Fundamentals of Language Access Planning for Deaf People

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Activating Change

Vision & Mission

VISION

Safety and freedom - not harm and punishment - for people with disabilities and Deaf people. People with disabilities and Deaf people are free from violence, thriving, and affirmed by communities and systems.

MISSION

01 Ending Widespread Victimization

People with disabilities and Deaf people are more than 3X more likely to be victimized than people without disabilities. Only 1 in 10 receive victim services.

02 Ending Mass Incarceration

People with disabilities make up 40-60% of our jails and prisons. We cannot end mass incarceration without ending disability disparities in the criminal legal system.

Webinar Goals

- Learn how and why language access planning for Deaf individuals is unique
- Understand the barriers Deaf individuals face when accessing services
- Learn the steps necessary to effectively create your own language access plan for Deaf people
- Become aware of the resources available to help you in your planning
- Ensure language access is woven into your entire organization

Language Access Planning Toolkit

Guidebook

Template

Resources

Language Access Planning for Deaf People: *Why It Matters*

1 in 4

Adults in the United States have a disability

People with disabilities and Deaf people experience **violence** at alarming rates

Deaf-Specific Language Access

- → Language access for Deaf people as a distinct, unique plan
- → Deaf-centered language access
- → Spoken language access principles aren’t interchangeable with Deaf language access principles

Common Barriers to Language Access for Deaf People

- When Deaf survivors reach out for services and support: what usually happens?
- Communication and cultural barriers exist within the system because it was not specifically designed to meet Deaf survivors' needs
  - Invisibility
  - Lack of specialized outreach by victim service providers
  - Phone-based emergency hotlines
  - Lack of language access
  - Lack of cultural competency in victim services and advocacy

Common Barriers to Language Access for Deaf People

Invisibility

- → Lack of staff exposure to the Deaf Community
- → Lack of understanding the lived experience of Deaf people
- → Leads to lack of specialized training

Common Barriers to Language Access for Deaf People

Lack of specialized outreach by victim service providers

→ Outreach and education efforts

→ Deaf community's unique experience of abuse

→ Educational materials

Common Barriers to Language Access for Deaf People

Phone-based emergency hotlines

→ Lack of awareness and training surrounding relay phone calls

→ Many reports of being hung up on, or phone calls going unanswered

Common Barriers to Language Access for Deaf People

Language access

→ Lack of experience and exposure

→ Lack of qualified interpreters, trauma-informed interpreters

→ Financial concerns

→ Ad-hoc communication methods

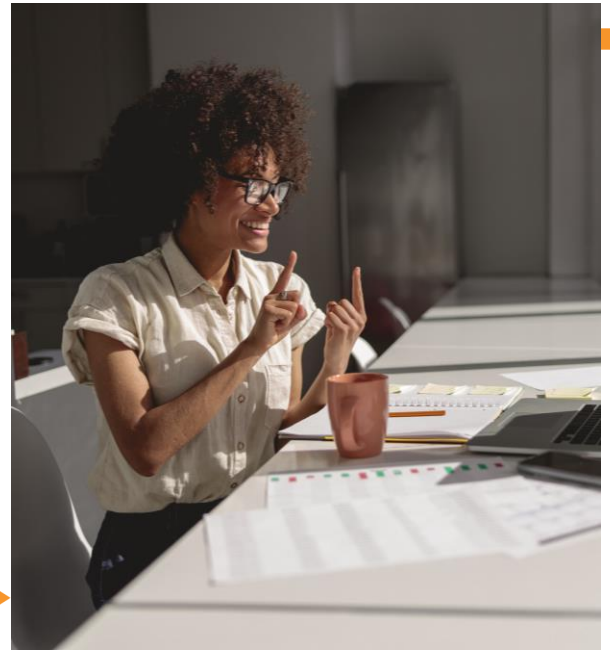
Common Barriers to Language Access for Deaf People

Lack of cultural competency in victim services and advocacy

→ The Deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority

→ Cultural context of domestic violence and sexual violence within Deaf community

Purpose of Language Access Planning



What is **language access** for Deaf people?

→ *The process of ensuring that people who are Deaf are able to access information, programs, and services at a level equal to hearing individuals.*

Language Access Plan for Deaf People

- A document that maps out how an organization will provide information and services to, and engage with, people who are Deaf.
- A proactive step to reduce the chances that a person will be denied critical information and services because of language barriers
- A plan to help your organization recognize and meet the holistic experiences of Deaf people, both culturally and linguistically

Language Access Planning: *The Process*

Working Through the Language Access Planning Process

- Before drafting your language access plan, take these action steps:
  - Designate a staff person and/or committee to lead the language access planning process
  - Identify all of the circumstances that require language access services
  - Determine what types of language access your organization offers and/or will offer
  - Determine the necessary budget for providing various language access services
  - Assess your needs

Step 1: Assign a Language Access Coordinator

→ Assessing, plan drafting, monitoring, training… Who is responsible for executing language access planning for Deaf people?

Language Access Coordinator

Step 2: Identify Local Deaf Communities

- Is there a large Deaf community near your organization?
  - A local Deaf school could bring in many Deaf families, working professionals, minors.
  - What do the demographics of this community look like?
  - Intersectionality
  - How does this affect your organization?

Step 3: Consider Your Services

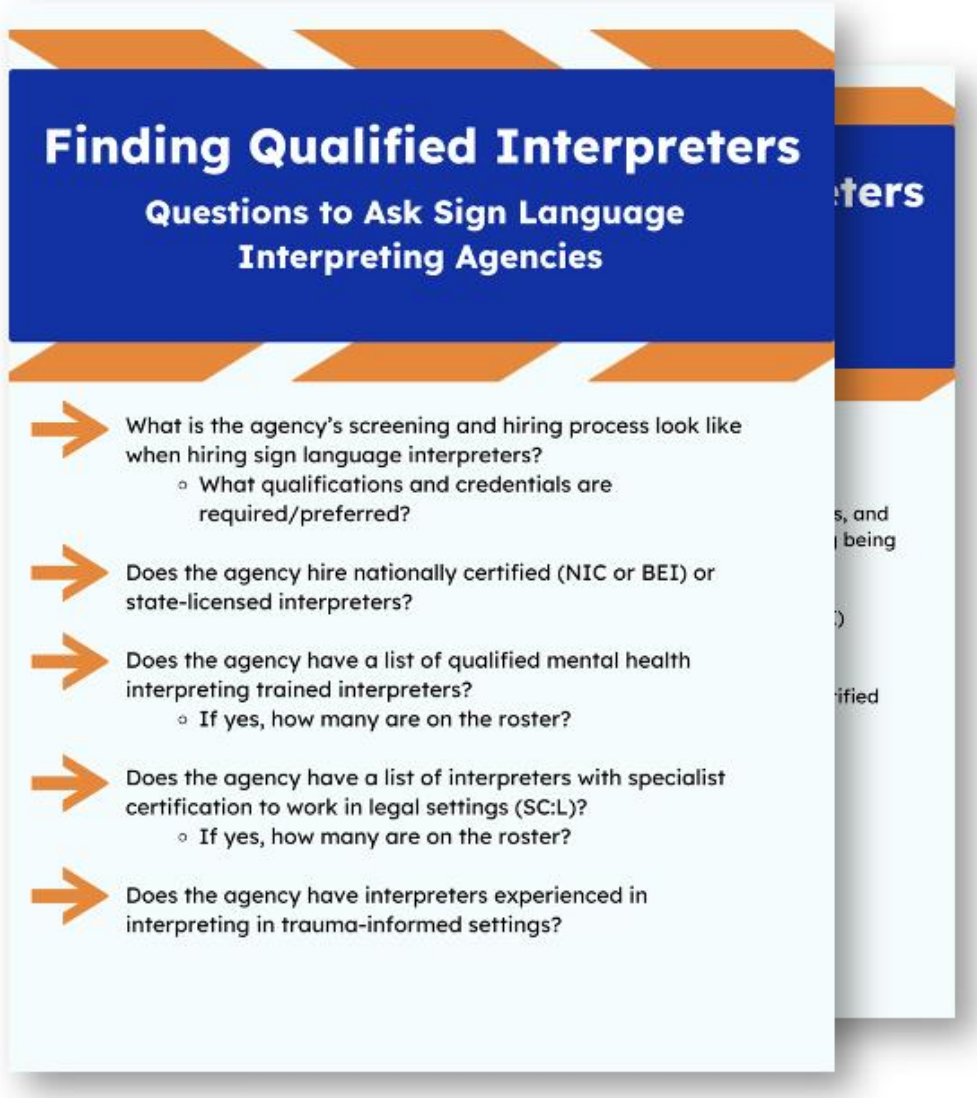
- What services does your organization offer?
- Any and all services you offer to hearing survivors must be made accessible to Deaf survivors
- What does this mean for your organization?

Step 4: Evaluate and Expand Your Deaf Language Access Capacity

- What do you currently have set in place for communicating with Deaf survivors?
  - ASL Interpreting
    - Interpreting agencies
    - Contracts with individual interpreters (hearing and Deaf)
    - Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)
  - Captioning educational videos, website announcements

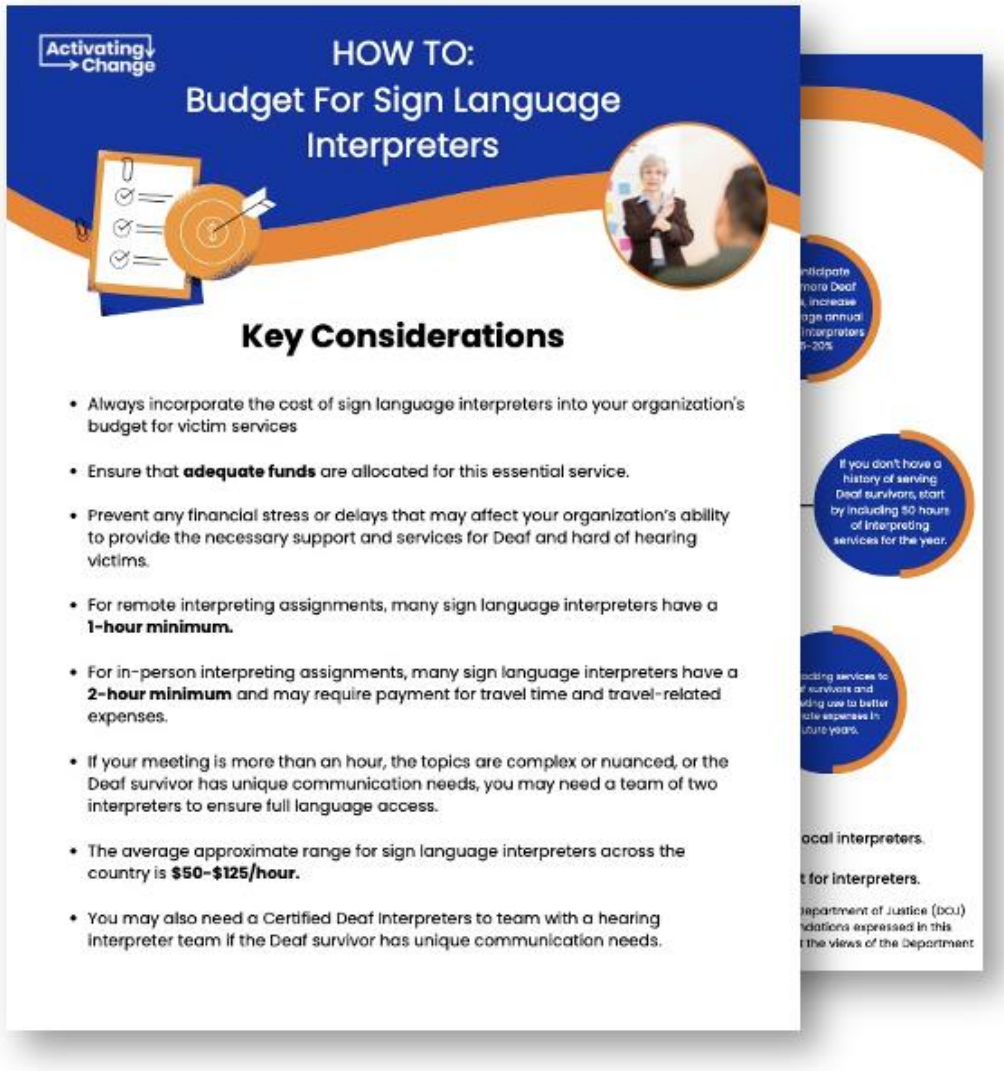
Finding Interpreters

- What is the agency's screening and hiring process look like when hiring sign language interpreters?
- Does the agency have a list of Deaf Interpreters/Certified Deaf Interpreters?
- Does the agency hire nationally certified (NIC or BEI) or state-licensed interpreters?



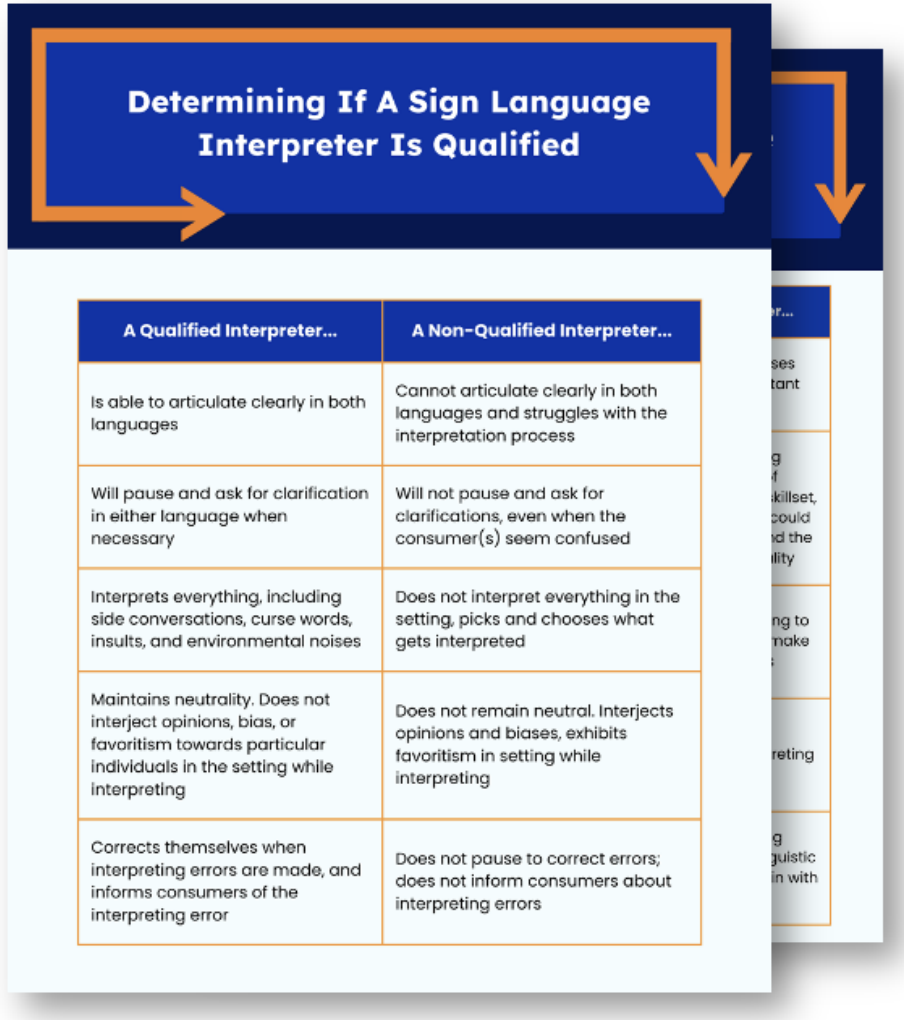
Step 5: Evaluate Your Budget

- What is your current budget?
  - Are there unmet needs?
  - If you don't currently have money in your budget allocated for language access for Deaf people, start with planning for 50 hours of interpreting services *
  - A qualified interpreter is often between $50-$125/hour



Step 6: Assess Needs

- Review accessibility within your environment to identify barriers for Deaf people; create plans to avoid them
- Establish agreements with interpreter agencies to ensure qualified, trauma-informed interpreters are available
  - Connect with your local Deaf community & Activating Change to help find quality local interpreting agencies



Determining If A Sign Language Interpreter Is Qualified

A Qualified Interpreter...	A Non-Qualified Interpreter...
Is able to articulate clearly in both languages	Cannot articulate clearly in both languages and struggles with the interpretation process
Will pause and ask for clarification in either language when necessary	Will not pause and ask for clarifications, even when the consumer(s) seem confused
Interprets everything, including side conversations, curse words, insults, and environmental noises	Does not interpret everything in the setting, picks and chooses what gets interpreted
Maintains neutrality. Does not interject opinions, bias, or favoritism towards particular individuals in the setting while interpreting	Does not remain neutral. Interjects opinions and biases, exhibits favoritism in setting while interpreting
Corrects themselves when interpreting errors are made, and informs consumers of the interpreting error	Does not pause to correct errors; does not inform consumers about interpreting errors

Step 7: Prepare to Support Staff

- What level of training is required for different types of employees? Consider their role and the level of contact they will have with Deaf survivors
- What tools and resources can your organization make available to make it easier to provide ongoing language access?

Step 8: Plan to Monitor and Adapt

- All plans for language access must be monitored regularly for quality control
- Organizations should develop a plan for how to monitor their services; how well they are meeting the language access needs for the Deaf individuals served

Language Access Planning

Now you’re ready to create your plan!

Language Access Plan Template

- Budgeting
- Services and Protocol
- Staff and Training
- Next Steps

Adopting and Implementing Your Plan

- Now that you have your language access plan for Deaf people:
  - Adopt and implement your plan
  - Train your organization
  - Share with your service provider community
  - Conduct outreach within your local Deaf community

Best Practices *For Enhancing Your Capacity, Eliminating Barriers, and Reducing Harm*

Collaboration

- Build relationships with Deaf organizations and the Deaf community in your service area, including planned outreach and engagement events
  - Attend local Deaf community events
  - Invite the local Deaf community to your events
  - Reach out to local Deaf organizations for potential partnerships
- Work with members of the Deaf community to educate staff on the local Deaf community and culture, and domestic and sexual violence against Deaf people
  - Invite Deaf community members and educators to your organization to provide trainings

Understanding Audism

- Explore the role of **audism** in the barriers Deaf survivors face, and engage in a process of becoming hearing allies to the Deaf community
  - This will build from your new relationships with the Deaf organizations in your community
    - Receive their guidance, remain open to learning about how audism creates harm in our society

Key Takeaways

Capacity Building

- → Draft a language access plan tailored to your current/prospective needs
- → Increasing capacity to serve Deaf survivors via language access = creating a supportive space for Deaf people

Questions?

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