferes with the communication between the parent and the teacher(s).

COLLABORATION

Interpreters are members of the student's educational team. Collegial conversations (e.g., with classroom teachers, TDHH, other support staff) are the basis for effective interpretation. In addition, the educational team should have time set aside each week/day, to ensure effective communication and to coordinate planning to enhance student learning.

Interpreters also require regular opportunities to provide feedback to the classroom teacher and TDHH regarding linguistic decisions that have been made throughout the day, while ensuring that educational decisions are made in conjunction with the classroom teacher and the TDHH.

SECTION THREE: EVLI PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

SUPERVISION OF EVLIs

The principal is responsible for supervising the educational staff in their school, including EVLIs.

JOB PERFORMANCE SUPPORT

School district personnel (e.g., TDHHs, principal, vice-principal) do not have the qualifications to evaluate interpreting skills and competencies, therefore if there is a serious concern about the EVLI's skills, the district will secure the services of a credentialed interpreter with evaluation skills and experience. Any such evaluations would include an observation of the educational interpreter's job performance in order to recommend professional development options as per the [CUPE Local 728 Collective Agreement](#). Such a specialist may also be requested by the EVLI in order to create a professional development plan.

HOURS OF WORK

Schedule

The principal/vice principal is responsible for creating a schedule that clearly outlines the EVLIs work activities, including adequate preparation and consultation time. Ideally, the schedule will be developed in collaboration with the TDHH and affected classroom teachers and EVLIs (as well as the student, as appropriate).

Scheduling of EVLI Hours of Work

Once the total number of hours of EVLI time at a school has been established, the principal and the EVLIs will determine the most effective scheduling in order to meet the needs of all students, throughout each school day.

Rest and Lunch Breaks

EVLIs working 30 hours or more will have two (2) fifteen-minute coffee breaks and a 30-minute lunch break. EVLIs that work more than 3 hours per day will have a paid 15-minute rest break during their shift. If the EVLI workday goes into the afternoon, however, and the total hours worked for the day is less than 6 hours, the EVLI will have an unpaid half hour lunch break. The rest and lunch break times are determined by the school principal in collaboration with the TDHH, the affected classroom teacher(s), and the EVLI(s) (as well as the student, as appropriate).

Of special note: To avoid fatigue and reduced efficacy, the interpreter should take a five to ten-minute brief break every 40 to 60 minutes. If lectures or presentations are complex and intensive in nature, or exceed one hour without a break, a team approach (using two interpreters) should be used.

Preparation and Consultation Time

EVLIs are not entitled to preparation time under the current [CUPE Local 728 Collective Agreement](#). In order to compensate for this, at present, Student Support has increased EVLI hours by 2.5 hours per week. It is recognized that there are times when more than 2.5 hours/week is required for preparation and consultation time, and so school principals and classroom teachers should work together with TDHH and affected classroom teachers and EVLIs (as well as the student, as appropriate) to identify whether there are other available prep times.

DUE PROCESS

Due process refers to the idea that when you encounter difficulties within a system there is a process that has been laid out for you to follow and that it is your right to follow in order to resolve your difficulties. The CUPE shop steward is available for consultation at any stage of the process.

As an EVLI, you will work closely with and under the direction of a qualified teacher, whose role is determined by the School Act. Should you have a disagreement with your supervising teacher or with any other colleague, it is important that you follow a process in the settling of the problem. The following process is designed to settle disputes as quickly and efficiently as possible and to protect your working relationships with your colleagues. Please be sure to follow these steps in order:

1. Address your concern to the individual (e.g., EVLI, colleague, education assistant, classroom teacher) directly. Most problems can be resolved at this level when people are willing to communicate with the individual involved. It is important to describe the situation and how it makes you feel and why. Avoid criticizing the other person.
2. If the disagreement cannot be resolved between those involved, you may communicate to the individual in writing that you do not feel that the issue is resolved, and will be taking the concern to the principal. At this stage, depending upon the situation, it is possible to request mediation. This courtesy allows the Principal to deal directly with both parties and to look for a mutually agreeable solution.
3. Generally, steps 1 and 2 will resolve the majority of all disputes. However, should this not be the case, you must contact your union shop steward for additional advice and assistance.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Sign language interpreting is one of the highest-risk professions for ergonomic injury ([Rochester Institute of Technology, 2007](#)). The research indicates that interpreting causes more physical stress to the extremities than high-risk tasks conducted in industrial settings, including assembly line work. The Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) study also found a direct link between an increase in the mental and cognitive stress of the interpreter and an increase in the risk of musculoskeletal injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis.

The research, conducted through RIT's Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, is one of the first to catalog the effect of signing on interpreters and show a correlation between mental and cognitive stress and increased ergonomic risk. The results of the study are available in the [March 2008 edition of the peer-reviewed journal Ergonomics](#).

Please also see [Appendix B](#) for further information and resources.

Occupational Health and Safety

Surrey School District strives to provide a safe and healthy workplace that minimizes the risk of injury and disease to its employees, students and contractors. The Occupational Health and Safety Program is the cornerstone of the district's effort to establish and maintain superior standards of occupational health and safety.

Each individual has a responsibility for their own safety as well as the health and safety of their fellow employees. All employees are to observe the established procedures and the directions of their Principal/supervisor. Employees must report unsafe conditions or acts, and perform their duties in a

manner that will meet the objective to eliminate accidents and enjoy an injury free workplace. All employees are encouraged to discuss all safety issues with their immediate Principal/supervisor prior to bringing them to the attention of the Health & Safety Sub-Committee at their school.

It is the EVLI's responsibility to ensure that familiarity with [Employee Safety Plans \(ESP\)](#), and to reach out to the school principal if they feel there is a need for additional training (e.g., Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training) or support.

Safety Issues and Employee Safety Plans (ESP)

You may find you have posted into a school where a student with diverse abilities or disabilities requires a proactive approach to mitigate their potential to exhibit challenging behaviour (e.g., risk of harm to themselves or to others). Planning for the EVLI's and student's safety occurs at the school level and a child specific [Employee Safety Plans \(ESP\)](#) will be developed by trained District staff in collaboration with the administrator, staff working directly with the student, the parent, and the student (as appropriate). The [Employee Safety Plans \(ESP\)](#) will itemize the setting events, specific antecedents, and actions to be taken by the adults in the classroom to help prevent challenging behaviour that may lead to injury and/or mitigate risk. The EVLI (and substitute EVLI) are responsible for implementing the procedures in the plan and signing off to indicate that they are aware of the measures they need to take when working with that child. Adhering to the [Employee Safety Plans \(ESP\)](#) promotes a safe and healthy working environment.

INTERPRETER & STUDENT ABSENCE PROCEDURES

The Collective Agreement provides for leave of absence benefits. In order to ensure educational continuity, at the beginning of each year/term the EVLI and the other members of the educational team will develop a plan that will be implemented in the event of an EVLI absence.

When an interpreter will be absent from work, the following procedures apply:

Interpreter

1. The Interpreter will log their absence through the [Employee Self-Serve](#), indicating: "replacement required".
2. The interpreter will contact *Sign Referral Services* (formerly Preferred Interpreters; <https://www.bookinterpretersonline.com/>) as soon as possible via e-mail to inform them of the absence. Upon receiving the absence notification from an interpreter, the agency will (as applicable):
 - a) Re-assign an available district EVLI (due to another student's absence) to the school;
 - b) Contact an interpreter from the approved substitute list.

Student

Where a member of the educational team anticipates a student absence, the case manager will contact Sign Referral Services via e-mail as soon as possible to inform them of the absence.

School Team

In the event that a substitute interpreter cannot be secured, the school team will implement their pre-determined student support plan.



EVL I Sub-Book

EVLIs are responsible for creating and updating a Sub-Book for their position. A smooth transition from one EVLI to another depends on a clearly written Sub-Book that is readily available. An example of a Sub-Book is located [here](#).

CLASSROOM OUTINGS

On occasion, EVLIs will be involved in classroom outings. As with school-based activities, these are planned in collaboration with the members of the educational team. As with school-based activities, during class outings, EVLIs work under the direction of the classroom teacher or Teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

Participation in School-based/Extra-curricular Activities

On occasion, EVLIs may wish to become involved in school-based/extra-curricular activities, such as coaching. Such participation should not interfere with the interpreter's daily work.

LIABILITY COVERAGE

Indemnification

The employer will defend, save harmless, and indemnify all employees from any demands, claims, writs, actions, or other proceedings which may be brought against them and which arise from the performance of their duties and responsibilities as an employee and for any cost, loss, damage, and liability arising therefrom, including all legal fees and disbursements incurred in connection therewith ([CUPE Local 728 Collective Agreement](#)).

KILOMETREAGE (aka: Mileage)

When employees are directed to use their own vehicle for school district business, they shall receive a kilometreage payment in accordance with Board Policy 4415, Section 5.6. Claim for authorized travel must be submitted on the prescribed Board form ([CUPE Local 728 Collective Agreement](#)).

All claims must be completed monthly and approved by the Principal. Claims **must be submitted within 3 months**, or they will not be accepted.

BUSINESS INSURANCE - PERSONAL VEHICLE

Business Use insurance is required when an employee uses their personal vehicle for work travel on more than six 6 occasions per month (this does not include travelling "to and from work"). Where "business use" rated insurance is required but not provided directly by the School District through a special auto plan policy, employees shall be reimbursed if travel in the employee's position reasonably demonstrates the need for "business use" rated insurance ([CUPE Local 728 Collective Agreement](#)).

MEDICAL INTERPRETING PROCESSES DURING CRITICAL INCIDENTS INVOLVING HOSPITALIZATION

If there is a critical incident at a Surrey School involving an ASL using DHH student, follow typical school effective practice *while recognizing there is the added layer of communication need*. Where the principal decides that the DHH student needs to be transported to the hospital, they will designate who will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s).

The district EVLI who works regularly with the student should be available to support the student through the incident by:

- 1) Contacting [Medical Interpreting Services \(MIS\)](#) to request that a qualified medical interpreter meet the student at the hospital.
- 2) Accompanying the student to the hospital where possible (with principal support) to ensure clear communication during transport and arrival at hospital. *It is critical to maintain continuity of communication in the chain of care during a health care emergency.*
- 3) Remaining with the student and continuing to interpret until a qualified medical interpreter arrives on scene.

When the MIS interpreter arrives on scene, the district EVLI may then hand off the work, updating the MIS interpreter with relevant background and linguistic information prior to leaving.

NOTE: *Due to the student's familiarity with the school-based interpreter and the school-based interpreter's comprehension/familiarity with student's communication needs, there may be instances when the school-based interpreter is the best person to interpret/stay with the student even with the MIS interpreter is on site at the hospital.*

[Medical Interpreting Services \(MIS\)](#) is the ASL interpreter booking service funded by British Columbia's Provincial Health Services Authority. MIS is operated by Wavefront Centre and provides interpreters for emergency and non-emergency medical appointments in communities across BC.

BC Mainland (Wavefront Centre Vancouver Office) - EMERGENCY

Phone: 604-736-7039

Text: 778-990-7391

TTY: 604-736-7078



APPENDICES

[Appendix A:](#) *Working Effectively with Educational Visual Language Interpreters (EVLIs) in Surrey Schools - A Handout for Educators -*

[Appendix B:](#) *Interpreter Repetitive Strain Injury Prevention*

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[Appendix J:](#) *Resources and Additional Links*

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH EDUCATIONAL VISUAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS (EVLIs) IN SURREY SCHOOLS - A HANDOUT FOR EDUCATORS -

Interpreting is beneficial only if a child already knows the language (i.e., American Sign Language, or ASL), that the EVLI will be utilizing to convey the information.

If a child is very young or only beginning to learn language through signing, watching an EVLI is not an effective way to learn sign language nor to gain an education. Learning sign language is an interactive process, as is learning spoken language.

In Surrey Schools, the Language Acquisition Support Workers (LASWs) are in place to support learning sign language. In addition, Teachers of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing who know ASL support language acquisition and the Provincial Outreach Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing also provide support through online tutorials.

Once it has been determined that the student will benefit from the support of an EVLI in the classroom, the following points are essential for teacher-interpreter collaboration and in order to support optimal student learning.

1. Environmental Considerations

Determine the best placement for the interpreter and the student in the room, so the student has the best visual access to the teacher, interpreter, and other students. Be aware that this placement must be flexible and may change as the communication situations change.

2. Student Fatigue

Be sensitive to the fact that interpreting places additional visual demands on the deaf or hard of hearing student that may cause fatigue. Students may need to take additional breaks throughout the day in order to alleviate that fatigue.

- When possible, if reading text or referring to text that is being used in the classroom, provide a written copy for the interpreter and the student, with time for review.

3. Interpreter Fatigue

Understand that the work of an interpreter is mentally and physically challenging and that the interpreter requires sufficient breaks throughout the day.

- Please check in with the interpreter in your classroom in order to determine the best way to accommodate this need.

4. Face-to-Face Interactions

When communicating with the deaf or hard of hearing student, direct your conversation to the student, not to the interpreter. This means speaking in the first person and looking directly at the student. Expect the student to respond to you, rather than to the interpreter. During these exchanges, remember that the student will need time to shift their attention as needed from the speaker to the interpreter.

- Avoid saying to the interpreter, "Tell them to do...."

5. Eye Gaze

Where a student is not attending to the interpreter, they are not attending to the teacher, to the class, or to the information. Remind the student to pay attention to the interpreter as often as necessary (i.e., just as you would with a student with typical hearing).

6. Speaker Clarity

Ensure that one person is speaking at a time. Encourage students to raise their hands prior to speaking, so that the interpreter and student(s) can identify the current speaker. It is a good idea to create a rule whereby no one speaks or signs without first being recognized by the teacher.

When communicating in an on-line environment (e.g., Microsoft Teams), experiment with various display options to ensure that the student is able to follow the lesson or conversation, (refer to Appendix H for tips).

7. Attention Getting

To get a deaf student's attention, tap them on the shoulder, arm, or desk. Wave to the student if they are at a distance.

8. Pacing

- During group discussion, remember that there is a delay between the information presented in the class, and when the deaf or hard of hearing student receives it. While it is not necessary to pause after each sentence or phrase, look to the interpreter to ensure that they have completed interpreting questions presented to the entire class (i.e., so that the DHH student has an equal opportunity to respond).
- Keep your rate of speech at a moderate pace. In most cases, speakers' normal speed should be fine. Know that speaking too fast or too slow presents challenges for interpretation.

9. Potential for Missing Information

- Be aware of information you communicate to the class non-verbally that may not be interpreted through facial expressions, gestures, or body language. An effective interpreter should be able to convey some of this information, however, DHH students who are watching the interpreter may miss visual messages you are demonstrating.
- When you are describing concepts that are not said aloud, but shared through other visual representations (i.e., if you draw a picture on the whiteboard or outline an angle through the air), ensure the interpreter has seen it and includes it through interpretation or that the student has seen the teacher's representation.

10. Individual Education Planning

Keep interpreters involved in the development and implementation of students' IEP goals, and the monitoring of students' language development, hearing levels (and associated implications), and other abilities.

11. ASL Learning

- Learn ASL wherever possible. When not possible, learn some survival or basic ASL vocabulary, such as, "Good morning", "Okay", "Good Work", "Wonderful", "Congratulations", "Right", "Later/Tomorrow/Yesterday", "Mom/Dad", "Sister/brother", "Book/Read/Write", etc. Deaf students will appreciate the communication and positive reinforcement in their language.
- Encourage hearing students to communicate with deaf classmates by learning to sign or at least, writing.
- For ASL learning resources, see [HERE](#).

To register in an ASL class, contact [Student Support](#).

12. Material Preparation

- Provide the interpreter, in advance, with materials that will be discussed in class. This is particularly useful when interpreting movies, books, handouts, or readings from a textbook. When interpreters are given opportunities to preview or read materials ahead of time, there is improved accuracy in their ability to convey the message.
- When using films/online presentations in the classroom, whenever possible select those that are accurately captioned. This not only benefits the deaf students, but also helps visual learners/hearing students to develop their reading skills.

13. Spelling Tests

If spelling tests are part of the child's program, the interpreter and student should agree upon signs to represent each spelling word during the test. Some of the words for the test may have existing signs, while some words that would typically be finger-spelled may need a sign developed for the purpose of testing spelling. Keep in mind that these created abbreviations are codes and should be used for this limited testing purpose only. *These codes should not be considered a part of ASL.*

14. Supervision

If the teacher leaves the classroom during educational program time, the interpreter may remain in the classroom to interpret any interactions that occur between students. The interpreter is not responsible for monitoring or disciplining the class during this time as they will be engaged in interpreting work.

15. Independence

When a student is old enough, it is helpful for them to meet independently with the interpreter to agree on specific signs or sign abbreviations for vocabulary specific to the class content. It is also helpful for the student to meet with the interpreter to determine the role of the interpreter in social situations; students may not want an interpreter to be a part of their peer interactions.

INTERPRETER REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY PREVENTION

Interpreting is a highly technical and cognitively demanding task. In order to fully provide a high-quality service that is consistently of an excellent standard, professional interpreters require supports such as regular breaks and, in some cases, co-interpreters (sometimes referred to as, “Teamers”).

The reliability and quality of interpretation will decrease over time if interpreters work alone or do not have sufficient breaks. This has been proven by many pieces of research over the years. There also is a significant risk of what is known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), also known as Cumulative Motion Injury (CMI), Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD), Repetitive Motion Injury (RMI), or work-related musculoskeletal disorder.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, based in the United States, in its Standard Practice Paper on Cumulative Motion Injury says:

Employers concerned about the health and safety of employees can help the interpreter avoid injury.

Some preventative measures the employer may take in consultation with the interpreter are:

- *provide 15 minutes of rest or alternative work for each one-and-a-half to two hours of interpreting.*
- *utilize more than one interpreter for sessions exceeding one-and-a-half hours.*
- *work with the interpreter to analyze the work-site to identify and eliminate, when possible, “stressors” such as standing in the same place for a long time, sitting in chairs that are not ergonomically designed, being exposed to extremes in temperature, and assuming awkward positions while interpreting.*
- *avoid continuous interpreting with heavy work output requiring intense concentration for long periods of time. The amount of time which should be spent in actual interpreting may vary from one job to another.*

For more specific information, see [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

Please be guided by interpreters in the management of these important health and safety issues.

Understanding The Requirements of Sign Language Interpreting:

Introduction

Sign language interpreting is an essential service to ensure the participation of Deaf people in work and other facets of society. Interpretation is both physically and mentally demanding.

- Daily job demands often depend on the type of interpretation, and can vary from day to day conversations to business meetings, and legal or medical proceedings.
- Interpreters may work solo, or in a team with one or occasionally two other interpreters to alternate work and rest.
- Currently, the profession lacks evidence-based occupational health recommendations suited to interpreters.
- Purpose • determine the prevalence and pain/discomfort among sign language interpreters registered with the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) and determine associated job demands.



Results

Figure 2 illustrates the high prevalence of prior medically diagnosed injuries.

- Figure 3 illustrates the location of pain and discomfort perceived by the interpreters.
- Mean discomfort levels on a 10 point visual analog scale (VAS) were significantly less ($p < 0.05$) at the time of the survey (3.5±2.3) however a similar level of discomfort was felt during one hour of solo interpreting (5.5±2.3) and one full day of team interpreting (5.7±2.4).
- Interpreting in situations where a medical or judicial outcome will be decided was most stressful, interpreting in a team of 3 or more was least stressful (Figure 4)
- Interpreters generally agree their job requires a lot of physical effort, although they moderately disagree they have good job security and job control (Figure 5).

Figure 2 • Prevalence of previously medically diagnosed injuries
Nearly 1 in every 4 interpreters has been diagnosed with tendonitis, arthritis, or carpal tunnel.

Figure 3 • Body locations where interpreters feel the most discomfort at the time of the questionnaire. The neck and right shoulder regions tend to be the locations of greatest discomfort. Mean discomfort on a VAS scale was 5.5 during one hour of solo interpreting, 5.7 during one day of solo interpreting, and 3.5 at the time of the questionnaire.

Discussion

Sign language interpreting is both a physically and mentally demanding task.

- Similar injury proportions as published in the literature showing a prevalence of medically treated carpal tunnel of 15% (Stedt, 1992) and 29–31% reporting pain in their neck and shoulder regions (Scheuerle et al., 2000).
- High perceived pain and discomfort for interpreters highlighted by the mean VAS score of 5.5-5.7 on a 0–10 scale.
- Pain and discomfort were highest in the neck and right shoulder regions.
- Discomfort and pain may be a result of sustained low level static contractions, over time restricting blood flow, leading to tissue degeneration (Hagberg et al. 1987).
- Increased importance of interpreting situation (i.e. medical or legal) can increase perceived stress of interpreter, and should be scheduled with adequate prep and rest time.
- Teaming is an effective way to help manage stress, perceived pain, and time with "hands in the air" interpreting.
- Job demand and control findings support Dean & Pollard's (2001) theory suggesting that interpreters are at an elevated risk of both stress related and cumulative trauma based disorders due to high job demand and low job control.