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## Tips for Working with Remote Sign Language Interpreters

### Securing Interpreters

- While one sign language interpreter can be used for short and simple meetings, most meetings require two interpreters. Two interpreters are needed for meetings that are longer than one hour and/or those with complex interpreting needs, including meetings covering dense material, meetings that are highly interactive, and meetings with multiple Deaf attendees.
- To find qualified interpreters:
  - Ask any Deaf attendees for names of their preferred interpreters.
  - Reach out to your state's "for Deaf, by Deaf" victim services agency for recommendations.
  - Contact us at [cvs@vera.org](mailto:cvs@vera.org).
- Schedule interpreters as soon as possible (at least two to three weeks in advance) because qualified interpreters book quickly.
- Give potential interpreters basic information about the content of the meeting and confirm that they have the necessary skill & experience before booking them.

### Preparing Interpreters

- Send information about your event and any materials that will be shown or disseminated during the event to interpreters a few days before your event. This includes any scripts, PowerPoint slides, and handouts.
- Meet with the interpreters before your event to orient them to the event.

- Share the purpose of the meeting, information about the audience (including the names of any Deaf attendees), the format (webinar, panel, town hall, etc.), the design (who will be speaking and for how long, if a presentation or other visuals will be shared and when, if the audience will be in “listen-only mode” or participating and when, etc.), and the agenda.
- Provide interpreters with a list of common names (people and organizations) that are likely to come up during your event, as well as a list of acronyms that may be used during the event.
- Discuss the interpreting approach that will be used during the event.
  - Will both interpreters have their cameras on during the duration of your event, or will they switch on and off?
  - If the interpreters are switching on and off, which interpreter is going first? And, when will they be switching?
  - How will the interpreters handle Q+A?
- Agree upon a way to communicate with one another if the video conferencing platform, audio stream, or internet connection fails during the event. Text messaging is a great option.

## Preparing Panelists/Trainers

- Let them know the event will be interpreted.
- Ask them to speak at a steady pace (not too fast and not too slow), avoid acronyms, and pause when the interpreters need to switch.
- If they are using visuals, such as presentation slides, during the event, ask them to pause after advancing each slide to give Deaf participants an opportunity to read the slide before moving their eyes to the interpreter.
- If there is more than one facilitator/panelist/trainer, when switching between speakers, have everyone state their name first. This allows the Deaf attendees to keep their focus on the interpreter and still know who is now speaking. Attendees asking questions should also be given this instruction.
- Let them know you will gently interrupt during the event with reminders, if needed. During the event, a presenter only chat box is a good place to share reminders or make specific requests such as “slow down” or “pause for interpreter switch.”

## Setting-Up and Testing Technology

- Ask interpreters to join the event 30 minutes early to test technology and finalize plans.
- Be sure to set-up your virtual room to allow for the interpreters' videos to be large and prominent on the screen.
  - As a general principle, limit the number of videos streaming to no more than nine at a time.
  - If you have more than nine attendees:
    - Stream the video of the interpreters and facilitators/panelists/trainers throughout the duration of your event.
    - Turn the cameras of other attendees on when they are commenting and off when they are finished.
  - If you are using a platform where video bandwidth may be an issue, always prioritize sharing the video of the interpreter, even if it means turning off video for the presenters.
- Some platforms, such as Zoom, have the capacity to pin or spotlight an individual's video so it is prominent on everyone's screen. If your platform offers this feature, consider using it for interpreters.
- Test the technology set-up in advance of the event.

## During Your Event

- At the start of your meeting, let the audience know the event is being interpreted and that they should see the interpreter(s) on the screen.
  - If you have any questions about attendees' view, ask a team member to join as an attendee and report back what they see.
  - Ask them to let you know if they cannot see the interpreter by raising their virtual hand or using the chat box.
  - Reach out to Deaf attendees directly using the chat function to make sure they can see the interpreter.
- Pause the meeting every twenty to thirty minutes (as agreed upon with interpreters) to allow for the interpreters to switch.
- If your event has a question and answer session, start that portion of the event by first asking if any of the Deaf attendees have questions and offer them the ability to stream their video and ask their question on camera and in sign language.

- If there is a tech problem that impacts the video or audio of the interpreter, pause the meeting until the issue(s) is resolved.
- Be mindful of the meeting end time. It's tempting to go over the established end time, especially when presenters are providing great content or participants are engaged in meaningful discussions.
  - Going over - even by a few minutes - can result in significant cost increases, as many interpreters bill in increments of 30, 60 or even 90 minutes.
  - Additionally, the interpreters may have another job to go to immediately following your event.

### **After the Meeting**

- Check in with the Deaf person to make sure the interpreter was effective. Make adjustments as needed for the next meeting.
- Check in with the interpreters to get and give feedback and make necessary adjustments for the next meeting.