

The Sign Post

Newsletter for the Central California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf



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Developing a Positive Relationship With Your Agency

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As a representative from an interpreting agency, I am well aware that many interpreters have complaints about the agencies with which they subcontract. This came to the forefront of my mind when I was in a workshop at an RID conference and someone complained to the presenter about their interpreting agency. The savvy presenter responded, "Have you told them what you need in order to successfully do your job?" The complainer was silenced and I did a mental fist-pump - yes! Then I started thinking about what their complaint represented: a need for improvement. The more I pondered the presenter's statement the more I realized that the reverse was also true - we as agencies should be clearer about what we need in order to successfully do *our* job. With this concept in mind, my aim is to provide tips so that both the interpreter and agency can have a positive and successful working relationship.

Express Yourself

Be explicit about the types of work you can and can not do. Let your agency know if you do not want to work in specific settings, have a conflict with or are not a good match with a client, if there are interpreters you prefer to (or not to) team with, and/or if you have specific areas of expertise which could lend itself to certain jobs. Also, be aware of your own limitations and make sure they are known by the agency coordinator. In general, the more the agency is aware of your specific skill sets the better able they are to provide you with assignments for which you are suitable.

Keep the agency coordinator up to date with your availability. This will save both you and the agency time because they will already know when you might be able to interpret and therefore will not be contacting you needlessly. Plus, the more you are on the coordinator's radar, the more inclined they will be to call you for those last minute requests.

Information is Key

Ask the right questions to get the information you need in order to do your job. Ideally, the interpreter coordinator with whom you work will get adequate information for you, but if they do not, take the initiative to do what you need to do in order to be properly prepared. If you are not getting your questions answered, be proactive - call the contact person at the job site, do research on your own related to the subject of the assignment, or do a Google™ search. At the same time, understand that there are times when the coordinator is simply unable to get more information out of the requestor. It is the nature of interpreting that from time to time you will have to go into a situation blindly for whatever reason, so do what you can to prepare yourself for the unexpected. Pre-assignment prep work is not just for interpreting students!

Get into the habit of reporting back about any special needs that you encounter in your assignments which may impact the choice of interpreters for future assignments with this client. This could include information about a client themselves, such as specific language needs/idiosyncratic linguistic tendencies or data that will help the next interpreter find the assignment. Most importantly, you should report to the agency if you have an exceptional rapport with the client and they request that you attend future appointments, or conversely if you do not mesh well with a client.

Let the Agency Do Their Job

Be mindful of the impulse to try to coordinate interpreting services for the agency, no matter how good your intentions may be. Sure, it is nice when you get to work with your favorite team interpreter and it is appropriate to indicate your preference to the coordinator. In most cases, however, it is not appropriate for you to get in touch with your preferred



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Leadership Meetings are open to all CCRID members. See the calendar at our website for date, time and place.

Contact ccrid@ccrid.org with any questions regarding meetings.

The Sign Post is prepared quarterly. Please send ideas, items or information for announcements to newsletter editor Shannon M. Simonelli at ccrid@ccrid.org one month prior to publication date.

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team interpreter directly to see if she can team with you, then to call up the coordinator and tell them that she will do the job. You may be well-meaning, but you are not always in a position to see possible negative ramifications of your actions. Potential issues could include, but are not limited to, interpreter preference of the consumer (deaf or hearing), billing/accounting issues between the interpreter and agency, or agency agreements with other interpreter, not to mention the ramifications it may have in consideration to confidentiality. What may seem straightforward to you could actually be putting your agency coordinator in an awkward position.

Have a Little Grace

While every interpreter is valued, she is not the only person that a coordinator deals with on a regular basis. Bear in mind that the agency coordinator

is juggling the requests from countless vendors and multiple interpreters' schedules simultaneously. When something falls through the cracks (and it will inevitably happen) let it be known to the agency coordinator, yet be gracious. She, like you, is only human!

From an Agency Perspective

As a coordinator, I am aware that many interpreters schedule with multiple employers, so it is important for me to respond to you quickly and succinctly - your time is precious! I also know that the quality of the information given to you will affect your ability to provide a successful interpretation. When assigning jobs it is important that favoritism be avoided—a personal relationship with another interpreter is never the deciding factor for assigning jobs, rather,

both interpreter availability and consumer compatibility are considered. Additionally, I accept responsibility for the actions of the interpreters with whom I contract and make every effort to be accountable for my own mistakes, such as scheduling errors or mishaps on assignment, when they occur.

At the core of a good experience between an agency and interpreter is the relationship. This may sound like common sense (and really, in a way it is), yet the relationship, whether good or bad, will make an impact on how much an interpreter works or how much interpreters will want to work with an agency. Make every effort to cultivate the best and most positive working relationship and you will reap the rewards.



CHALLENGE

How would you sign This ASL Joke?

The following excerpt is from "Deaf Culture: Our Way" by Roy, Samuel, & Thomas Holcomb.

A lumberjack was busy working in the forest, chipping down trees. A responsible lumberjack, he would yell, "Timber" each time a tree was felled. One day, He came upon a tree that would not fall, no matter how hard he chopped or how loudly he yelled. After consulting with his fellow lumberjacks, he decided to call a tree doctor. When the tree doctor examined the tree, his diagnosis was that the tree was deaf and could not hear the signal, "Timber." The prescription was for the lumberjack to learn the manual alphabet. He mastered the alphabet and fingerspelled T I M B E R to the tree. Lo and behold, the tree began to fall.



What would you do in each situation below?

Discuss the conflicts, decisions you would make, and the possible long and short term outcomes. Scenarios are from "Encounters with Reality" by Brenda E. Cartwright (first edition).

- You're voicing for a Deaf person making a presentation to a large audience. It's not possible to get the Deaf speaker to stop in this situation, but you have just missed a sign. The first time the speaker uses the sign, you just work around it. But then it comes up several more times, and even with the context, nothing comes to mind that fits.
- Your uncle is the pastor of the church you have attended for years. The church has a nationally certified interpreter come in every week to interpret the service. You have just graduated from an ITP program and your uncle wants you to take over interpreting his sermons in order to save money.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stepping Up

CCRID Members who have passed an interpreting assessment or certification test:

- Alisha Bravo, EIPA
- Renee Bisnett, Ed:K-12
- Suzanne Conway, Ed:K-12



Cherished Tidings

CCRID members who have had life-changing events. No Cherished Tidings were submitted.

All names included with expressed permission.

EVENTS

October

1, 6:30pm –830pm Interpreter/????: *Defining the Changing Role of Educational Interpreting*, The Tower, 205 E. Riverpark Circle, Fresno, CA

9, 9am—11am, Terp Time, Professional Development: **NIC**

Interview Practice using the Austin Andrews Method, DHHSC—Fresno

10, 2pm—4pm, *Leadership Meeting*; Suzanne Conway's residence, Fresno email ccrid@ccrid.org for directions

November

6, 9am—4pm *Classifiers & Cinematographic Techniques for Interpreters* with David Nathanson DHHSC—Fresno

14, 2pm—4pm, *Leadership Meeting*; Suzanne Conway's residence, Fresno email ccrid@ccrid.org for directions

December

No Activities planned

For details and event fliers go to the calendar listed at www.ccrd.org