

# Use of Certified Deaf Interpreters in Deaf Mental Health Care

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With the wide range of language skills and dysfluency encountered in Deaf Mental Health Care, it is sometimes necessary to meet client's communication needs using Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs). CDIs can serve as an invaluable member of the treatment team.

## *What is a CDI?*

- CDIs are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) individuals that are nationally certified through the Registry of Interpreters (RID). CDIs also must be licensed in the state of Missouri.
- CDIs have proficient communication skills and general interpreter training. In addition, CDIs have specialized training and/or experience in the use of gesture, mime, props, drawings, and other tools to further enhance communication.
- CDIs are required by the RID to possess knowledge and understanding of deafness, the Deaf community, and Deaf culture. They must also possess native or near-native fluency in American Sign Language (ASL).

## *When is a CDI needed?*

- The RID recommends using CDIs when communication with a Deaf individual is unique and cannot be adequately addressed with the sole use of a hearing interpreter. RID states that such situations may involve individuals who:
  - Use idiosyncratic, non-standard signs or gestures such as those commonly referred to as "home signs" which are unique to a family;
  - Use a foreign sign language;
  - Have minimal or limited communication skills;
  - Are Deaf-Blind or Deaf with limited vision;
  - Use signs particular to a given region, ethnic, or age group; or
  - Have characteristics reflective of Deaf culture not familiar to hearing interpreters.
- In the mental health field, we often encounter language disruptions or dysfluency with our clients. When this occurs, it can be very difficult to communicate solely with the use of a hearing interpreter and is recommended that a CDI be used. Using a CDI will help to ensure understanding by both the client and clinician. These communication issues may be related to a psychiatric disorder or may be of a social origin. For more information on dysfluency with Deaf clients please see the fact sheet "Dysfluency in Deaf Mental Health Care" on DMH's Office of Deaf Services website.
- It is recommended to keep an ongoing dialogue with the hearing interpreter to determine if the use of a CDI would be beneficial.

## *How to Use a CDI*

- When using a CDI, follow the same protocol as you would when using a hearing interpreter alone. You can view more information on how to work with an interpreter by accessing the fact sheet "Working With Sign Language Interpreters" on DMH's Office of Deaf Service's website.

## *How to Use a CDI (cont.)*

- Keep in mind that when using a CDI additional time will be spent focused on ensuring communication is taking place. This means that you need to allow greater time for the interpreting process to happen than you would when working directly with a client.

## *Benefits of Using a CDI*

- RID lists the following benefits to using a CDI:
  - o Optimal understanding by all parties;
  - o Efficient use of time and resources;
  - o Clarification of linguistic and/or cultural confusion and misunderstanding(s); and
  - o Arrival at a clear conclusion in the interpreting situation.



For more information,  
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## *Sources*

CDI (Certified Deaf Interpreter) Certification. (2007) Retrieved from <http://www.rid.org/content/index.cfm/AID/89>

Use of a Certified Deaf Interpreter. (1997). Retrieved from [http://www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/pdfs/Standard\\_Practice\\_Papers/CDISPP.pdf](http://www.rid.org/UserFiles/File/pdfs/Standard_Practice_Papers/CDISPP.pdf)