

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

A best practice guide
for hospitals

Purpose of this guide

Hospitals have a duty of care to support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) so they have fair and impartial access to all services.

This includes Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing people who use Auslan as their first language.

To support their right to a qualified interpreter, this guide provides best practice advice on:

What is VRI?

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How VRI works

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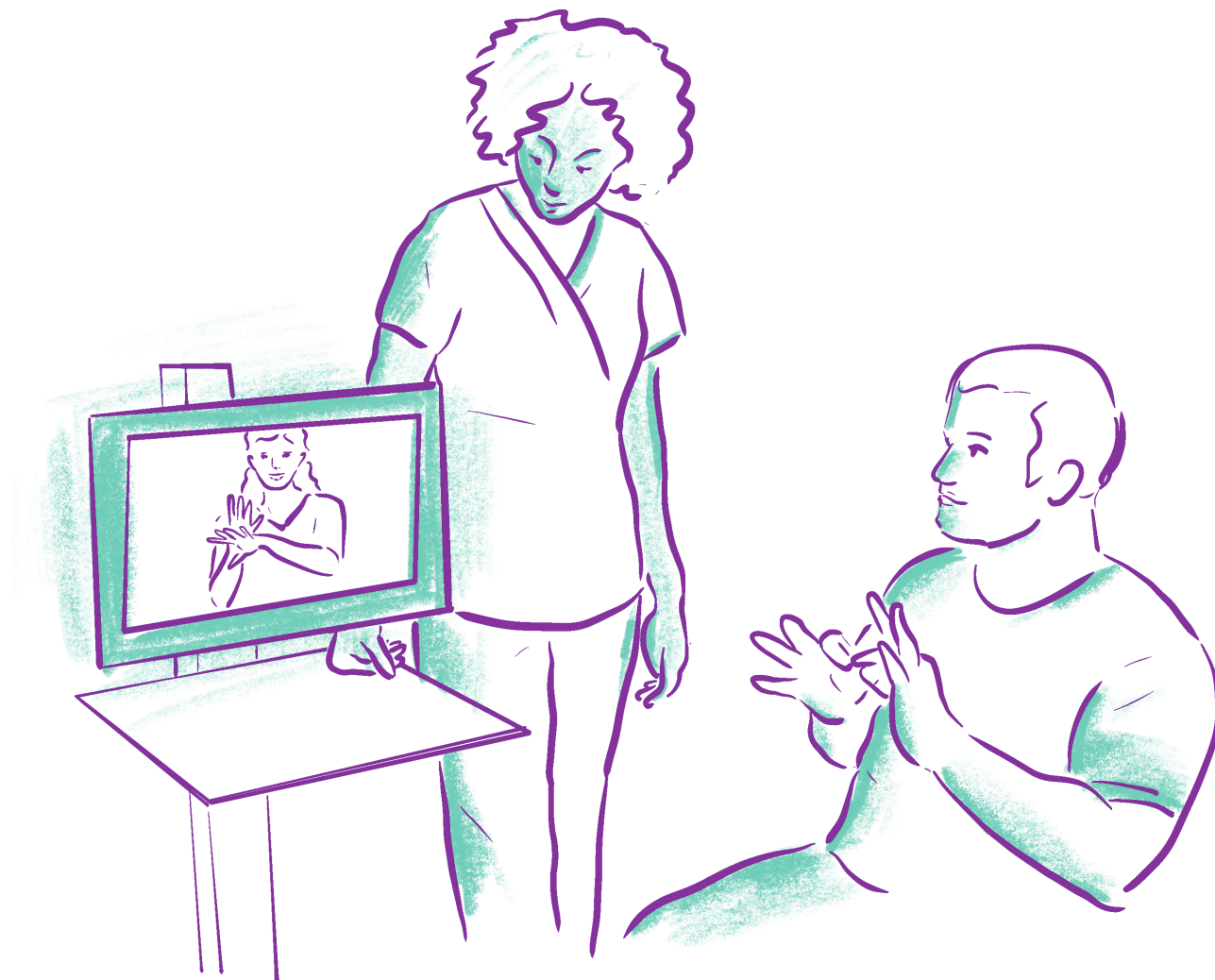
How to set up VRI

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What is VRI?

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is a service that helps people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to communicate with a hearing person through an interpreter over video conferencing.

VRI supports accurate, quick and secure communication between Auslan users and healthcare professionals.



What is VRI?

Why use it?

There are many benefits of using VRI to support patients in hospitals, including:



Reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure



Improved conversations using sign language



Ability to connect with a greater range of interpreters



Patients can choose an interpreter they know and understand



Shorter waiting times and reduced travel costs



Flexibility to schedule an interpreter without a minimum wait time

When isn't VRI suitable?

VRI may not be the best option for Auslan users who may be better understood face-to-face. This might include patients who are:



Deafblind and communicate through tactile Auslan



Unable to sign clearly or can no longer move their hands or arms



Children



Unable to understand the use of VRI or have mental health issues



Experiencing technology issues, like an unreliable internet connection



Treated by multiple medical practitioners



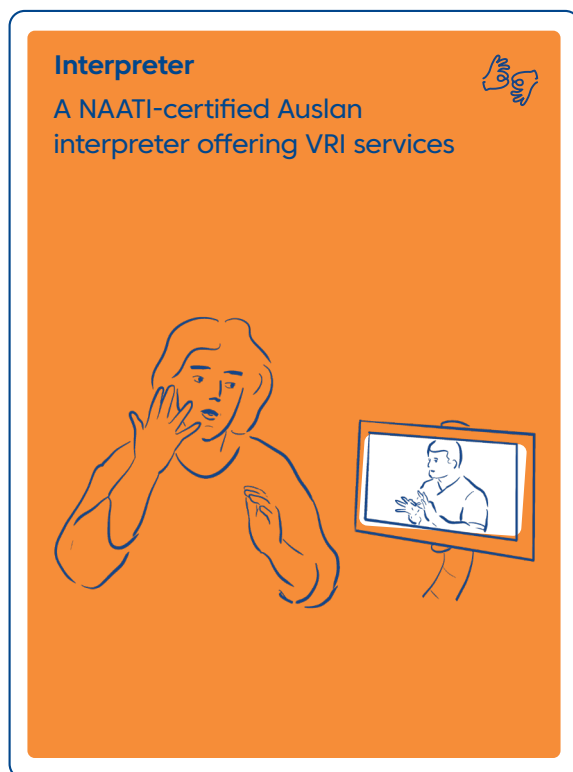
Impacted by medication

How VRI works

In a hospital setting, healthcare professionals can use VRI to connect an Auslan user with an interpreter over video conferencing.

A typical scenario for using VRI in a hospital is when the interpreter is in a different location to the Auslan user and health professional.

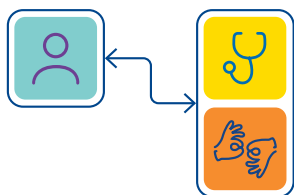
Location A



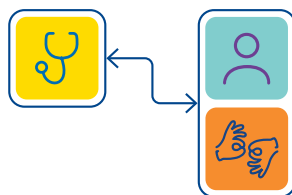
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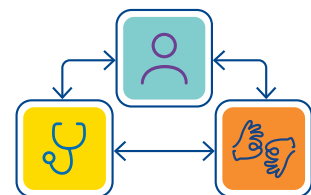
VRI can also be used when:



The Auslan user is remote, the interpreter and health professional are together



The health professional is remote, the Auslan user and interpreter are together



Everyone is remote

How to set up VRI Healthcare professionals



Setting up the technology and space

You will need:



High speed internet

Make sure you have a stable connection via Wi-Fi or 4G.



A portable device

This could be a smartphone, tablet or laptop that supports video conferencing software (e.g. Zoom, FaceTime or Telehealth) and has a camera, speakers and microphone.



An adjustable stand or case

This allows the interpreter and Auslan user to see each other clearly while signing.



A quiet and private room

The device can be plugged in for charging, so that it's always ready to use.



A plain background

Ensure that there are no lights or windows directly behind the Auslan user. Shadows can make it difficult for the interpreter to read their signing.



An office divider

Use one in a neutral colour as a plain background, with solid blue or black being optimal. You can also close the blinds.



A clear camera view

Remove any clutter, such as water bottles or computer screens.

How to set up VRI Healthcare professionals



Making a VRI booking

To make a booking, you will need to contact your hospital or interpreter service provider and share:



The date, start and finish time

Make sure to include your location and time zone.



What the booking is about

This should cover treatment options, consent or specific interpreter requirements.



The VRI link

This may be provided by your hospital or from your interpreting service provider.



Specific linguistic requirements

Make sure to share any specific needs, such as if the patient is from overseas, a minor, or has vision loss that requires adaptive Auslan (visual frame).

How to set up VRI Healthcare professionals



During the session

When you're ready to start the VRI booking, follow these steps:

- 1 Set up the camera**
Make sure the camera is facing the Auslan user and is no more than a metre away. It should focus on their head, hands, arms and fingers.
- 2 Open the VRI link**
Enter the details to connect to the booking.
- 3 Adjust the camera**
Check with the Auslan user and interpreter that their position and lighting is suitable and adjust as required.
- 4 Face the Auslan user**
Make sure you can maintain eye contact with the patient.
- 5 Confirm that everyone is ready to start**
Check with the interpreter that you can hear each other and confirm with the Auslan user that they are ready to communicate.
- 6 Start speaking**
When you speak, the interpreter relays the information through Auslan (sign language) to their camera, which is viewed on the device's screen for the Auslan user.
- 7 Wait for the Auslan user to respond**
The Auslan user signs to their camera for the interpreter to see.
- 8 Listen to the interpreter**
As the interpreter watches the Auslan user sign, they will speak to you in the first person.

How to set up VRI Healthcare professionals



How to communicate effectively



Speak directly with the Auslan user

Avoid using phrases like 'tell him/her/them' or 'ask him/her/them'.



Talk at your usual pace

The interpreter uses your speaking pace to set a natural signing flow. They will let you know if you need to change pace or if they need to clarify anything you said.



Avoid side conversations

The interpreter is required to relay everything they hear to the Auslan user.



Introduce yourselves to the interpreter

This allows the interpreter to relay who is speaking to the Auslan user.



Pause while the Auslan user is taking notes or reading

It's challenging to watch an interpreter and read or write at the same time.



Be aware of body language

If the Auslan user nods, this signals acknowledgement of communication. It does not automatically mean that they agree or understand.



Be patient if the interpreter takes longer than you expect

English and Auslan each have different language structures. It can take time to convey information depending on the required interpretation.



Offer different types of support

If the patient is not fluent in Auslan, it may be best to end the call. The interpreter will offer advice on how to better communicate with them.

How to set up VRI Interpreters



What to expect from a VRI interpreter

Interpreters are responsible for:



Maintaining a private space to work

Interpreters will ensure they have a stable internet connection, a reliable device and a quiet space with a plain, contrasting background.



Having up to date certification with NAATI

This refers to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. Interpreters are also responsible for continuing their professional development and expanding their medical knowledge.

During the session

When the session is ready to start, you can expect the interpreter to:



Join the VRI link

They should join the link 5 – 10 minutes before the appointment start time.



Be clearly visible

You should be able to see them from the waist up. Confirm that the Auslan user is comfortable with their position before starting the process.



Start the interpreting process

The interpreter will relay everything that is heard into Auslan and everything that is signed into English in an impartial and accurate way. Communication should occur naturally and interpreters will ask for clarification if needed.



Share feedback

The interpreter will provide any feedback during the appointment. If there is feedback about the interpreter, this can be shared with them directly or through the booking service. If you're happy with the interpreter, consider booking them for future sessions.

How to set up VRI Auslan users



Set up and process

As an Auslan user, you must know your rights when receiving VRI as a service to understand medical information.

The hospital and interpreter are responsible for setting up the technology and equipment, VRI interpreting booking and location, and delivering the service.

While this setup is in progress, you have the right to:



Refuse an interpreter

Hospital staff should work with you to resolve the issue and capture your decision in your health record.



Ensure the space is appropriate

You can advise if the location is unsuitable for the VRI service and needs to be improved.



Receive a quality VRI service

This means you are able to clearly communicate with an interpreter using sign language.



Advise if the connection is poor

Let someone know if the technology is impacting the conversation.



Choose who you see on-screen

You can ask to see the healthcare professional alongside the interpreter, or to see the interpreter only.

This best practice guide is part of a suite of resources developed for Deaf Regional Health, an ILC project funded by NDIA.

**For further information about this project,
or services for Deaf people:**

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