



Remote Interpreting Services

Remote sign language interpreting services refers to circumstances where the interpreter and the consumer(s) are in different locations. Remote services can be provided using agencies or independent contractors through high speed internet, software, or web-based platforms, along with various devices or equipment appropriate for the service. The interpreter has access to the audio content as well as a view of the consumer simultaneously. There are a variety of systems that allow the consumers to use any portable device that can connect to the Internet such as laptops, tablets, or smartphones.

Remote access services are a viable option for many institutions under the right circumstances. Remote interpreting may be a solution to resolve provider shortages, fill niche needs, effectively allocate financial resources, or ensure consistent services. While remote services may appear convenient, careful consideration of the consumer, entity's capacity to provide services, and the circumstance requiring access is important to implement effective services. The underlying goal is to provide quality, sustainable services.

Remote services are an option, but may not be effective in all circumstances. Factors to take into consideration include but are not limited to: consumer readiness, accessible internet connection, availability of equipment, and whether remote services are feasible in the situation. An interactive dialogue with the consumer about their communication preference, strategies, and subjective experience is important.

Key Considerations

Legal Framework

There are several key standards by which one would want to heed when employing remote services. Regardless of the modality by which access services are provided, the deaf individual must be able to "receive information from, and convey information, to the covered entity¹." The Department of Justice (2010), Revised ADA Requirements: Effective Communication, document outlines:

- Standards for effective communication
- Requirements for qualified interpreters
- Minimum technical standards for entities considering remote services

Setting

An assessment of the circumstance in which access services are requested will assist in determining the feasibility of employing remote services. Gathering information on the type of circumstance (meeting, class, presentation), location (on site, off site, online, room setup, room acoustics), number of participants, format (lecture, 1:1 meeting, group activity), and staff training needs will offer perspective on the amount of planning needed to ensure services are implemented appropriately and effectively.

Consumer

Ascertain and assess the experience of the consumer(s), meaning the deaf and/or hearing individuals using the services. If a consumer is new to using remote services, then an opportunity for training is important. All users should be familiarized with the service, equipment, what to expect, and how to navigate challenges. Consider the following approaches:

- Provide an opportunity for an orientation and demonstration of the service
- Identify opportunities to discuss what remote services will look like in the setting and the roles of individuals involved in the process
- Provide resources or materials that outline responsibilities, logistics, and procedures
- Discuss basic technical issues, troubleshooting strategies, and suggestions solutions
- Offer tips to ensure effective use of remote services

Evaluating Services

Evaluating services can provide insight before, during, and after services are rendered. It is recommended to have a systematic process in place for obtaining and responding to feedback and concerns of access services. This process should also include steps which will address how substitutions and replacements will be handled along with anticipated timelines for responding to complaints or issues. Having this process formalized can ensure effective communication access.

Tips

- Anticipating challenges and preparing protocols for solutions can limit lapses in communication and reduce stress while mitigating problems.
- In the event technical difficulties are encountered while utilizing remote services, there should be a backup plan to ensure limited or minimal lapse in service.
- Schedule periodic meetings to review effectiveness of remote services, if possible.

Additional Resources

- NDC - Effective Communication. www.nationaldeafcenter.org/effectivecomm
- DOJ and DOE - Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students with Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/doe-doj-eff-comm-faqs.pdf>
- DOJ - Effective Communication. <https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>
- NIEC - Preparing Interpreters for Tomorrow: Report on a Study of Emerging Trends in Interpreting and Implications for Interpreter Education. Retrieved from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3DKvZMfIFLdU0o1M1JYR0ITczQ/view>
- RID - Standard Practice Paper: Video Remote Interpreting. Retrieved from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3DKvZMfIFLdTkk4QnM3T1JRR1U/view>

References

1. U.S. Department of Justice, Revised ADA Requirements: Effective Communication: <https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>

