

# **NEVADA COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

## **(DRAFT) Position on American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are vital in ensuring equitable access for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) across all aspects of life, including employment, healthcare, and community participation. The availability of qualified ASL interpreters fosters inclusion, reduces barriers to communication, and upholds the rights of D/HH individuals to fully participate in society.

**The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocates for policies and initiatives that increase the availability and accessibility of ASL interpreters in critical areas, including employment, medical settings, and general community engagement.**

### **The Need for ASL Interpreters**

#### **1. Employment**

- Access to qualified ASL interpreters is essential in the workplace to ensure D/HH individuals can participate in job training, meetings, and professional development.
- Interpreters facilitate effective communication between employers, coworkers, and D/HH employees, promoting workplace inclusion and reducing misunderstandings.
- Providing ASL interpretation aligns with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates reasonable accommodations to ensure equal employment opportunities.

#### **2. Medical Settings**

- The presence of qualified medical interpreters is critical for accurate communication between patients and healthcare providers.
- Effective communication ensures informed consent, accurate diagnoses, and appropriate treatment plans, improving health outcomes and reducing the risk of medical errors.
- Medical interpreters also help bridge cultural differences, fostering trust and understanding in patient-provider relationships.

#### **3. General Community Access**

- ASL interpreters enable D/HH individuals to participate in public events, access government services, and engage with community programs.
- Community interpreting ensures equal access to information, such as emergency announcements, public forums, and educational workshops.

- Increasing interpreter availability enhances social inclusion and promotes a sense of belonging within the broader community.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### **1. Increase the Pool of Qualified Interpreters**

- Invest in interpreter training programs to expand the number of certified ASL interpreters in Nevada.
- Provide scholarships or incentives for individuals pursuing careers in ASL interpreting, particularly in underserved areas.
- Increase availability of programs that provide ASL curriculum for a second language credit.
- Increase availability of programs to certify or provide advanced education for ASL interpreters statewide.

### **2. Mandate Interpreter Availability in Critical Settings**

- Enforce policies requiring ASL interpreters in medical facilities, government offices, and public services to ensure compliance with the ADA.
- Encourage businesses to provide interpreting services for job interviews, training sessions, and workplace events.

### **3. Establish Centralized Interpreter Resources**

- Create a state-run registry or service to connect D/HH individuals with certified ASL interpreters for various needs, including employment, healthcare, and community events.
- Ensure that interpreters are available on-demand for emergency situations and urgent medical appointments.

### **4. Promote Public Awareness and Collaboration**

- Launch awareness campaigns to educate employers, healthcare providers, and community leaders on the importance of ASL interpreters and the rights of D/HH individuals.
- Collaborate with advocacy groups and organizations to identify gaps in interpreter services and develop targeted solutions.

**Proposed Next Steps (Call to Action):** Ensuring access to ASL interpreters is not just a matter of compliance but a fundamental aspect of creating an inclusive and equitable society. Policymakers, employers, and community leaders must work together to prioritize interpreter services and address the unique needs of D/HH individuals in Nevada.

**Conclusion:** The availability of qualified ASL interpreters is crucial for breaking down communication barriers and empowering D/HH individuals to thrive in all areas of life. By investing in interpreter services and promoting their use in employment, medical settings, and community spaces, Nevada can lead the way in fostering inclusion and accessibility for all residents.