



# Tips for Working with Interpreters

Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons

3951 Pender Drive, Suite 130 • Fairfax, VA 22030

703-352-9055(v) • 703-352-9056 (tty) • 703-352-9058 (fax)

[www.nvrc.org](http://www.nvrc.org)

## Visual Considerations

- ❖ **Assist the interpreters in positioning themselves close to the speaker or visual presentation.** If the people using the interpreter have both the presenter and the interpreter in view, they get more information than if they must glance back and forth between the two. Often this means positioning a chair close to the presenter or facilitator. Make sure not to stand between the interpreter and the deaf or hard of hearing individuals.
- ❖ **Be aware of lighting.** Avoid standing in front of windows as backlighting glare interferes with sight. If a slide show or video is used, leave an area lighted near the screen so the deaf participants can see the interpreter. This allows the dialogue and the visual presentation to be seen by the deaf participants.
- ❖ **Get everyone's attention before demonstrating.** This may take a moment as interpreting requires extra time for processing information and rendering a translation. Once the information has been relayed, then the deaf participants are able to fully attend to the speaker's demonstration.
- ❖ **Employ good turn-taking procedures.** In group situations, turn-taking must be handled properly to ensure that deaf participants have equal opportunity to offer comments or ask questions, and receive comments from others. Ask everyone in the group speak or sign one person at a time. Remember, the interpreter is only able to relay comments from one person at any moment.

## Communication Considerations

- ❖ **Direct your remarks to the deaf person rather than the interpreter.** Making eye contact with the deaf person and speaking in the first person shows respect. The deaf person will be watching the interpreter while glancing back and forth between the speaker and the interpreter.
- ❖ **Speak at your natural pace.** Be aware that the interpreter may wait to hear and understand a complete thought before beginning the interpreting process. The interpreter will advise the speaker if they need information repeated or if the pace is too fast to follow.
- ❖ **Make the best use of handouts.** Before the meeting, provide the interpreters with any materials that will be used such as outlines, agendas, and a list of all the key participants if possible. For larger meetings, it is helpful to the interpreters for the participants to use name tags as it helps identify who is speaking.
- ❖ **Relax.** Clear communication is mostly common sense. If you are unsure whether the communication is working, ask the deaf people.