

Agency of Human Services

American Sign Language Interpreter Contract

Navigating the procurement of interpreters for Deaf Vermonters for state agencies.

The Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS) can be reached at 1-800-639-1519 or email: virs@sover.net

What is the cost? Certified Interpreters are self-employed for a living. The AHS contract has a rate schedule of payment based on years of experience, hourly fees and travel time to/from the job site. The contract is also in agreement with the office of Vocational Rehabilitation, who monitor the contract, and the Vermont Registry of Interpreters. It is the responsibility of the state agency or department to pay for the service and the finders' fee VIRS charges for their service, \$40 for one Interpreter, or \$80 if two Interpreters are needed. The Deaf consumer does not pay for VIRS fees or the Interpreters, the hiring entity does.

Questions/Help: For assistance or clarification around hiring Interpreters or how to use the Interpreter in your meetings, please contact Bill Hudson, DAIL Coordinator for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services: bill.hudson@vermont.gov, 802-881-0125. Other questions regarding the contract contents, please contact Nichole Jolly, the VocRehab Administrative Assistant: Nichole.jolly@vermont.gov, 802-241-0327 to help direct you to the appropriate staff.

Why are we doing this? Have you or your staff had a Deaf person show up requesting information? Received or needed to make a phone call to a Deaf person? Had a Deaf person request an interpreter at your office? How did you and your staff handle these situations?

The interpreter contract provides a statewide listing of certified Interpreters who are in agreement of doing work for any state department within the agency.

All Interpreters on the contract are nationally certified and freelance/self-employed so they are hired for many interpreting jobs outside state government as well. Because American Sign Language is the primary mode of communication for Deaf people, it is very ideal to have a "communicator link" between you, as the non-signer, and the Deaf person in order to have a communication dialogue. Think about it, if a person who only spoke French or Spanish came into your department for services, you would need to hire an interpreter speaking their language, right? Same concept!

American Sign Language is a language of its own. It is not universal and is not based on English and is not a sign for word language. It has its own linguistic norms, values and structure. American Sign Language among the Deaf community brings a strong culture component and cohesiveness.

Why provide Interpreters? Ease, less burden on you and the Deaf person, convenience, peace of mind, communication accuracy.

Why does the state contract only include Nationally Credentialed Interpreters?

Interpreters who are Nationally Certified are bound by a Code of Professional Conduct. Some of the Tenets of this Code include neutrality, accepting work with discretion, and confidentiality. Hiring a credentialed Interpreter ensures an accurate Interpretation. Departments should refrain from the use of family members/friends to interpret the appointment. Not only could this lead to miscommunication but could also be a legal issue as a result. To learn about the Code of Professional Conduct for interpreters co-authored by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), visit the [RID website](https://rid.org/ethics/code-of-professional-conduct/) (https://rid.org/ethics/code-of-professional-conduct/).

And, it is the law! The Americans with Disabilities Act requires all state government services to be accessible.

This is stated under Title II: state government: Integration of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of society is fundamental to the purposes of the Americans with Disabilities act. May not refuse to allow a person with a disability to participate in a service, program, or activity simply because the person has a disability. To ensure that communications with individuals with hearing, vision, or speech impairments are as effective as communications with others, the public entity must provide appropriate auxiliary aids.

Under Title II public access: Places of public accommodation include private establishments such as restaurants, hotels, theatres, convention centers, retail stores, shopping centers, dry cleaners, laundromats, pharmacies, doctor's offices, hospitals, museums, libraries, parks, zoos, amusement parks, private schools, day care centers, health spas and bowling alleys. A public accommodation must make reasonable modifications in its policies, practice, and procedures in order to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Steps to hiring the interpreter(s): The contract works with the Vermont Interpreter Referral Service (VIRS) to secure Interpreter(s) at your convenience. You may call VIRS directly. Please have ready the Deaf person's name, the names of other participants and the reason for the appointment. This information is helpful in finding a good Interpreter match and availability. It is helpful if there can be more flexibility on the appointment dates/times, if possible.

To procure an Interpreter you can contact [the Vermont Interpreter Referral Service](https://virs.org/) directly (https://virs.org/).

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) is the national organization for sign language interpreters in the United States. Visit the [RID website](https://rid.org/) (https://rid.org/).

Our Vermont Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (VTRID) is the local affiliate chapter of the national organization. The RID website can be found [here](http://vtrid.org/). (http://vtrid.org/)