

METROPOLITAN



R E G I O N A L  
A R T S C O U N C I L



## **Working with American Sign Language/ English Interpreters in Performing Arts**

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MN Relay Service 1-800-627-3529

This information can be made available in the following alternative formats: Braille, large print, audio tape and computer disk. We also can help your group find a language interpreter to translate these guidelines. To accommodate your request, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council will need at least 10 working days.

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# INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! By deciding to offer an ASL interpreted performance, you have taken an important step toward ensuring that a larger portion of your potential audience has access to your arts program.

Outlined in the following pages is a planning process to guide you in providing an American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreter for artists and audience members who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing.

This guide was written primarily for arts organizations who plan to incorporate this service into their arts programming on a regular basis. However, if you are using this guide in response to an immediate access request, read through all the material paying special attention to points highlighted with the ▲ symbol.

Many people in the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community communicate through American Sign Language, a system of gestures, hand signs, and finger spelling. In fact, ASL is probably the fourth most widely used language in the country.

Planning ahead and consistently providing this service allows you to increase the size of your audience by developing and strengthening a relationship between your organization the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

It is also one way to comply with the program accessibility requirements of the 1992 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Program accessibility refers to services that enable artists and audience members with disabilities to enjoy a performance on the same aesthetic level as those who are not disabled.

## **How to Use this Guide**

Designed as both a planning and implementation tool to help you improve the accessibility of your programming, this guide is geared to small and mid-sized arts organizations. It can be adapted for use in any artistic medium including, but not limited to, dance, music, theatre, visual arts and outdoor arts events.

The step-by-step approach to providing a performance with ASL interpretation includes advice for your production manager and stage manager.

In the guide you will also find:

- Sources to help you locate an ASL interpreter.
- A list of local and national organizations and publications serving people with disabilities that can help you plan and/or publicize your arts event.

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# Planning Ahead

## **Develop public relations/outreach strategies.**

- It takes time to develop relationships in the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community. A consistent and thoughtful approach is necessary to building an audience.
- Outreach should be done by you, not the interpreter. You'll get the best results by involving Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons in the planning process.
- To gather outreach strategies, contact organizations with experience offering interpreted performances. [See Resources]
- Target advertising efforts to organizations and publications that work specifically with Deaf and hard-of-hearing people.
- Publications for this audience should include a map to the theater, the symbol for interpreted performances, names of the interpreters, if possible, and a TTY number for purchasing tickets. If you do not have TTY communication equipment, include the number for the Minnesota Relay Service (1-800-627-3529).
- Word of mouth is often the best way to get information to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Do not underestimate the power of this approach!
- Make sure everyone in your organization understands why these accommodations are being made.

## **Select date(s) of interpreted performance.**

- If you plan to offer a limited number of interpreted performances, choose dates later in the run of the event so the interpreter has time to rehearse.
- If you offer interpreted performances for each event in your season, determine all dates before the season begins and announce them in all publications.

## **▲ Determine number of interpreters needed.**

- The general practice is to use 1– 2 interpreters per event. This should be decided by you and the interpreter(s).
- Considerations: length of the event, complexity of text and number of performers.

## **▲ Hire interpreter(s). [See Resources]**

- Fees range from \$25 to \$50 per hour and are based on the following: qualifications of interpreter, length of scheduled event, date/time of scheduled event. The total price involves a negotiation process unique to your situation. Discounts are often given to non-profit organizations.

Evaluate the interpreter's qualifications by considering:

- Years of interpreting experience.
- Experience interpreting in performing arts.
- Certification from the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) or the National Association of the Deaf (NAD).
- References provided by the interpreter from other arts organizations the interpreter has worked with.
- Focus of your event. For example, if your production addresses a particular ethnic or religious group, it may be of value to hire an interpreter representing that group.

**Ensure access to box office.**

- Your box office should be accessible so that Deaf and hard-of-hearing people can call to make reservations. Using a TTY allows you to communicate written words through your phone lines. If you do not own a TTY, the Minnesota Relay Service will act as a third party. There is no charge for this service.
- Post an interpreter symbol in the window to inform people that interpreters are available.

**Secure volunteer interpreters.**

- ASL Students from local colleges are often willing to volunteer their services, or ask your Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons to offer recommendations.
- Ideally, two volunteer interpreters are needed for each interpreted event: one to interpret interactions at the box office and one to work with the ushers, interpreting questions and showing Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons to their seats. They will also work with the ushers during intermission and can interpret any pre- and post-event announcements.
- These interpreters should be compensated with complimentary tickets.

**Make programs accessible. [See Resources]**

Your printed program should include the following:

- A listing of interpreted events.
- An acknowledgment of the interpreter(s), with a short biography for each.
- An explanation of any specialized signs or name signs that will be used by the interpreter during the performance.

# Interpreter Logistics

Prepare both the interpreter and your organization for the interpreted performance. You may wish to duplicate this checklist for your stage manager.

## ▲ **Ensure that interpreter has adequate time to prepare.**

Interpreters will need:

- The text at least 3 – 4 weeks before opening.
- Access to rehearsals, performances and audiotapes or videotapes of the event (if available) to rehearse.
- Access to the director, assistant director, participants or stage manager for translation clarification and consultation.

NOTE: The interpreters' need to attend a non-interpreted event prior to the interpreted event may vary depending upon their approach to the event and access to other rehearsal materials, e.g. tapes. Generally speaking, an interpreter may want to sit in the event space and watch the event 2 – 4 times in addition to attending rehearsals and rehearsing backstage during any non-interpreted events.

## ▲ **Determine where the interpreter will be placed and where Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons will be seated.**

In consultation with the interpreter and, if possible, a deaf patron, decide:

- Where the interpreter(s) will be placed. They should be placed as close to the action as possible, with consideration given to sightlines from the area reserved for Deaf patrons.
- What seats will be reserved for Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons.
- Whether interpreter(s) will sit or stand. If sitting, what type of stool works best.

## ▲ **Determine how interpreter will be costumed.**

- Interpreters customarily wear appropriate street clothing when interpreting a show. You may, however, choose to costume the interpreter so that the interpreter matches the overall picture. A solid-color top that contrasts with the interpreter's skin tone is required. The style may match that of the costumes.

## ▲ **Provide appropriate lighting for interpreter.**

- Two lights, cross-focused from above, are better than one. They should have a dim/bright limit and black out at the end of each act.
- If there are lines in the text that are delivered in the dark, interpreter lighting should be brought to a level so that Deaf audience members can see the interpretation.
- The space to be occupied by the interpreter may need to be delineated by glow tape.

## ▲ **See to stage management details.**

- Inform participants in your organization of the interpreted event and interpreter placement.
- Plan exits and entrances with the interpreter before the event.
- Provide space in a dressing room where the interpreter can prepare for the event.
- The interpreter may need to check valuables with you.
- Make sure the interpreter gets calls (e.g. 30 minutes, 15 minutes, etc.) before the start of the event.
- It is recommended that the participants in your event acknowledge the interpreter(s) during a curtain call. If you wish to do this, be sure to make the participants and interpreter(s) aware of how this will be handled.

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# Resources

## ▲ Local Resources

These organizations are experienced in planning ASL interpreted events and can help you build outreach strategies.

**CSD (Communication Services for the Deaf)**  
2055 Rice Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-297-6700 v/TTY  
651-297-6766 fax  
1-877-456-7589 v/TTY  
interpreting@csd-mn.org

**Guthrie Theater**  
725 Vineland Place  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
Pam Truesdell, 612-347-1108 v

**Metro Regional Service Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (RSC)**  
130 East Seventh Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-297-1316 v  
651-297-1313 TTY  
651-215-6388 fax

**SLICES**  
Sign Language Interpretation,  
Consultation & Education  
Services, LLC  
14649 Hanover Lane  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
612-827-1885 v  
952-953-6043 TTY/fax  
paula@slicesweb.com

**VSA arts of Minnesota**  
Access to Theatre Program  
528 Hennepin Avenue, Suite 305  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
Jon Skaalen, 612-332-3888 v/TTY  
612-305-0132 fax  
jon.mn@vsarts.org

## ▲ Finding Interpreters

These organizations can help you find and schedule an interpreter. (listed in alphabetical order)

**All Hands Interpreting Service**  
8327 Harriet Avenue South  
Bloomington, MN 55420  
612-242-5122 v  
952-888-3461 TTY/fax  
ahis.suejub@gateway.net

**ASL Interpreting Services (Dynamic Communications)**  
6517 Hunter Road  
Corcoran, MN 55340-9632  
763-478-8963 v  
763-478-3093 TTY/fax  
pam@aslis.com

**Metro Interpreter Connection**  
785 Vicky Lane  
Lino Lakes, MN 55014-1122  
651-784-2526 v/TTY  
651-784-2527 fax  
micreferrals@aol.com

VSA (see above)

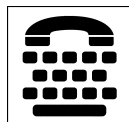
CSD (see above)

## ▲ Accessibility Symbols

These symbols may be used in press releases, brochures, signs, forms, maps, floorplans, advertisements and newsletters. To obtain electronically generated copies of these and other symbols related to access, along with a brochure that explains how to use the graphics effectively, send \$12.95 plus \$3.50 shipping and handling to Graphics Arts Guild Foundation, 90 John Street, Ste. 403, New York, NY 10038-3202. Specify a PC or MAC disk. You can also download the symbols from their website at [www.gag.org/das](http://www.gag.org/das).



Interpreting



TTY/TDD



Questions?