

New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative Tipsheet

Providing Access through Sign Language & Text for Low Vision & Tactile Communicators During the Coronavirus Pandemic



Low Vision Sign Language via Social Distancing

- Many individuals use face-to-face interpreting within 1-3 feet. Current regulation dictates 6 feet social distancing.
- When live services are reinstated, those requiring close distance for live interpreting can use technology to zoom in on the interpreter while social distancing mandates are maintained. Portable low vision aids may be used (i.e. digital magnifiers and portable CCTVs, telescopes, smart phone and tablet cameras, etc.) to increase visual access.

Low Vision Sign Language Users via Online Platforms

- Test the equipment in advance.
- Web cameras are different. Ensure that the camera does not have auto-focus or it will attempt to follow the motion of the interpreter and cause a very blurry image.
- A web camera that allows for zooming capacities is preferred so that the interpreter can zoom in on him/her/themselves.
- Depending on the platform, if the presenter uses 'screen sharing' to display a PowerPoint or other visual content, be aware that the interpreter may disappear for viewers, unless otherwise accommodated for.
- The background must be solid, preferably black, to provide contrast.
- The interpreter must have solid, contrasting color to their skin tone.
- Interpreting production across a 2-dimensional platform is different than live performance, the following must be considered:
 - Pace the sign language production
 - Slowed fingerspelling, move the hand closer to the body so that there is a contrasting background to the production
 - Establish strategies for interpreter clarification so that there are not unnecessary interruptions
 - Add methods of communication for access providers, through an additional laptop or smart phone, and/or via private communication via chat boxes in the webinar platform
- Lighting is critical. Ensure the interpreter is illuminated from the front, without glare. No lighting from behind.

Live Captioning & Texting via Online Platforms

- Live captioning during webinars is often a preferable means of access, regardless of live sign language services. Depending on the online platform, captioning can or cannot be imbedded into the live session and archived via recording.
- Encourage use of on-screen chat boxes to facilitate inclusivity of Deaf & DeafBlind participants.

Tactile/Pro-Tactile Users in Face-to-Face Communication

- If at all possible, determine what communication needs maybe be accommodated via distance technology, such as live texting accessible through a refreshable Braille display.
- Face-to-face interpreting, when allowed, should be assessed on an individual basis. Known parties may be comfortable interacting directly. *No department or agency can mandate face-to-face interactions during the 'shelter-in-place' mandate* (see USDOE Policy Guide from 3.21.20 for further direction).
- Determine if communication is comprehensible while wearing approved protective gear.

Supplemental Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Students with Disabilities <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf>

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