

15 TIPS FOR PROVIDING ASL COMMUNICATION ACCESS TO THE DEAF COMMUNITY

- 1) Make a commitment to be accessible in all things. Don't let access be an after thought.
- 2) Change your attitude towards how you approach access. Access is a fundamental human right.
- 3) Move away from thinking of interpreters as "helpers" and "volunteers". Interpreters are highly skilled professionals and deserve to be seen and treated as such; compensate them for their time and expertise.
- 4) Just like the cost of a sound system, venue rental, flyers, etc., communication access is a necessary expense that you should budget for when organizing an event.
- 5) "Deaf" is an umbrella term. Not all Deaf people have the same communication styles or needs. Some Deaf people may prefer interpreters with strong ASL skills while others may prefer interpreters with strong transliteration skills. And still others may prefer to use Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs). To make your event accessible to DeafBlind individuals, Pro-Tactile interpreters may also be needed.
- 6) Be aware that not all interpreters are "created equal". Some interpreters are more skilled and culturally competent than others.
- 7) Deaf people often have interpreters they prefer to work with. If you know the Deaf person planning to attend your event, ask them who their preferred ASL interpreters are for your specific event and reach out to those interpreters.
- 8) ASL interpreting is strenuous work and ASL interpreters risk injury to their hands when working for long periods of time. For this reason, two interpreters are typically required for events that are longer than one hour in length. Budget accordingly.
- 9) Don't wait until the last minute to find and secure interpreters for your event. They are typically booked well in advance.

10) Some ASL interpreting agencies may be able to find interpreters for you at the last minute but keep in mind that it will typically cost 2 to 3 times more than if you planned ahead and hired the interpreters directly.

11) Don't forget to do outreach. Let the Deaf community know that you are committed to making your events accessible and listen to the feedback and requests you receive from them.

12) It's generally okay to ask Deaf folks to RSVP in advance prior to hiring interpreters if you're not sure if anyone from the Deaf community will attend your event and you are a small nonprofit organization with limited funds. You can state in your advertising something along the lines of, "We are committed to making this event ASL accessible. Please let us know by xx date (typically 2 weeks before the event) if you would like us to secure ASL interpreters for this event and we will do our best to do so." And if you receive a request after this date, please note that it is still appropriate to try to find interpreters, despite the date having passed.

13) In order to do the best job possible, interpreters need to be prepped. Provide them with as much information relating to your event as possible, including but not limited to transcripts of planned speeches, lyrics, agenda, PowerPoint slides, notes, names of people that will be mentioned, and so on. The more prepared the interpreters are, the better job they will be able to do.

14) Be intersectional in your activism and organizing. Just like hearing people, Deaf people have many marginalized and intersecting identities. Providing an interpreter does not mean complete access has been achieved.

15) Check in with Deaf people after your event and obtain feedback on how access can be improved next time.

Thank you for your allyship.

Note: *Ally* is a verb and *allyship* is an ongoing, daily practice. This document is a work in progress. Written by Drago Renteria with special thanks to Jennifer Mantle. This copy was distributed at Creating Change, Detroit, MI, January 2019. For additional resources, visit the Deaf Queer Resource Center at <http://www.deafqueer.org>.

###