

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

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

Access to language is a critical component of cognitive, social, and emotional development for all students, including those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH), Deaf/Blind (DB), and Deaf or Hard of Hearing + (D/HH+). Research consistently demonstrates that individuals with greater access to language early in life experience a higher quality of life, including improved academic performance, social integration, and overall well-being. The availability of highly qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters in educational settings is essential to ensure that D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students receive equitable access to education and communication.

**The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocates for the inclusion of certified educational interpreters in all school settings, emphasizing the critical role they play in the academic and personal success of D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students.**

ASL interpreters bridge the communication gap for D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students, providing them with equal access to classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and social interactions. By ensuring that D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students can fully participate in their educational experience, interpreters contribute to:

- **Academic Success:** Supporting comprehension of classroom materials and effective communication with teachers and peers.
- **Social Integration:** Facilitating meaningful interactions between D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students and their hearing classmates, fostering inclusion and reducing feelings of isolation.
- **Cognitive and Emotional Development:** Enabling access to a rich linguistic environment that supports critical thinking, problem-solving, and emotional expression.

**Certified Educational Interpreters** The role of ASL interpreters in schools requires specialized skills and knowledge. Certified educational interpreters possess the training and expertise necessary to:

1. Provide accurate and effective interpretation of academic content and classroom dialogue.
2. Adapt communication styles to meet the developmental and linguistic needs of D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students.
3. Collaborate with educators to ensure that instructional goals are met and that D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students receive the support they need to succeed.

Certification standards, such as those established by the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) or the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), ensure that interpreters meet the high standards necessary to provide quality services in educational settings.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### **1. Require Certification for Educational Interpreters**

- Mandate that all ASL interpreters working in schools hold appropriate certification, such as EIPA or RID credentials.
- Establish and enforce state-level standards to ensure consistency and quality in interpreting services.

### **2. Promote Early Access to Language**

- Advocate for programs that provide D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ children with early exposure to ASL and other communication methods to support language acquisition and cognitive development.
- Partner with early intervention programs to ensure families receive the resources needed to support their child's linguistic development.

### **3. Provide Ongoing Training and Professional Development**

- Offer regular training opportunities for interpreters to stay updated on best practices, educational strategies, and emerging technologies.
- Encourage collaboration between interpreters, educators, and administrators to foster a team-based approach to supporting D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students.

### **4. Raise Awareness and Advocate for Resources**

- Increase public awareness about the importance of qualified interpreters in educational settings and their impact on the success of D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students.
- Advocate for adequate funding to ensure all schools can hire certified interpreters and provide necessary support services.

**Proposed Next Steps (Call to Action):** Educational equity for D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students depend on access to high-quality ASL interpretation in schools. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders must prioritize the certification, training, and availability of interpreters to ensure that all D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students can thrive academically and socially.

**Conclusion:** Language access is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of a successful education for D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students. By ensuring the presence of certified educational interpreters in schools, Nevada can support the academic, social, and emotional development of D/HH, DB, and D/HH+ students, laying the foundation for a brighter and more inclusive future.