

Best Practices in Access:



NDC
National Deaf Center
on Postsecondary Outcomes

Video Remote Interpreting



Video remote interpreting (VRI) is a fee-based service that delivers interpreting services, often on demand, through a web-based platform on a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone.

VRI can be used effectively to

- fulfill last-minute, urgent requests for an interpreter;
- offer interpreting in the absence of in-person interpreters, especially in rural areas;
- provide interpreters with specific skill sets (e.g., deaf interpreters, trilingual interpreters); or
- meet a deaf person's communication preferences.

What standards must be met for VRI?

VRI must meet the following standards, which are described in the Department of Justice's Guidelines on ADA Requirements: Effective Communication ([ada.gov/effective-comm.htm](https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm)):

- “Real-time, full-motion video and audio over a dedicated high-speed, wide-bandwidth video connection or wireless connection that delivers high-quality video images that do not produce lags, choppy, blurry, or grainy images, or irregular pauses in communication;
- a sharply delineated image that is large enough to display the interpreter's face, arms, hands, and fingers, and the face, arms, hands, and fingers of the person using sign language, regardless of his or her body position;
- a clear, audible transmission of voices; and
- adequate staff training to ensure quick set-up and proper operation.”

Considerations

Arranging for VRI services requires careful consideration and planning. Discuss effective communication preferences, strategies, and experiences with the deaf person to help determine whether VRI is appropriate. Some deaf people, for example, may not be comfortable with or want to use VRI. Furthermore, VRI may not be a good fit in all settings, such as hands-on learning and lab environments.

To determine whether VRI services will be effective, discuss the following:

Technical Skills

VRI training and extra support may be needed to ensure that all parties can connect and resolve technical issues.

- Are the instructors, staff members, and the deaf person familiar with VRI services and able to resolve minor issues? Who can be contacted if further support is needed?
- Is the instructor aware of how to pin or spotlight the interpreter on the video conferencing platform (if available)?



Communication Preferences

Ensure that the deaf person and interpreter can discuss communication strategies with each other before, during, and after the session.

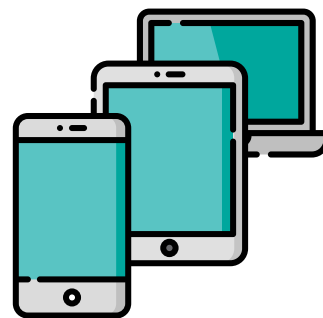
- How will the deaf person prefer to ask questions or reply to discussions? Will they use American Sign Language, speak for themselves, or type a reply and ask the interpreter to voice what they typed?



Equipment

A deaf individual may want to use a personal laptop or tablet to take notes or reference materials and will therefore need an additional device for VRI. When equipment is needed, consider the following:

- Be prepared to lend equipment (e.g., laptops, tablets, microphones, headphones) to deaf people and interpreters. Think about who would be responsible for setting up the equipment.
- Regularly check equipment to verify that it is in good condition (e.g., batteries can hold a charge and cords are not frayed or broken).
- Ensure that the deaf person has access to a webcam (built in to the device or plugged in separately), if necessary.
- Most laptops pick up audio from the front of the screen, which can limit access to multiple speakers in a room. Provide additional microphones that can be placed appropriately throughout the room to pick up audio from various participants.



Internet Connection

Use the best possible broadband connection with optimal upload and download speeds (VRI requires a much faster internet connection and larger bandwidth than typical online courses). If possible, plug an Ethernet cord directly into equipment for a stable connection.

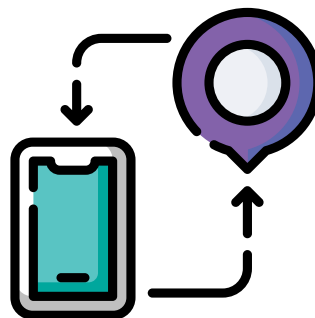
- Do the interpreter(s) and deaf person have access to reliable, high-speed internet with enough bandwidth for clear, uninterrupted video?
- Discuss a backup plan in case of technology glitches, poor internet connection, or other issues affecting video clarity.
- Contact your IT department if you need a personal hotspot or help troubleshooting issues.



Logistics

Share the logistics in advance to ensure the deaf person and interpreter have access to all information being presented.

- What is the nature of the event (e.g., meeting, group discussion, lecture- or lab-based course)?
- Will the event have visual components, such as slides, videos, or writing on the board? How many people will attend?



Preparation

Provide interpreters with access to any learning management software and course materials before each class to save time and create a better experience for the student, instructor, and interpreter.

- Proactively identify potential barriers, troubleshoot, and develop solutions before class in a fully remote setting.
- Can a practice session be coordinated in advance to test various features and ensure that any problems are addressed in advance?



In the right settings, VRI can be an effective accommodation. Evaluate the quality of VRI services by checking in with all parties regularly, especially with the deaf person, to ensure equitable access.

VRI Is Not VRS

VRI and video relay services (VRS) are similar but are used in different circumstances. VRS is a form of telecommunication services, which is governed and paid for by the FCC, that provides interpreters for deaf and hearing people to communicate over the phone. On the other hand, VRI is a way to access an interpreter remotely for any other situation. VRS should not be substituted for VRI.

VRI is used in a variety of settings, such as one-on-one appointments, group meetings, academic classes, campus events, virtual learning, presentations, and conferences. VRI services can be provided through an in-house staff member, an individual freelancer, or an agency contractor.

Additional Resources

Equitable Access Guide: Understanding Legal Responsibilities for Institutions
nationaldeafcenter.org/eag

Hiring Qualified Sign Language Interpreters
nationaldeafcenter.org/hiringsli

Best Practices in Access: Deaf Interpreters
nationaldeafcenter.org/deafinterpreters

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf: Standard Practice Paper: Video Remote Interpreting
drive.google.com/file/d/0B3DKvZMfFLdTk4QnM3T1JRR1U/view

Your Questions, Answered: Interpreting
nationaldeafcenter.org/covid19faqs#interpreting

National Association of the Deaf on VRI
nad.org/resources/technology/video-remote-interpreting

Telecommunications: VRS, VRI, and TRS
nationaldeafcenter.org/tcservices

Tips for Instructors: Teaching Deaf Students Online:
nationaldeafcenter.org/teachingonline

Making Online Learning Accessible for Deaf Students: A Guide for Disability Services
nationaldeafcenter.org/DSSOnlineTeaching



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