How to Work With a Sign Language Interpreter

Prep Material

Any material you have (e.g., presentations, agenda, notes) makes the interpreting process smoother. The more time the interpreter has to prepare, the more efficient the interpretation will be. Everything is safe; material provided to the interpreter will be destroyed after use.

Placement, Tools, & Equipment

When the interpreter works from English to ASL, the interpreter needs to be seen. Likewise, the interpreter needs to be heard when they work from ASL to English. Ensure you provide the interpreter(s) with adequate placement and equipment to be seen and heard by the participants in their preferred language.

Clarity & Confidentiality

An interpreter's main goal is to facilitate communication. Everything that is said will be interpreted faithfully and accurately. If they do not understand something (e.g., a name, jargon, implied meaning of a phrase), they will ask for clarification. Everything is held in the utmost confidence.

Interacting with the Interpreter

It is natural to want to ask the interpreter questions about the process or include them in the conversation. While working, they are focusing on facilitating the interaction, not as a participant of it. Before or after the appointment is the best time to direct anything to the interpreter.

Unsure of something? Just ask.

Communicating through an interpreter should be easy and comfortable. This includes being able to ask questions about the process. At any point, you can ask for advice and to guide you on best practices. You can ask the D/deaf person(s), agency, the interpreter, or check out some online guides.

Relax. Be yourself.

Speak at a regular pace, use words you normally would. Avoid phrases such as "Tell her," or "Explain to him." Speak in first person, just like you are having a conversation using the same language as each other, as if there is no interpreter.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?
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