

## **Tips on how to communicate through a sign language interpreter**

1. Breathe. If you have never worked with an interpreter before, please inform the interpreter AND the person who is deaf. The more honest, flexible, and willing to learn you are, the more comfortable the situation will be.
2. According to the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf](#), sign language interpreters must render the message faithfully. This includes relaying everything that is being said. Do not ask the interpreter to omit things as it is an ethical violation for the interpreter.
3. Speak directly to the person who is deaf. Please don't look at the interpreter. The conversation is between you and the patient/employee/student, etc. not the sign language interpreter and you. Avoid such phrases as "Tell her." or "Explain to them." The interpreters are there to facilitate communication between the person who is deaf, and others. Also, trying to hold personal conversations with the interpreter can cause confusion of roles and detract from the person who is deaf's ability to participate fully in the encounter.
4. In settings such as business meetings, doctor's appointments, classroom settings, etc. the interpreter may position themselves next to/behind you, so that the person who is deaf can look at you both. If this is not possible, the person who is deaf might look more at the interpreter, however, please still address the person who is deaf rather than the interpreter.
5. Please be aware of lighting in the room including windows. Placement of an interpreter in front of lights or windows will impact the person who is deaf ability to see the interpreter clearly.
6. Speak in your normal tone and at your normal pace. Interpreters are trained to be able to work at a conversational pace. If adjustments or clarity is needed, the interpreter will make that known.
7. Please give the interpreting agency and the person who is deaf any materials ahead of time such as agendas, video links, or presentations.
8. If your facility requires face masks, consider ordering [clear masks](#) from this Deaf, Women Owned business.