



# Utah Sign Language Interpreter Services

Why should the employer/company hire sign language (SL) interpreters for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing? When is this necessary?

## Pros of providing SL interpreters onsite

- Allows full communication access for both the employer and the employee where their ideas and feedback are expressed.
- Allows both to tap into new thinking approaches, creativity, etc.
- Misunderstandings and miscommunications will be reduced and/or avoided and helps protect the employer/company from potential liabilities.
- Allows the meetings to be more effective, productive and quicker.
- Presents the employer/company in a disability friendly way - customers with disabilities are more likely to use the services offered by the company if they know the company is disability friendly.
- Employee will be more dedicated and this may reduce employee turnover.

## Appropriate Situations to provide SL interpreters onsite?

- Staff/team meetings
- Training
- Job evaluations
- Disciplinary meetings
- HR issues
- Special occasions

First step – always ask the employee what they need. Some employees may not need interpreters depending on their hearing loss and/or situations.

*Please be aware that Utah law requires that persons providing interpreting services hold a state or national certification. You can get more information regarding this at Utah Code § 53A-26a-305.*

## How to find Qualified Interpreters

There are two typical approaches used to hire an interpreter. It's up to you which approach to use. There are pros and cons to both approaches.

### 1. Contract with an individual interpreter:

- A list of certified interpreters and their contact information is available on the UIP website [www.utahinterpreterprogram.org](http://www.utahinterpreterprogram.org) under the tab *need an interpreter* then select *interpreter directory*. You may contact interpreters directly to secure one for your needs.
  - Pros-
    - Ability to negotiate service payments.
    - Ability to have the same interpreter who would be familiar with your business, jargon and names of people and/or staff.
  - Cons-
    - More work for you- if the interpreter gets sick or there's scheduling conflicts, you'd have to find a replacement yourself.
    - If you need an interpreter that has familiarity/expertise in a specific field, it may take longer for you to find an interpreter meeting those criteria.

### 2. Hiring Through an Agency:

A list of various interpreter agencies can be found on the UIP website [www.utahinterpreterprogram.org](http://www.utahinterpreterprogram.org) under the tab *need an interpreter* then select *interpreter agencies*. You may contact any agency to assist you in securing an interpreter.

- Pros-
  - Agencies often have a large pool of interpreters available.
  - Less work for you- the agency will arrange the interpreters for you.
- Cons-
  - More expensive due to agency's overhead expenses.
  - May get different interpreters each time you request which means they will not always be familiar with your business, the people involved or jargon used at your business.

### Other Modes of Effective Communication Ideas for daily usage, short messages or meetings-

*Deaf and hard of hearing people communicates differently. You should ask him or her directly how they prefer to communicate.*

- **Writing**
- **Texting/Computer/Smartphone/iPad** - typing back and forth
- **Body language/gestures**
- **Lip-reading/speaking** (*Be aware of possible issues*)
  - Many words look alike- ball vs. mall or dime vs. time.
  - Only 30% of spoken words are visible.
  - Visual barriers like beards, mustaches, braces, accents, and mumbling will affect the deaf person's ability to lip-read.
  - Environmental – lighting, visibility of the speaker or visual distractions around can be factors.
  - Lip-reading requires a lot of practice; is not reliable and can increase misunderstandings.
- **Video Relay Services (VRS)**
  - A free public phone service available for deaf and hard of hearing people using sign language to communicate directly with you through phone by using a simple webcam similar to skype. *\*\*Due to Federal Communications Commission (FCC), this service cannot be used if people are in the same room. \*\**
- **Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)**
  - When on-site interpreting services are not available, VRI uses video conferencing technology, equipment, and a high-speed internet connection to provide the services of a certified interpreter, usually located at a remote call center, to people at a different location. *\*\*This can be used for people who are in the same room and need an interpreter. \*\**

**\*\* NOTE: On-Site Sign Language Interpreters are generally preferred over VRS or VRI. \*\***

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