



*Health & Disability Advocacy
Ngā Kaitautoko*

Cultural Competencies for Health and Disability Advocates

Feb 2010

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Introduction

Cultural belief systems and practices impact on all aspects of life and the way we respond to people and situations. A reasonable response in one culture can be considered offensive to another. Definitions of culture vary both in complexity and in the attributes that are emphasized. Culture provides the foundation for processing memories, as well as how a person's personality is expressed and how they determine appropriate reactions. Culture also shapes responses to disability, illness, treatment family violence and homelessness for example. Put simply, it is about how people view and do things 'it's what we do around here'.

A culture is identified when a group of people share a distinctive set of:

1. Manners (customs, practices, rules)
2. Morals (values, beliefs, norms)
3. Arts (visual, literary, performing, aural expression etc)
4. Traditions including language, knowledge and history

Culture describes the group, not the individuals in it as not all members of the group will agree about manners, morals, arts and traditions and what the lifestyle is and what should be taught to the members of the group. For example, there are significant differences in how people from Pacific communities view these things depending on whether they have been born and raised on one of the Pacific Islands, born on one of the Islands and raised in Aotearoa, or born and raised solely in Aotearoa – not to mention the differences between each of the Pacific cultures as well.

Language, dialects and regional variations of how language is used are often closely linked to the history and other traditions of the group.

The international Deaf community, for example has 133 formally registered sign languages of which NZSL (New Zealand Sign Language) is one. Sign language is not universal. Like spoken languages, sign languages emerge naturally in communities and change through time. There are at least 25 different sign languages in Africa alone. Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and BSL (British Sign Language) are closely related in the way that English is between Britain, Australia and NZ so even when different terms and expressions are used, it is possible to explain what is meant.

Racing, rugby and beer plus the quarter acre pavlova paradise are associated with NZ even though this would not be relevant for many living in NZ.

Some cultures don't support making complaints about professional people who provide services so it is important to explore with them ways of identifying what improvements can be made to services to improve the quality of care provided. Hospitals and other institutional facilities develop their own cultures that those using and providing the service respond to. Research shows a strong relationship between the culture of an institutional facility and various performance issues. Hospitals and residential homes in Aotearoa are under pressure to change their cultures to be more consumer-centred and responsive to the people they have been set up for.

Institutional cultures can also be found in prisons, private schools, universities and monasteries for example. These institutions have developed their own manners, morals, arts and traditions over time and expect compliance with these.

Other cultural groupings such as the transgender community and those who have been in prison have experienced longstanding discrimination where they have been left with a strong sense that their concerns are not taken seriously. The power imbalance of vulnerable residents in residential homes has also contributed to a reluctance or fear about speaking up.

Cultures are dynamic and changing all the time as they influence each other and respond to changes in the environment.

Membership of a cultural group is based on behaviour and beliefs, not characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexual practices, occupations, citizenship etc. Being a member of a culture means you understand how and why the group acts as it does and you know enough to be able to operate within it yourself. Usually, people live within the cultures of which they 'appear' to be members. For example, most people in Aotearoa aged between 13 and 19 prefer teenage language, particular dress codes and music. However, there will be some in this age group who prefer older or younger cultural lifestyles and others outside the age group who adopt the teenage lifestyle. This can be disconcerting to others who expect them to act according to their chronological age.

In a society, some cultural groups have more power and authority than others. This can encourage some people to learn and adopt these cultures. For example women have learned to operate within a heterosexual male culture because they are more likely to get good jobs that may. Many Māori have adopted Pakeha culture.

There is no definition of how big a group has to be to constitute a culture or sub-culture. Sub-cultures are smaller groups within a culture and can relate to common characteristics such as race (Pasifika, Asian, Māori) plus the sub-cultures that spring from them (eg Tongan, Samoan, Indian, Korean, different iwi) as well as the different spiritual groups (eg Christianity, Buddhism, Islam). There are also sub-cultures of the spiritual groups eg Christianity includes Catholics and Protestants; Protestants include Presbyterians, Mormons, Methodists and so on.

It is common to belong to at least six or more cultural groups or communities eg ethnicity/race, those who are Deaf, those with sight impairments, sporting activities, religion or spiritual beliefs, acting or singing, political action. Political communities also have sub cultures eg eco-friendly, protecting animals, promoting inclusion and Māori Sovereignty.

Some cultures will overlap with other cultures. Deaf culture for instance is practiced by the Deaf community which is made up of people from various races and ethnicities.

These competencies will act both as a guide and a way of measuring success in achieving safe respectful advocacy practice with people of many cultures as well as the range of settings where the impact of a culture/s is significant. It should also act as a focus for valuing diversity and promoting inclusion where all consumers have opportunities to fully participate in decisions about their wellbeing.

Cultural Competencies for Advocates

Competency Area	Competencies	Assessment options to measure competence	Standard of the competent practitioner
Competency working with people from different cultures, cultural groups and in different settings	Knowledge, skills, behaviours, personal attributes displayed by the advocate	How will you know when the level of competence has been achieved?	What the competent practitioner does and what their practice looks like (usually after 12 mths on the job)
Theoretical Basis New to NZ: A guide to Ethnic Groups in NZ Culturally and Linguistic Diverse - Resource Kit for Health Practitioners Victoria Camplin-Welch: Refugees as Survivors (RASNZ) and Waitemata District Health Board (2007) Talking Past Each Other: Joan Metzge Kinlock, Victoria Press 1978	Knowledge The advocate is familiar with the following areas of knowledge: Identity: It is important to be able to reflect on one's own cultural identity, history, attitudes and experiences to achieve an understanding of the impact of professional practice and interactions on people from different cultures and cultural groups. The advocate can describe and discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their own cultural identity and links to 	A range of tools and approaches can be used to assess whether the advocate is practising in a competent manner. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Self assessment • Assessment by peer/s, supervisor or other (internally) • External assessor • Check-list • Case studies • Audience Evaluations • Written evidence of reports, action plans and self/peer evaluations • Verbal/written questions • External evaluation surveys 	Is able to apply the appropriate skills and behaviours in both formal and informal interactions with colleagues, consumers, groups, as well as during presentations and networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Achieves a high level of accuracy when assessed on knowledge and skills. ➤ Is able to clearly demonstrate the full range of knowledge and skills required for competent practice or can identify specific steps for achieving competence in specific areas requiring attention within an acceptable timeframe. (This can be done during supervision)

<p>Fate, Spirits and Curses: Mental Health and Traditional Beliefs in Some Refugee Communities, Dr Kathy Jackson Rampart Publishers, 2006</p> <p>Intercultural communication in the global workplace. Varner, Iris & Linda Beamer. (2006). 4rd ed. Boston, Mass. McGraw-Hill.</p> <p>The History of New Zealand Michael King</p> <p>Being Pakeha Michael King</p> <p>History of Deaf Culture and New Zealand Sign Language</p> <p>To Be Who I Am Report of the Inquiry into Discrimination Experienced by Transgender People</p>	<p>various cultural groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their own personal values and beliefs with regard to working with people from other cultures and cultural groups • values and beliefs that are important to people from other cultures and in various settings • the importance of inclusion as well as the consequences of exclusion and isolation • their personal vision for people from other cultures and cultural groups • how they manage personal and professional boundaries in relation to working with different cultural groups. <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can describe the way in which health and disability services are being provided within their region and how these are accessed and provided to Deaf consumers, refugees and migrants, as well as youth and older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written evidence of presentation plans <p>As part of professional development and keeping up-to-date the advocate provides evidence of attending approved sessions relevant to working with people from other cultures and cultural groupings.</p> <p>This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training (internal/external) • Seminars • Workshops • Practice sessions • Peer support sessions • Supervision 	<p>sessions or performance reviews)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has a clear plan for engaging with and encouraging consumers from a range of cultures and cultural groups to use the advocacy service. ➤ Consumers from different cultures and cultural groups using the service provide positive feedback and reflect their confidence in the advocate and their willingness to use the service again and recommend to others within their community.
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<p>Human Rights Commission</p> <p>The Pacific Health + Disability Action Plan 2002</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <p>Advocates are familiar with the context of current issues and feel confident about working with people in schools, residential facilities including prisons, rest homes, disability homes and hospitals.</p> <p>The principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi is relevant to and reflected in advocacy practice in relation to other cultures and cultural groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have knowledge of the issues for the transgender community and newly released prisoners etc when using mainstream health and disability services, systems and processes. <p>History:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can describe and discuss the significance of the history of the Deaf Community in NZ and how this impacts on the way they use health and disability services • They can describe and discuss the significance of the arrival of refugee and migrant communities in NZ and how this impacts on the way they use health and disability services • They can describe and discuss the significance of discrimination on various cultures and communities and how this impacts on the way they use health and disability services • They can make links between service provision, the history of the different groups and the Code of Rights • They have an understanding of inequalities and privilege 		
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<p>The identity, beliefs and values of the various cultures and cultural groups in Aotearoa are well understood and respected by advocates.</p> <p>All consumers and their whanau/family are provided with a culturally appropriate service</p> <p>All consumers and whanau/family feel their culture is acknowledged and respected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can recognise racism and have a range of strategies to deal proactively with it. <p>SKILLS & BEHAVIOURS</p> <p>The advocate is able to demonstrate the following attributes, skills and behaviours to achieve culturally safe advocacy practice when interacting with people from other cultures and cultural groups.</p> <p>Personal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values and understands own culture and their links to cultural groups • Has regular contact with the place they call 'home', as in their papakainga (where they belong) and/or maintains links with their own whanau/family, hapu and iwi • Demonstrates a positive attitude towards the world views of other cultures and cultural groups. 		
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	<p>Processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows where to go to find information about a particular culture or cultural groups and who to consult to ensure due regard for process is given • Has respect for the views and beliefs as well as different processes used by other cultures and cultural groups • Ensures correct protocol and procedures are followed • Has clear professional and personal boundaries • Takes part in formal and non-formal events in a professional manner. <p>Effective communication</p> <p>When working with and assisting people who don't use spoken English the advocate will be guided by the consumer and their family when an interpreter is required.</p> <p>It is important the advocate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to identify when an interpreter is needed and know how to arrange and book one 		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the importance of introductions and time to make connections and understand each others perspectives and viewpoints. • Establishes working relationships based on Trust and respect • Takes care with language and avoids jargon and technical terms that may lead to confusion and misunderstanding. • Is responsive to any preference to make requests and discuss plans in person (eg by phone) or face-to-face • Achieves an effective and appropriate approach to the collection of ethnicity data for aggregate purposes. * • Provides effective facilitation and resolution skills that take into account cultural needs and expectations. • Checks all parties have a shared understanding of any decisions, plans or conclusions reached • Provides opportunities for cultural processes where appropriate. • Ensures meetings are conducted in a manner that is respectful to all parties so all present feel safe, are able to have their say and are listened to. 		
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	<p>Positive relationships:</p> <p>Advocates need to inspire confidence through their work with various communities. They need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work respectfully with all levels of people including older people, youth, and children. • Communicate effectively with the whanau/family and/or support people and maintain rapport • Check with whanau/family or support people (where appropriate) before making assumptions about why a consumer has acted in a particular way. • Encourage consumers to utilize the strengths and resources within their community/ whanau and /or their networks. <p>Relationship building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the ability to establish and maintain a range of meaningful and appropriate relationships of benefit to different cultural groups to achieve their confidence in the service. 		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to work confidently with the broader cultural communities as well as individuals, whanau/families and smaller groups. • Is able to effectively assist people from a range of cultures and cultural groups and operate effectively within the different provider systems and processes • Is able to critique the environment they are working within in ways that take into account a range of perspectives and views. 		
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* This includes explaining that it is important to have accurate ethnicity data to plan services, improvements and enable comparisons of outcomes and whether progress has been made. Existing disparities will continue if services can't measure their effectiveness.

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NZ Relay Service <http://www.nzrelay.co.nz/>

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Out at Work: Understanding your rights to be an inclusive workplace – a guide to the rights of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual employees in NZ

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Statistics New Zealand provides census information e.g. Quickstats - Culture and Identity

Culture Grams provides concise, reliable, up-to-date information on the world's cultures. Four page reports for more than 200 countries.

Dev-Zone An independent NZ based resource centre on international development on global issues

Journal of Intercultural Studies showcases innovative scholarship about emerging cultural formations, intercultural negotiations and contemporary challenges to cultures and identities

Korero Māori is an interactive website for learning Māori Language <http://www.korero.Māori.nz/>

New Zealand Sign Language Dictionary online version <http://homepages.ecs.vuw.ac.nz/~pondy/nzsl/>

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Language Line , Office of Ethnic Affairs, provides information about a telephone interpreting service that helps people access the services of Government agencies in different languages <http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/>

Intercultural Press provides a diverse collection of publications to promote intercultural learning and skills development and to support intercultural effectiveness

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Cultural awareness checklist for those providing a service to health and disability consumers *

1. **Communication:** what is the consumers preferred method of communication?
2. **Language barriers:** is the consumer verbal or non-verbal?
3. **Cultural identification:** how does the consumer identify themselves?
4. **Comprehension:** does the consumer understand? Beware of nodding and other affirmative gestures as these are no guarantee of understanding
5. **Beliefs and traditions:** be sensitive to practices that are significant to particular beliefs and traditions eg no body fluids in a fridge where food is kept. There are also traditions around birth and death that can be distressing for people if they are prevented from practicing them
6. **Trust:** can the consumer trust you to do the right thing?
7. **Realistic views:** being aware of any misunderstandings, misconceptions and unrealistic views
8. **Food/Diet:** what foods and food rituals are important?
9. **Assessments:** be aware of culturally accepted emotional expression so this can be taken into account
10. **Bias and prejudice:** be aware of your own bias and negative views towards particular practices and manage this so as to not disadvantage the consumer

*Adapted from 'A Checklist to facilitate cultural awareness and sensitivity' Seibert, Stridh-Igo, Zimmerman: J Med Ethics 2002; 28: 143-146

Trans Respect 101

Many trans people are painfully aware of the differences we have from the general population. It is often a source of conflict both internally and externally. The real problems seem to originate from others; often people we know who are not quite sure how to "deal" with us. These could be coworkers, friends or family. We would like to be treated as people first and foremost. We would like to have the respect you would give anyone else. It really is that simple but of course, nothing about transgender is simple so hopefully the following will help.

General

Treat me as a member of the gender to which I identify; not to my presentation or your perceptions of what gender I am. If I identify as male then treat me as such, not as a natal female, or if I identify as female, treat me as such not as a natal male.

Do not talk about me as if I am a separate entity; an actor in a role if you will. In other words, if you are talking about me or with me, always consider that I have always been in my true gender. Dont say "When you were Bob" If you must refer to the past then do so by referring to it as before I came out or before I began my transition.

Use the correct pronouns both in my presence and away. Hearing of me referred to by my birth sex instead of my true gender both in my presence or second hand from a distance, hurts. It hurts because I see it as an insult, not just disrespect.

Use my correct name, not my birth name. It is not a nickname or a joke, it is who I am.

I understand that you may have difficulty with this and your adjustment is naturally difficult. Correcting yourself at the time or making a discreet personal apology after the fact goes a long way toward my respect for you. I am sure you want my respect as much as I want yours.

If you see others making unacceptable comments toward transgendered people, correct them or at the very least, make your displeasure known before you walk away.

Sexual orientation has absolutely nothing to do with gender. Do not assume I am either gay or heterosexual. It is just as inappropriate as it would be in the presence of a gay, lesbian, bisexual or asexual person. It is in fact, a violation of Human Rights Statutes.

Do not expect that I will stereotype into the gender presentations of pop culture or misinformed media. Many masculine women are still women just as many effeminate men are still men. That said, many transwomen or transmen may not have the generally accepted mannerisms of their gender. This does not make them less transgendered in any way.

Accept my decision to live my life in my true gender. I made this decision to allow myself to be happy and comfortable in my own body. The alternative is to deny it and be miserable. It is not your choice it is mine. You cannot change my choice.

Do not think this is a mental disorder. It is not. It is rooted in neurology, endocrinology and physiology for cause. I have no choice at all except to accept this or suffer for denying who I am.

Transition

Do not assume that I will have surgery. Most transsexuals do not and for various reasons.

Understand that genital surgery is reconstructive surgery; not cosmetic. It is a necessity for me to align my sense of gender and my sex. It is not transition,

Transition is a process of change. I learn to live, work and play in my true gender. It is this socialization that is transition, and nothing else.

Medical interventions are necessary for me to undertake my transition. They are not vain cosmetic procedures but essential for my well being in order to further my presentation in my true gender. Understand that I realize they can have adverse effects and these are risks I am willing to take. These are risks most people would cringe at. They can include organ failure, disfigurement and even death. I dont take them lightly and neither should you.

Social

Please! Don't call me or tell me about a transgender program you saw on television. I know all about it. In fact I probably know more than those who presented the program (even if they are psychologists). Remember, I LIVE with this.

Dont introduce me as your transgendered friend or whatever. I am a person not a thing. Introduce me by name and leave it at that. Alternatively, dont ignore me in social situations because it makes you uncomfortable.

ASK before taking my photograph. Do not show photos of me before my transition. To me they are hurtful and a painful reminder of a life denied. Under NO circumstance should any photo with me in it be posted on the internet for any reason without my permission.

Do not associate being transsexual with cross dressing, transvestic fetishism, drag queens or drag kings, gay, lesbian or bisexual people. None of these, or other associated descriptions have anything in common with my situation.

The terms "tranny", "she male", "girly boy", etc are offensive and to be avoided. In fact, some of these and more, are used by the porn industry. I do not associate myself with that industry any more than you do. In fact I find their objectification of transsexuality offensive.

My physical presentation is NOT crossdressing. It is dressing to match my gender. For me, cross dressing is dressing as my natal sex. It would be the same as you crossdressing. You would feel ill at ease in a dress if you are a male; well, I feel ill at ease in a business suit because my gender is female.

If I am in the process of "coming out" NEVER assume that because you have been told, you have license to tell anyone you want. You dont. I told you because I trust you and want you to respect that confidence. I will tell people on my terms and in my own time. Dont destroy that trust I have given you.

Dating

Treat me as you would anyone in their true gender role. If I identify as female, treat me as such. Open doors, take my coat and help me be seated.

If you want to know about my past, ask if I am comfortable sharing that with you. This subject is an absolute NO-NO on the first few dates unless I offer to share it with you. I need to be able to trust the person I am with, and trust is not something I hand out like candy. I often has to be earned.

Get to know me; my likes and dislikes, my interests and my turn offs. If you try to focus on my being trans, I will quickly want the date to end. Don't assume that I want sex. I may or may not. You will have to pick up on my clues.

If sex is in the picture, then treat me as you would a natal partner. If I am F2M, let me take the lead. If I am M2F then treat me with the same consideration you would of any female.

NEVER make references to any part of my anatomy. If I haven't had reconstructive surgery, don't place any attention on my breasts if I am F2M. It is my chest not your playground.

Be an attentive lover. The key word here is lover. I don't want to be with a sex machine.

Be honest with me about yourself and your feelings. It will go a long way toward a second date.

If you are not seeking a relationship, then let that be known up front. Don't lead me on or build false hopes. It is cruel.

If you enjoyed my company then be sincere in expressing that.

Working

Treat me as you would any co-worker however, practical jokes may no longer be a joke.

My skills and abilities have not diminished since beginning my transition. Don't make the mistake of assuming they have.

My need to use the correct washroom is not superficial or pushing boundaries. I can and will make some concessions but only for a time.

If you are going to play silly games that could be construed as discrimination or prejudice, expect that I will react by escalating my complaints to the highest level, including legal action in the form of a Human Rights complaint. It is not something I will take lightly and neither should you.

Ignoring me or cutting me "out of the loop" is discrimination. See the above point.

If my job will jeopardize the company's presentation to its customers or the public then negotiate a change of responsibilities with me, but do not make the mistake of assuming you can lower my wages and benefits accordingly. That too is grounds for a Human Rights complaint.

If you decide you are going to "Build a Case" for dismissal, be careful, be very careful because it can be legally seen as constructive dismissal. It too is grounds for a Human Rights complaint.

The final summary of these situations and many more is this; I am a person just like you. I want to be treated with dignity and respect and am not willing to be an object of ridicule. Treat me with the respect you yourself would want and life will be pleasant. I will be happy and not make yours or anyone else's life difficult. All I want is to live my life in peace without any undue hardships. It is your choice how you treat me; not mine. I do not want confrontation any more than I want to suffer discrimination. I only want to be seen for the person I am, not the person you think you see.

From Transgender London <http://www.transgenderlondon.com/index.html>

Office for **Disability** issues

Te Tari Mō Ngā Take Hauātanga
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

Effective communication with deaf people:

A guide to working with
New Zealand Sign Language interpreters

April 2009

Introduction

In this guide, you will find advice on how to achieve effective communication with deaf people, through your contact with service users, work colleagues, or generally as citizens.

Working with sign language interpreters is usually critical to making effective communication happen. Written English is not an adequate substitute for many deaf people.

Key actions covered include what interpreters do and how to book one, what your responsibilities are when booking sign language interpreters, and common things that can affect communicating well with deaf people.

Government agencies need to ensure services and information provided to the public are accessible to deaf people, on an equal basis with others. This responsibility is stated in the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006, which has principles to guide government agencies in their interaction with deaf people (section 9). It is also stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (article 21).

This guide is available on the Office for Disability Issues website at:

<http://www.odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/working-with-nzsl-interpreters/index.html>

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Part 1: Ensuring effective communication with deaf people

This section outlines why and when you need to book a sign language interpreter, what you can do to allow deaf and hearing impaired people to contact your service, how to provide access to public events, and who is likely to access services through a sign language interpreter.

- New Zealand Sign Language has the same official status as English and Māori.
- The New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 specifies principles to guide government agencies in relation to deaf people and New Zealand Sign Language.

Why is New Zealand Sign Language important in communicating with deaf people?

There are an estimated 7,000 - 9,000 deaf people who use New Zealand Sign Language (based on Census 2006 information).

In the past, there was an active prohibition of New Zealand Sign Language in schools, due to misconceptions about the nature of sign language (it was thought to be an inferior mode of communication and not really a language at all). This prohibition has had far-reaching consequences for many deaf people, including low academic achievement, low levels of literacy in written and spoken English, and limited career options as a result.

This means written information is not a suitable or reliable substitute for communicating with many deaf people.

New Zealand Sign Language has developed over time through being used by the deaf community in New Zealand. It is not an artificially created communication system.

Just like spoken languages, sign languages have grammatical rules for creating sentences. The rules of New Zealand Sign Language are different from the rules of English. The word order in a sentence in New Zealand Sign Language is often different to that in an English sentence. There is also not always a one-for-one correspondence between an English word and a New Zealand Sign Language sign.

What are the legal requirements for providing interpreters?

Deaf users of New Zealand Sign Language are legally entitled to be provided with an interpreter in certain settings. This is similar to people who speak a language other than English.

The following legislation applies to the provision of interpreters:

- New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, section 24
- New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006
- Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989, section 9
- Electoral Act 1993, section 158(8)
- Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994, section 20(d)
- Health and Disability Commissioner Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996, Right 5
- Human Rights Act 1993, section 65
- Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992, section 6.

New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006

The New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 recognises New Zealand Sign Language as an official language of New Zealand, alongside English and Māori.

The Act provides deaf people with the right to use New Zealand Sign Language in legal proceedings. A competent sign language interpreter needs to be provided if a deaf person has said they want to use New Zealand Sign Language in a court or tribunal.

The Act also states principles to guide government departments in the promotion and use of New Zealand Sign Language. In particular, the Act states in section 9 (1)(c) that “government services and information should be made accessible to the deaf community through the use of appropriate means (including the use of New Zealand Sign Language)”.

Unless the government staff member meeting with a deaf person is highly fluent in New Zealand Sign Language, then sign language interpreters will be needed to ensure effective communication happens.

Read the New Zealand Sign Language Act (2006) <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2006/0018/latest/DLM372754.html>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires States to ensure deaf people can access government information and services, allow the use of New Zealand Sign Language, and ensure the provision of sign language interpreters. This is principally stated in Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information.

New Zealand ratified the Convention in September 2008, and the government is obliged to implement its obligations. The Convention has the status of international law, and can be referred to by courts in decision making. All new legislation and policy should be consistent with it. New Zealand is also required to report to the United Nations every four years on progress with implementing the Convention.

Read the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

<http://www.odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/un-convention/index.html#ReadtheConvention6>

When do I need to book a sign language interpreter?

This section advises when you need to book a sign language interpreter.

- Sign language interpreters are usually needed when communicating with deaf people.
- Always check with the deaf person involved with the meeting/event before booking sign language interpreters.

Assume interpreters will always be needed (but always check first)

Interpreters should be booked for a meeting or event where deaf people will be present. This will go a long way to ensuring effective communication happens.

Even if you consider that the deaf person can use English fluently, there are reasons why an interpreter may be requested. You should not rely on using written English as a substitute, due to low literacy levels generally in the deaf population.

A deaf person who is proficient in English in everyday use (reading, writing and speaking clearly) may still prefer to use a sign language interpreter for more complex or technical subjects, or in situations where they do not know the person they will be meeting.

Also, lip-reading is not a reliable means of following a conversation. Many sounds of English are not visible on the lips or are indistinguishable from the lip movement alone. Lip-reading is more difficult when the speaker is not familiar to the deaf person.

Always check with the deaf person if they have any particular requirements and preferences before you book an interpreter.

Sign language interpreters and booking agencies may request information about a deaf person to judge the interpreter's competency to interpret for a particular client and in a particular situation.

You can ask Deaf Aotearoa for advice if you are unsure of what to do.

Before a meeting and on request

Book a sign language interpreter if the deaf person, a family member or a deaf representative (such as a support person, advocate, deaf mental health worker or an employment consultant or community relations officer) makes a request for one to be present.

During or after a face-to-face meeting

If you have concerns or difficulties in communicating with a deaf person during a meeting, especially if it is the first time you have met them, ask the deaf person if they would like a sign language interpreter booked for any further meetings.

Read more about Deaf Aotearoa

<http://www.deaf.org.nz>

When do I need to ensure access to services?

This section describes situations when sign language interpreters are required for deaf people to access services.

- Assume that a sign language interpreter will always be needed when meeting with a deaf person.
- Check in advance to confirm this is the case.
- Deaf people may need to communicate and access a service in different ways to hearing people.

Book a sign language interpreter if there is a risk that a deaf person may not fully understand information provided in English. In such cases, without sign language interpreters present the deaf person will have restricted access to a government service. Or, in a worst case, errors could be made in the deaf person's access to assistance or services.

It is especially important to provide a sign language interpreter in situations such as where informed consent is being sought or an assessment of their personal health needs is being done.

Your first contact with a deaf person may not be face-to-face. They may wish to book an appointment or obtain information without coming to see someone in person.

Ensure your services are accessible by allowing deaf people to make contact via telephone, fax, email or other ways. Some deaf people may not be able to leave their house due to illness or other factors.

How do I ensure deaf people can contact our service?

Always include fax and email contact details on public information, such as leaflets and websites, as well as telephone numbers. You need to make sure that any contact through fax or email is responded to in a timely way (such as would be expected when a hearing person makes contact using the telephone).

If you have regular contact with deaf people or have deaf staff, you could consider making a dedicated text telephone (TTY) available. It is possible to have a combined telephone which can handle both ordinary and text calls. If you do establish a TTY, ensure that all relevant staff are trained how to use it. You can ask Deaf Aotearoa for advice.

Ensure staff know about the New Zealand Relay service. This allows text telephone users and ordinary telephone users to communicate via a relay assistant. The relay assistant will type what you say and will read out any typed response. The relay assistant will explain the procedure to you when you first make or receive a relay telephone call.

Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter to interpret a telephone call for them. If this is the case, the interpreter will be with the deaf person in the same room and you will hear the interpreter's voice over the telephone.

Read more: Deaf Aotearoa <http://www.deaf.org.nz>

New Zealand Relay service <http://www.nzrelay.co.nz>

When do I need to ensure access to public events?

This section outlines how government agencies should ensure events open to the public are accessible to deaf people.

- Public events should be accessible to deaf people on an equal basis with others. Sign language interpreters will need to be present to make this happen, where practicable.
- Written English is not a valid substitute for sign language interpreters.
- Publicise the availability of sign language interpreters on publicity material (such as posters) and in communications (such as invites, websites, emails).
- Provide a tick box on registration forms so people can request a sign language interpreter.
- Book sign language interpreters well in advance (two to three weeks in advance should be allowed). If no deaf people have registered their interest, the interpreters can be cancelled (note that cancellation charges may apply).

How do I ensure public events are accessible to deaf people?

Deaf people whose main language is New Zealand Sign Language may not be able to access information very well (or at all) in English (both written and spoken). If there are no interpreters present at an event, then deaf people may be excluded from accessing information and knowing what is happening.

New Zealand Sign Language is an official language of New Zealand. Government departments are expected to make their public events accessible to deaf people on an equal basis with others.

When organising a public event (for example, a lecture, forum, or elections of candidates to public office), you should plan well in advance the need for sign language interpreters. This includes budgeting money to pay for interpreter services.

There have been occasions where deaf people have not attended public events because sign language interpreters were not advertised as being present. This is understandable, as there would be little point in going to an event if a deaf person expected they could not access what was going on.

Until it is commonly known that sign language interpreters will be available, you will need to actively publicise accessibility for deaf people so they know they can participate.

What if no deaf people are present on the day?

Decide in advance what you want to happen if this turns out to be the case. You could ask the sign language interpreter to carry on interpreting, for example if the event is filmed.

Usually for smaller events, the facilitator will ask the audience if any deaf people are present who wish to make use of the sign language interpreter. This question will be interpreted. If no-one indicates that they are using the interpreter, the interpreter will leave in consultation with the event organiser (a full fee will usually be charged).

Some differences in deaf people using interpreters

This section outlines differences in the deaf population and deaf people's varying preferences for using sign language interpreters when accessing a service.

- Deaf people are a varied group. Some deaf people have different needs to be accommodated to ensure they effectively access information or a service.
- Check in advance to make sure you understand a person's needs as much as possible.

Some groups of deaf people have particular requirements in using sign language interpreter services. Understanding these differences will help ensure that effective communication happens and services can be accessed. Read more about some deaf people's different needs in the following sections:

- Māori deaf people
- foreign deaf sign language users
- deaf people who have minimal language competence
- deaf-blind people.

• You may occasionally get a request to book an electronic note-taker or captioner, or an oral interpreter. Read more in Section 5: Other communication professionals. There is a group of deaf or hearing impaired people who do not use sign language and who therefore do not benefit from having a sign language interpreter present.

Read more in the National Foundation for the Deaf – factsheet on communicating with deaf and hearing impaired people

http://www.nfd.org.nz/site_resources/library/OrganisationFiles/Communicating_with_deaf_and_Hearing_Impaired_People.pdf

Māori deaf people

This section describes the specific needs of Māori deaf people.

- If the spoken language of the setting is English, book a sign language interpreter.
- If the spoken language of the setting is Māori, book a trilingual interpreter (English/Māori/New Zealand Sign Language). Note: you will need to do this at least four weeks in advance.
- Check with the deaf person what their preferences are first, if possible.

Māori deaf people constitute a large proportion of the deaf community in New Zealand (and at a higher percentage than Māori in the general population).

New Zealand Sign Language is used by Māori and Pākehā deaf people alike. Within New Zealand Sign Language, there is an increasing vocabulary of signs for Māori-specific concepts.

If services specific to Māori are available, Māori deaf people may prefer to access these services through a sign language interpreter.

Where the spoken language in the situation is English, Māori deaf people can access services through a New Zealand Sign Language/English interpreter.

In situations where Māori is being spoken, an interpreter who is skilled in New Zealand Sign Language, Māori and English is needed. These people are known as trilingual interpreters. Currently, very few New Zealand Sign Language interpreters are qualified to interpret from and into Māori. These few interpreters are often in great demand and will need to be booked at least four weeks in advance.

As there are very few trilingual interpreters, and there may be none in your area. You may have to pay for the interpreter's travel costs and travel time in addition to their usual interpreting fee.

If no trilingual sign language interpreter is available and the service or event is mainly conducted in Māori, you could consider booking two interpreters who will work together (a spoken Māori-to-English interpreter and an English-to-New Zealand Sign Language interpreter).

This last scenario would be more appropriate if prepared speeches are being given. This would allow faster interpretation, as the interpreters would not need to wait on each other to know what a speaker was saying and then interpret that information.

Deaf users of foreign sign language

This section describes how to accommodate the needs of deaf people who use a sign language other than New Zealand Sign Language.

- Try to find a sign language interpreter who is able to interpret in the foreign sign language.
- If this is not possible, ask Deaf Aotearoa or the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) for advice.
- Other communication professionals, such as a relay interpreter/visual language specialist, may be able to help or in some situations a family member of the deaf person.

Contrary to popular belief, sign language is not universal. Although there are some grammatical similarities between most sign languages, distinct sign languages exist in different countries. Users of one sign language will not necessarily understand someone using a different sign language.

Overseas visitors or recent immigrants who require a sign language interpreter may therefore not understand a New Zealand Sign Language interpreter.

Some sign language interpreters have experience in sign languages other than New Zealand Sign Language. A booking agency may be able to help. Alternatively, the SLIANZ directory of sign language interpreters lists other languages that an interpreter is prepared to work in.

Some foreign sign languages are closely related to New Zealand Sign Language (such as British Sign Language and Australian Sign Language). A British or Australian deaf person will usually be able to work with a New Zealand Sign Language interpreter.

Other sign languages are not related to New Zealand Sign Language (such as American Sign Language or Japanese Sign Language).

If a sign language interpreter with experience in the foreign sign language cannot be found, a relay interpreter/visual language specialist may be able to help.

Deaf people who have minimal language competence

This section describes how to accommodate the needs of deaf people who have minimal language competence.

- Inform the sign language interpreter or booking agency if you are aware that a client has minimal language competence.
- You may need to use additional communication strategies, such as using very simple phrases or visual aids.
- It may be appropriate to book a relay interpreter/visual language specialist.
- Ask Deaf Aotearoa for advice.

A small proportion of deaf people have not mastered either a signed or spoken language. They may have grown up isolated from other deaf people from whom they could have learned sign language. They may also have had very rudimentary communication with hearing people around them. As a result, they may have had poor access to education and experienced limited language development. Individuals in this situation may have difficulty expressing or understanding complex ideas, and have little understanding of conversational and social norms.

Although a deaf person with minimal language competence may use some signs or English words, these words may be used in an idiosyncratic sense and only known to that person and people close to them.

The person may have difficulties with consistent grammar and may just use isolated words. Also, they may be unsure of what even simple questions mean (for example: what's your name? where do you live? how old are you? how long have you been feeling sick?).

If you are aware that a client of your service has minimal language competence, you need to advise the interpreter or booking agency of this in advance. However, it may only become clear at a meeting (where a sign language interpreter is present) that the deaf person involved has minimal language competence.

There may be other issues affecting a deaf person's ability to communicate, such as the fact that they are a recent immigrant, are deaf-blind, or have experience of mental illness.

In situations where a deaf person has minimal language competency:

- The sign language interpreter will tell you when they are not sure what is being expressed by the deaf person.
- Allow additional time for the meeting. It may take a good deal of time for the sign language interpreter to make sure that the deaf person understands what is being discussed.
- Rephrase your questions and statements in the simplest possible terms. For example, include only one idea in each question. If possible, present options for responding (such as 'this or that?'), and do not mix different time frames (such as past and present) within one statement.
- Use visual aids where possible. A pictorial sheet may be available explaining the most common procedures for your service. You could point to a date on the calendar when making an appointment time, or show medicine that the deaf person is supposed to take, or show a picture of a building the deaf person is meant to visit.
- The deaf person may not be able to read. Where possible, assist with filling in forms and book follow-up appointments while an interpreter or support person is present, rather than sending a letter to the deaf person later on.
- It may be appropriate to book a relay interpreter/visual language specialist.

Read more in Section 5: Other communication professionals.

Deafblind people

This section describes how to accommodate the needs of people who are deaf and have a vision impairment.

- Check in advance which form of communication the deafblind person uses, for example:
 - New Zealand Sign Language with visual modifications
 - tactile New Zealand Sign Language
 - deafblind finger spelling.
- Book a sign language interpreter with experience in that form of communication, or ask if the deafblind person has a preferred communicator/guide.
- Check seating and lighting arrangements.
- Ask Deaf Aotearoa, Deafblind New Zealand, or the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind for advice.

Deafblind people have both a vision impairment and a hearing impairment. They use a variety of communication strategies depending on the nature and extent of their vision impairment, exposure to New Zealand Sign Language and experience of deaf culture.

For some deafblind people, it is possible to ask the sign language interpreter to modify their signing so that it falls within the visual field of the deafblind person.

Other deafblind people communicate by placing their hands on the interpreter's hands and feeling the movements of the signs in this way.

Another communication mode is for the sign language interpreter to spell out words on the deafblind person's hand using a special finger spelling alphabet.

Check in advance which communication strategy is used by the deafblind person, and then inform the booking agency or freelance interpreter. Ideally, book a sign language interpreter who has experience in working with deafblind people.

Appropriate lighting is especially important for deafblind people. Check seating arrangements and lighting in advance with the deafblind person and the interpreter.

The Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind employs five deafblind co-ordinators around the country, including specialist support trainers and one national deafblind trainer. This service aims to improve quality of life by reducing isolation, enabling deafblind people to live as independently as possible in their local community, and raising awareness of the challenges of being deafblind.

Read more:

Deaf Aotearoa <http://www.deaf.org.nz>

Deafblind New Zealand <http://www.deafblind.org.nz>

Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind <http://www.rnzfb.org.nz/ourservices/servicesforspecificgroups/deafblindservices>

Part 2: The sign language interpreter

This section explains what a sign language interpreter does, and provides guidelines to ensure that you hire a competent, qualified sign language interpreter.

- Sign language interpreters convert what is said by a person using a spoken language and a person using sign language.
- Interpreting can be simultaneous or consecutive.
- Regular breaks are needed to ensure an interpreter is able to effectively do their job and prevent injury.
- More than one interpreter is needed for interpreting that lasts more than one hour.

An interpreter facilitates communication between people who do not share a language in common. The interpreter converts the messages said or signed by one person into the language of the other person (and vice versa).

Sign language interpreters in New Zealand are trained to interpret between spoken languages (mainly English and/or Māori) and New Zealand Sign Language.

They may also carry out 'sight translation' where the interpreter translates on the spot from a written document (such as a consent form, application form or a letter) into New Zealand Sign Language.

Sign language interpreters often interpret simultaneously. This means that they start signing the message while you are still speaking, or that they start speaking very shortly after the deaf person starts signing. There will be a slight time lag while the interpreter processes the information being said and converts it appropriately into the other language.

Simultaneous interpreting requires a good deal of mental processing. Either appropriate breaks should be given, or interpreters should work in teams to support each other and share interpreting during the meeting.

In some cases the interpretation happens consecutively, allowing a person to speak, or sign several sentences, or take a whole turn in the conversation before this is interpreted. This may be especially appropriate in face-to-face meetings between two people or small groups.

Although consecutive interpreting requires more time than simultaneous interpreting, the end result is often clearer communication. This is because the interpreter can take the time to listen and fully understand what the speaker is saying, which helps make a more coherent translation into the other language.

How do I know if a sign language interpreter is professionally competent?

This section describes the competencies that you should expect to find in a professional sign language interpreter, their skills and characteristics, and qualifications.

- A sign language interpreter should:
 - be fluent in sign language and have a high language ability in the spoken language they are translating from/to
 - appreciate the differences between deaf people and hearing people
 - understand the context of an interpreting assignment
 - have an appropriate level of training and qualification.
- A professional sign language interpreter will also be a member of the Sign Language Interpreters Association and/or the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters, and follow those organisations' Code of Ethics.

Skills and characteristics

A professional sign language interpreter should demonstrate the following skills and personal characteristics.

Fluent in New Zealand Sign Language

As with all languages, acquiring a high level of fluency in New Zealand Sign Language requires many years of training and contact with the deaf community. Most sign language interpreters are not native users of New Zealand Sign Language. This is a point of difference with most other language interpreters, who are usually native speakers and part of a language community (such as Māori, or Chinese).

Fluent in English and/or Māori

Interpreters, including sign language interpreters, need to adjust their language usage according to the context in which they work. This means they need a large (and at times specialist) vocabulary, and need to be able to use different language styles appropriate to the people involved in the meeting or event. They need to be competent in written language as well since sight translation may be needed.

Use a range of interpreting skills

There is often no word-for-word correspondence between languages. It takes training, practice and experience to instantaneously express the full meaning of a speaker's words in another language. Just being fluent in two or more languages does not mean that a person can interpret between these languages.

Understand both 'deaf' and 'hearing' cultures

Deaf people whose first or natural language is New Zealand Sign Language have a different cultural background and a different life experience to hearing people. They may also have different expectations of how communication will take place. Since government services are largely staffed by people who are not deaf, a competent interpreter needs to understand both cultures to ensure they can facilitate effective communication.

Understand the setting and have the knowledge to deal with a variety of subject matters and terminology

Sign language interpreters work in a great variety of settings: from education to courts to health; and from one-to-one meetings to large conferences. A competent sign language interpreter needs a good educational background to deal with this variety and be able to adapt to different settings.

It is advisable to check an interpreter's experience in a particular setting before booking them, so you can be sure they are sufficiently familiar with the systems and any specialist language. A booking agency can assist with selecting appropriate interpreters for a particular setting.

Behave in an ethical and professional manner and be committed to a code of ethics

Like other professionals, interpreters are party to private interactions and information and are ethically bound to protect the privacy of clients. They should also facilitate communication in a manner that is fair to both parties, without unduly intruding in the situation. The Code of Ethics of the Sign Language interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) covers impartiality, confidentiality, competency, accuracy and professional development.

Competency

Use competent, qualified sign language interpreters to ensure that the interaction between you and your client is conveyed accurately and smoothly. At present there is no system to assess or rank the competency levels of New Zealand Sign Language interpreters after graduation from the AUT Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting (currently the only qualification available), or to assess their continued ability to practise in New Zealand.

The booking agency or sign language interpreter will consider all requests before agreeing to provide the service. They need to make a decision on the level of competency required for a particular assignment. The more information about a meeting/event that you can provide in advance and at the time of making a booking, the better that decision making will be.

The SLIANZ Code of Ethics includes refusing to accept assignments beyond an interpreter's competency.

Use a qualified and competent interpreter

A qualified sign language interpreter will have undergone assessments in New Zealand Sign Language and English competency, interpreting skills and ethical behaviour by the end of the two year AUT diploma. Being qualified means that the sign language interpreter has attained a level of competency at which it is generally safe to practise.

Some policies exist that specify the level of experience required: for example, a 2005 Court Circular recommends that interpreters have at least two years postgraduate experience as a sign language interpreter in a wide range of contexts before they work in legal proceedings.

Read about using New Zealand Sign Language in Courts: <http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/courts-publications/moj-sign-lan-bro-v6.html?search=true>

Risk of using an unqualified person

There are significant risks associated with using lay people or unqualified interpreters (such as family members or friends of the deaf person, hearing children of deaf adults, staff members with some experience in New Zealand Sign Language or sign language students who have not undertaken interpreter training).

First of all, their fluency in English and New Zealand Sign Language has not been assessed and interpretation may suffer as a result. Even if such individuals are fluent in both New Zealand Sign Language and English, there are risks such as bias, conflict of interest, and lack of confidentiality. Deaf people may not feel that they can be completely open about their information under these circumstances.

However, the level of competency required for interpreting is different from one setting to the next (and from one client to the next). In high consequence settings, it will be important to check the sign language interpreter's experience in that particular setting and the number of years they have been practising as an interpreter.

Qualifications

A qualified New Zealand Sign Language interpreter will have completed the two-year Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting (DipSLI), awarded by the Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

The diploma course includes an introduction to specialist settings, such as medical and legal interpreting. However, it is advisable to check the individual interpreter's experience in such settings to ensure that they are sufficiently familiar with the systems and specialist language they may encounter.

Qualified sign language interpreters are generally registered members of the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) or the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI). Membership of these organisations is voluntary.

Both organisations have an interpreter's Code of Ethics, which members are required to sign and agree to follow.

Some overseas qualifications may also be accepted. While overseas interpreters may be judged to have completed equivalent training in sign language interpreting skills, there is currently no scheme to assess their competence in English or New Zealand Sign Language.

Before an overseas sign language interpreter works alone, SLIANZ recommends that they spend a minimum of six months immersing themselves in the New Zealand deaf community to build up their fluency in New Zealand Sign Language.

Read more about the SLIANZ Code of Ethics <http://slianz.org.nz/index.php?page=code-of-ethics>

Read more about the NZSTI Code of Ethics <http://www.nzsti.org/documents/codeofethics.pdf>

Part 3: Booking and paying for interpreters

This section explains how to find, book and pay for sign language interpreters.

- Know what you are responsible for doing when booking sign language interpreter services.
- Plan well in advance.
- Seek advice if you are not sure.

Tips for a successful booking

Check the deaf person's requirements before you book

You may need to book a sign language interpreter of a particular gender, or one who has specific language skills or experience in working with a particular group of deaf people (for example, a deafblind person or a Māori deaf person).

Check if you need more than one interpreter

You may need to book two or more sign language interpreters if your meeting/event lasts for more than one hour and breaks are not possible.

Book well in advance (where possible)

Book at least two weeks in advance. There is a relatively short supply of qualified sign language interpreters, especially outside of Auckland, and you may find it difficult to book an interpreter at shorter notice.

Plan ahead for events that require more than two interpreters

Make a booking as soon as possible (such as one to two months in advance of the event) if more than two sign language interpreters will be required, or if you have special requirements (such as an experienced conference interpreter or a Māori-speaking New Zealand Sign Language interpreter).

Gather all details before you proceed with a booking

At first contact, the booking agency or sign language interpreter will need to know:

- organisation billing address – who is paying?
- contact person – who is organising the meeting/event
- date, time and location of meeting/event
- name(s) of deaf people involved (where possible)
- description of the meeting/event – what is going to happen?
- description of information about the meeting/event that will be provided to the sign language interpreter in advance.

This information allows the interpreter(s) to make an assessment of their competency to interpret the assignment successfully and, if so, to accept the booking.

Confirm who will pay and check terms and conditions

Be clear on who is responsible for paying for the interpreter, and read the interpreter's terms and conditions (such as what happens if a booking is cancelled).

Keep everyone informed about the booking

Let the deaf person and any other professionals or agencies who will be involved know that a sign language interpreter has been booked. Where possible, give the deaf person the name of the sign language interpreter(s) booked. If there is a change of date, time or venue, inform everyone (including the sign language interpreter).

How do I book an interpreter?

This section lists steps you should follow when booking a sign language interpreter.

- Get all the relevant information about a meeting/event ready before making a booking. This information is required by the booking agency/interpreter.
- Understand how you will get in contact with sign language interpreters.
- Read the terms and conditions for the service and understand you are entering into a contract to purchase this service.

1. Find sign language interpreters

There are two ways you can find a qualified interpreter:

- Via a booking agency
- Contact freelance sign language interpreters.

2. Make contact and check availability

- Provide full details of booking
- Use the departmental booking procedure for interpreters if available.

3. Check terms and conditions

- Make sure you understand what you are responsible for doing as a result of booking an interpreter.

4. Confirm booking

- Follow up to confirm booking in writing or email, even if the initial booking enquiry was confirmed on the telephone. This makes sure everyone involved has the right details of the booking.

5. Inform the deaf person that an interpreter has been booked

- This will help the deaf person feel confident that they will be able to communicate effectively with you in a meeting and/or access an event.

6. Make payment after the interpreting services have been provided

- Payment for interpreting services will be advised during the booking process.

7. Provide feedback on how the service was provided

- Let the booking agency or the sign language interpreter know how well you felt the interpreting job went.
- Give your deaf client(s) the opportunity to provide feedback as well.
- Deal with complaints about the sign language interpreter if required.

Read more about the SLIANZ complaints procedure <http://slianz.org.nz/index.php?page=complaints-procedure-2>

Finding a sign language interpreter

This section advises how to go about finding a sign language interpreter and respecting the preference of the deaf person(s) involved.

- Interpreters can be contacted directly or through a booking agency.
- Check if the deaf person has any preferences for interpreters.

There are two ways to find sign language interpreters. You either contact a booking agency or contact freelance sign language interpreters directly.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each booking method. You should take into consideration the amount of administration required, terms and conditions of the agency/freelance interpreter, and any particular requirements for the meeting/event.

Client choice

The deaf person may have particular requirements about the interpreter or type of interpreter they prefer to work with.

Reasons for preferring a particular interpreter include:

- gender of the interpreter (such as in health-related bookings, like visiting a GP, a client may prefer an interpreter of the same gender)
- experience and knowledge of the interpreter in a particular setting (such as medical or legal)
- previous bookings (for consistency, it is often recommended that the same interpreter does related assignments so that they share the background knowledge and terminology. This would be particularly useful for counselling sessions, for instance)
- language repertoire (for example, a client may ask for an interpreter who uses clear English lip patterns in combination with New Zealand Sign Language, or is familiar with older or younger people's signing style).

If a preferred interpreter is not available, you should inform the deaf person of this and discuss appropriate alternatives.

Using freelance interpreters

Freelance sign language interpreters manage their own bookings. You contact them directly to make a booking, payment and other matters to do with the interpreting job.

Using a booking agency

A booking agency contacts sign language interpreters on your behalf and handles other aspects of the booking, such as invoicing and helping the interpreter to get preparation materials or further details of the meeting/event.

Booking agencies either employ interpreters on a casual or permanent contract, or act as 'brokers' between freelance interpreters and the agency requesting the interpreting service.

Booking agencies have checked the qualifications and competence of the sign language interpreters on their books. Terms and conditions may vary depending on the agency, but they usually charge a booking fee in addition to the sign language interpreter's fee.

Contact interpreters and booking agencies

SLIANZ directory of New Zealand Sign Language interpreters

- a list of member sign language interpreters can be found in the SLIANZ directory
- all sign language interpreters listed have undergone the minimum of diploma training or equivalent/higher overseas training
- the interpreter's year of qualification is listed (giving some indication of level of experience) as well as preferred areas of work .
- read more at: <http://slianz.org.nz/index.php?page=interpreter-s-directory>

Specialised sign language interpreter booking agencies

There are three specialised booking agencies for sign language interpreters:

Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand

- has a national booking service for sign language interpreters
- contact the local Deaf Aotearoa office to arrange a booking.
- read more at:
<http://www.deaf.org.nz>

iSign

- an online booking service (contracted by Deaf Aotearoa) to provide a national online booking system accessible to both clients and interpreters.
- read more at:
<http://www.isign.co.nz>

Advanced Interpreting Management Services (AIMS)

- provides sign language interpreting management for all types of assignments, including specialist areas of interpreting where the allocation of interpreters requires more careful consideration
- operates throughout the North Island, and manages interpreting provision in conjunction with workforce development.
- managed by experienced interpreters
- contracts only qualified SLIANZ registered sign language interpreters.
- interpreting practitioners are supported, supervised and trained in the area of work required.
- read more at:
<http://www.aims.nz>

General interpreting booking agencies

You may also be able to book a sign language interpreter through general booking agencies providing interpreting services. Some of these services are:

Interpreting New Zealand

- provides both on-site and telephone interpreting in some 70 languages, including New Zealand Sign Language interpreters (on-site only)
- provides sign language interpreters for hospitals, health centres, social services, courts, tribunals, police, immigration, housing and wider local and central government organisations
- booking service operates 24 hours, seven days a week
- serves not only the wider Wellington area, but also many other North Island and South Island regions.
- read more at: <http://www.interpret.org.nz>

Sign language interpreting in health-related settings

Waitemata Auckland Translation and Interpreting Services

- managed by Waitemata District Health Board Asian Health Support Services
- a 24 hour, seven days a week service providing access to more than 90 languages and dialects, including sign language interpreters
- read more at:
<http://www.healthpoint.co.nz/default,51125.sm?solo=supportServices&index=3>

Counties-Manukau Health Interpreting and Translation Services

- part of Middlemore Hospital support services, operated by Counties Manukau District Health Board
- a 24 hour, seven days a week service providing access to more than 90 languages and dialects, including sign language interpreters.
- read more at: <http://www.middlemore.co.nz/Funded-Services/Hospital-Specialist/Services/Middlemore/interpreting.htm>

Auckland District Health Board Interpreting Service

- provides a 24-hour health interpreting service to Auckland District Health Board and to external services during normal business hours.
- read more at: <http://www.adhb.govt.nz/Sites-Services/interpreting.htm>

When do I need to book more than one sign language interpreter?

This section outlines situations where you need to use more than one sign language interpreter to ensure effective communication is achieved.

- Check if you need to book two or more interpreters if the assignment lasts for more than one hour.
- Always book two or more interpreters if the assignment is longer than two hours and the interpreters cannot take a significant break.

In situations of prolonged and intense communication sign language interpreters generally work in a team of two to ensure that concentration is maintained for optimum interpretation and that OOS (Occupational Overuse Syndrome) risks are minimised. For example, meetings that have lots of discussion or information content like workshops, or legal proceedings.

For all-day events or events taking place over several days, you will need to book several (two or more) sign language interpreters. If so, you will need to plan well in advance to book the number of interpreters that you require.

When two sign language interpreters are booked, they will take turns interpreting. This means you will not need to schedule any breaks, keeping disruptions of the meeting/event to a minimum.

The sign language interpreters will also support each other to improve the accuracy of the interpretation. This is especially important when the assignment is complex due to content, speed of interaction or type of language used by the deaf person.

What should I do if other agencies or professionals are involved in the booking?

This section discusses what to do when there are multiple people and/or agencies involved in booking and working with sign language interpreters.

- Be clear on who is responsible for booking sign language interpreters, who will pay for the interpreting service, and make certain everyone involved knows what is happening.

In some situations, it can be confusing to know who will book the interpreter and who is responsible for paying for the service.

Generally, the government agency that has been contacted by the deaf person, or that is organising an event, should take responsibility for booking the interpreter and informing the deaf person.

If a deaf person is referred to your service by another professional, you should check who will book and pay for sign language interpreter services.

If you book an interpreter and you are aware that other professionals or agencies have a direct involvement in the meeting or event, you should let them know and discuss who will cover the costs of the interpreter services.

Some examples of situations where more than one agency is involved are:

- a deaf person has the support of an employment consultant from Deaf Aotearoa when attending a job interview
- the Deaf Mental Health Service is involved with a deaf person who has a hospital appointment or an appointment with a lawyer
- a Deaf Aotearoa community liaison officer is supporting a deaf person before an appointment with Work and Income
- a city council is co-hosting a public lecture series with another organisation.

What if no sign language interpreter is available?

This section outlines what to do if you cannot find a sign language interpreter for your meeting or event.

- Always talk with deaf people involved with an event or meeting if you have problems booking sign language interpreters.

If you have tried to book a sign language interpreter but no interpreters are available, you could:

- Postpone the appointment - make sure that everyone is kept informed of changes in the appointment date and time.
- Book interpreters from out of town - in this case, you will need to pay for the interpreter's travel costs and time in travelling in addition to the fee for interpreting. However, this option avoids having to reschedule the appointment and any other costs involved.
- Shorten the time of the meeting or event - this may be appropriate if only one sign language interpreter can be booked but you need more than one interpreter.

You could provide a longer break in addition to the short breaks usually required for the interpreters, or you could shorten the entire appointment (particularly if another meeting cannot be booked for a while). Always ask for the deaf person's permission to do this before making arrangements.

In the case of a public event, consider a change in the programme so that the parts most relevant to the deaf person are covered first (when the interpreter is available). Again, seek the deaf person's advice before doing this, so you do not assume what the deaf person may be interested in seeing.

- **Use an unqualified interpreter/communicator - only with permission from the deaf person, and if all other options are not viable.**
There are significant risks associated with using unqualified interpreters. However, if no qualified interpreters are available and it is impossible to postpone or shorten the assignment, the deaf person may give permission for a 'communicator' or other person with some degree of fluency in both English and New Zealand Sign Language to act as an interpreter. In such cases, you should make sure the deaf person understands what has been said.
- **Proceed without a sign language interpreter - only with permission from the deaf person and if there is no other choice.**
In some circumstances, the deaf person may agree to proceed with a meeting without a sign language interpreter. You should provide confirmation or written backup of important points, such as the name of a prescription drug or the next appointment time. For group meetings, provide a note-taker or electronic note-taker if the deaf person is fluent in written English.

Always attempt to book a sign language interpreter for any further meetings. One meeting without an interpreter should not be taken as being acceptable practice or precedent for further meetings in the same way.

Read more about tips for communicating with hearing-impaired people from the National Foundation for the Deaf

http://www.nfd.org.nz/site_resources/library/OrganisationFiles/Communicating_with_deaf_and_Hearing_Impaired_People.pdf

Who pays for sign language interpreter services?

This section discusses responsibility for paying for sign language interpreters and funding support available in some situations.

- Check if your organisation has a policy on booking and paying for sign language interpreter services.
- Government agencies have a responsibility to ensure their publicly available services are accessible to deaf people.

In general, the government agency that is hosting the meeting/event is responsible for paying the cost of the sign language interpreters.

Before any booking is made, make sure you have the funds available to pay for the interpreters. You should also find out what your agency's policy is for using and paying for interpreters (if there is one).

For government services where face-to-face appointments are required, like Work and Income or Inland Revenue, the provision of sign language interpreters is a definite obligation of the government agency.

When more than one agency is involved with a booking, you should discuss who will cover the costs upfront and before any booking is made.

The New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 urges government departments to increase accessibility of their services to deaf people through the use of New Zealand Sign Language.

In section 5, read more about the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 - Principles to guide government departments.

Funding for sign language interpreters is limited

Assistance with funding to cover the cost of sign language interpreter services may be available in some situations. You should make sure you find out in advance whether funding is available in your specific situation before making a booking.

- If your department or agency has a contract with a particular interpreter booking agency, the contract may include some situations where the booking service does not charge for the interpreting service.

For example, Deaf Aotearoa may cover the cost of interpreting at GP or other personal health-related visits by a deaf person (via their contract with the Ministry of Health).

- In some circumstances, when the deaf person's reason for using your service is related to getting a job, training to be ready to get a job, or self employment, the cost of the sign language interpreter may be covered by a Workbridge Support Fund. This funding is attached to an individual disabled person.

Read more about Workbridge and Support Funds at <http://www.workbridge.co.nz/?page=122>

How much will sign language interpreters cost?

There are no general set terms and conditions for sign language interpreters. You should always request terms and conditions from the booking agency or freelance sign language interpreter, so you know what contractual arrangement you are agreeing to before a booking is made.

Key things to look for in terms and conditions are:

- the hourly rate
- booking fee - in the case of a booking agency. In some cases booking agencies might not charge a separate fee but instead an increased hourly rate
- minimum booking time - often set at two hours
- preparation charges - for example, when a large public event is organised the sign language interpreter may need to visit a venue prior to the event to check their position on stage, lighting and other factors; or a long meeting that has lots of information; or where there are numerous presenters at a conference with different topics
- travel costs - to get to the meeting or event
- cancellation charges - payable where the appointment or event is cancelled within a certain time limit (often within 24 or 48 hours before the meeting/event).

Part 4: Working effectively with sign language interpreters

This section describes how to effectively work with sign language interpreters in a variety of situations and how to make working conditions safe for them.

- Understand what arrangements are needed by sign language interpreters so they can best facilitate communication and prevent personal injury.
- Plan in advance when using sign language interpreters.
- Arrangements for interpreters may be different depending on the situation.

What do sign language interpreters need to ensure effective communication with deaf people?

Meetings with deaf people will run more efficiently and effectively if you consider requirements of sign language interpreters as an integral part of your meeting or event planning. This is not an optional extra, or something that can be left until the last minute.

As the meeting/event organiser, you should take responsibility for effective communications and not rely on the sign language interpreters or deaf person to make everything happen.

The sign language interpreter will need to:

- Hear and see everything and everyone clearly. This includes audio-visual/multimedia presentations, videos and any documents / papers that may be referred to, as well as clear visibility of all participants in a meeting. Interpreters may need to sit or stand slightly in front of (and to the side of) the speaker if microphones are used.
- Sit or stand where they will be comfortable for the whole meeting. If seated, the interpreter should ideally have an adjustable chair with a good back and without arm rests.
- Sit or stand where they can be seen clearly by the deaf person(s). The deaf person and/or the interpreter will be able to advise you on the best position. Things that need to be considered include:
 - being next to the main speakers
 - lighting – can the deaf person easily see the interpreter?
 - background behind the interpreter - is there anything to distract from the interpreter, such as a clear glass wall where you can see people moving outside, or coloured wall that makes contrast with the interpreter poor
 - proximity to other visual information - such as where a presentation is projected.

Note: if a deaf person is speaking at an event, then the interpreter will need to access a microphone to voice what the deaf person signs.

- Have regular breaks, and/or work with another interpreter.
- Have written information about what's being discussed available before the meeting/event. Information that an interpreter needs includes:
 - advance notice of the purpose of a meeting
 - a list of names or roles of people involved
 - an agenda
 - speech notes
 - handouts
 - a copy of presentation slides.

This information is needed so that the interpreter properly understands the context of the meeting, and any specialised language or terms used which may not be common in New Zealand Sign Language or known by the deaf person. The interpreter will need to translate any specialised or technical terms or concepts into language that a deaf person can understand. This is not easily done on the spot.

How can I help sign language interpreters to work safely?

As well as ensuring good communication, sign language interpreters have to manage a physical element to their job. The risks of sign language interpreters developing OOS (occupational overuse syndrome) are now well known. In a 2005 survey, the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) found that 64% of sign language interpreters had suffered a work-related injury of some kind during their career.

To prevent such injuries, sign language interpreters need regular breaks during their working time. The physical location of the meeting or event should be set up so the interpreter can sit or stand comfortably, and there is not undue stress placed on their body while interpreting. This approach follows ACC injury prevention guidelines.

Interpreting between different languages is a complex and mentally demanding task. All interpreters require regular breaks so they retain optimum levels of concentration and accuracy in their interpreting.

SLIANZ has produced an Occupational Safety and Health paper outlining best practice for interpreters to work safely.

Key points for prevention injury are:

- If your meeting/event lasts more than one hour, you need to book two interpreters. If only one interpreter is working, allow 5 to 10 minutes of rest break for each 30 to 45 minutes of interpreting
- Make sure the meeting venue is physically comfortable – such as having an adjustable chair with a good back rest but without arm rests, and lighting should not be too dim or too bright to prevent eye strain (both for the sign language interpreter and the deaf person).
- If water or other refreshments are provided to people at the meeting / event, please include the interpreter(s).
- Provide information on what is being discussed to the interpreter(s) at least 24 hours in advance – this will lessen the stress of having to interpret new concepts or terms into sign language on the spot and ensure the best communication happens.

Go to ACC to read more about preventing and managing discomfort, pain and injury <http://www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/discomfort-pain-and-injury/index.htm>

In section 5, read the SLIANZ Occupational Safety and Health Standard Practice paper.

How do I communicate with a deaf person using a sign language interpreter?

Most people have never taken part in an interpreted conversation before, and it can be difficult to imagine how such a meeting will run. There are some simple things to keep in mind that will help you work effectively with a sign language interpreter and ensure good communication with a deaf person:

- Your main conversation partner is the deaf person, not the interpreter. To reflect this, the interpreter will speak/sign in the first person when relaying what each party is saying to the other (for example, the interpreter will sign/speak 'I think' rather than 'he/she thinks').
- You should address the deaf person directly and to face them rather than the interpreter. While it is natural to look at the person talking, you need to remember that interpreter is repeating what the deaf person said.
- When the deaf person signs, the interpreter will voice what they are saying into English. Look at the deaf person signing, rather than at the interpreter, whilst listening to the interpretation.
- Talk to the deaf person in the first person as you would talk to a hearing person. You do not need to talk through a sign language interpreter, such as saying 'could you please ask him/her...!'.
• As the deaf person will need to look at the interpreter while you are speaking, it is useful if the interpreter sits or stands close to you. The deaf person can then also see your face and body language as you talk.
- You can speak at a normal pace. However, it is helpful to the interpreter if you pause occasionally after sentences or chunks of conversation. Interpreting is not a word-for-word process. Instead, the interpreter will wait until they have heard a reasonable chunk of information before they find an equivalent in the other language. It is therefore not helpful if you speak very slowly or pause between words.
- If you are quoting from written material, allow extra time and pause between sentences. The grammar of written language is different from that of spoken/signed language, and there are often fewer natural pauses and hesitations. The interpreter will therefore need some additional time to do the interpreting.
- The sign language interpreter's role is to facilitate communication between people. They do not contribute to the conversation themselves. The Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) Code of Ethics instructs interpreters to remain impartial, and keep all discussion confidential.

Working with sign language interpreters in specific situations

General ways to best work with sign language interpreters apply to all situations. However, sign language interpreters and deaf people will have different needs depending on the scale of the meeting or event, where it happens and how it is carried out.

In the following sections, read about specific things to keep in mind for:

- one-to-one or small group meeting
- larger meetings with three or more people

- presentation or conference
- public event
- radio, television or other recorded event.

One-to-one or small group meeting

This section describes key things to think about when organising a face-to-face meeting with one deaf person or a small group of people.

- Plan the use of sign language interpreters in advance, and make sure you have all the meeting information available when you make a booking.
- Understand what arrangements are required to ensure the sign language interpreter is able to best facilitate effective communication.
- Know what you need to do and how to behave when working with sign language interpreters.

Before the meeting

- At the time of booking a sign language interpreter service, you should provide details about the meeting, such as its purpose and any relevant prior history.
- If you have not worked with a sign language interpreter before and you have questions about the process, ask the sign language interpreter to explain their role and discuss how you plan to run the meeting/interview.
- Allow enough time for the meeting. Discussions using interpreters will take longer than simply talking to another person. You may want to book extra time for the appointment than usually scheduled.
- Arrange seating to allow everyone to see each other clearly. Often the sign language interpreter will try to sit next to you so that the deaf person can see both of you at the same time.
- If you need to sit behind a desk or table, the sign language interpreter will usually move to the same side of the table as you. In small groups, sitting in a circle is best. Preferably move so that there are no desks or tables between you.
- A meeting room's physical environment may make it difficult for the deaf person to see the interpreter's face and your face clearly. You should allow time at the start for the sign language interpreter and the deaf person to rearrange seating to ensure clear visibility. For example, sitting in front of a window causes the face to be backlit, or parts of the room may be in shadow, or a visually busy backdrop may be distracting.
- If you intend to use any papers, forms or other written material during your meeting, please provide this to the deaf person in advance. They will not be able to read and look at the interpreter at the same time during the meeting. Provide a copy to the interpreter as well so that they can be prepared, such as translating any difficult or specialised language.

During the meeting

- Introduce yourself to the deaf person and the sign language interpreter, and explain your role.
- If the sign language interpreter has not yet met the deaf person, allow the interpreter to introduce him/herself (and where necessary, to explain his/her role).
- Remember to speak directly to the deaf person rather than to the interpreter.
- Sign language interpreters usually interpret consecutively during one-to-one or small group meetings. Allow a person to speak or sign several sentences or take a whole turn in the conversation before giving time for the interpreter. Pause every so often so that the interpreter can convey what you have said.
- Use plain English and avoid jargon wherever possible.
- At times the interpreter may need to interrupt you to ask for clarification. They will only do this to ensure smooth communication, not to add their own opinion. The interpreter will usually announce that they are talking not the deaf person.
- The sign language interpreter will interpret everything that is being said or signed. Do not talk to the interpreter or to others present about the deaf person if you do not wish this information to be transmitted to them.
- Allow reading time if providing material to the deaf person during the interview/meeting. The sign language interpreter may need to translate written materials on the spot. If possible, provide written materials in advance so that plenty of time can be given to a translation and assistance can be given to the deaf person with filling in forms if necessary.
- To ensure that the sign language interpreter can remain a neutral party, you should stay present in the room. Avoid leaving the deaf person and the interpreter alone together.

Larger meetings with three or more people

This section describes key things to think about when organising meetings with many people involved.

- Make sure you have provided all relevant meeting information to the sign language interpreter in advance.
- Check if you need to change how you run the meeting to make it inclusive of deaf people present.

Before the meeting

- Provide the sign language interpreter with an agenda, copy of the last minutes, and any other documentation that participants will receive. The interpreter should receive these two or three days in advance of the meeting. Interpreters will keep this information fully confidential and will either hand the notes back to you after the meeting or will dispose of the notes safely.

- Provide a list of participants and their job titles/roles.
- Arrange seating so that the deaf person can see all other participants. A horseshoe or circle is best. The sign language interpreter(s) will sit opposite the deaf person and usually next to the chair or main speaker.
- If there will be presentations, ensure that the deaf person will be able to see both the interpreter and the projector screen or video.

During the meeting

- During introductions, allow additional time so the interpreter can spell out the people's names. A list of participants will enable the interpreter to spell names accurately and to identify speakers throughout the meeting. Also, extra time will allow the deaf person to look across at the person introducing themselves, if they are located away from the interpreter.
- The chair or the deaf person should introduce the interpreters. Also, going through a few basic communication guidelines will help the meeting to run smoothly.
- Only one person should speak at a time. Any simultaneous discussion or people talking over others will be lost to the deaf person. Interpreting happens one person at a time.
- If the meeting is chaired, then the chair should choose who will speak and when. It can be helpful if participants wanting to speak raise their hand before speaking - this will signal to the chair (and also the interpreter and the deaf person) who wants to speak.
- Use plain English and avoid jargon wherever possible.
- In large meetings, sign language interpreters will usually interpret simultaneously with what is being said. There will still be a short delay while the interpreter processes the information they have heard and converts it into the other language. The deaf person will therefore receive the spoken information slightly behind other participants in the meeting. The chair should allow for this time lag and check regularly whether the deaf person wishes to contribute to the discussion. The deaf person may appear to ask questions out of sync with other people due to this time lag.
- Allow time for the deaf person to read any materials or presentation handouts before you explain or discuss them. It is not possible for them to read and look at the interpreter at the same time.
- Make sure interpreters are present during tea or lunch breaks. The deaf person may want to talk socially with other participants. If only one interpreter is working, ensure that they can take at least a 20 minute break during lunch time.

Presentation, conference, or public event

This section describes key things to think about when organising a presentation, conference, or a public event to groups of people.

- Plan the use of sign language interpreters well in advance, and make sure when you make a booking that you have all the event information available.
- Make sure arrangements for sign language interpreters are treated as a core responsibility in organising the event.

- Design the event with the participation of sign language interpreters in mind.

Before the presentation or conference or public event

Sign language interpreters

- You should make a booking as soon as possible, and at least a month in advance. Several sign language interpreters will be required for conferences/events (especially if they last more than one day and/or if there will be several deaf participants or presenters). For example, if you have concurrent workshop streams, multiple deaf participants may want to attend different streams. A booking agency, a freelance sign language interpreter and/or deaf participants can advise you on how many interpreters may be needed. Ask for interpreters suitably skilled for conference level work.
- You should make sure one person is responsible for co-ordinating the interpreters' scheduling and preparation needs. This might be one of the working interpreters or one of the conference organisers. Discuss this role with the booking agency or the main point of contact for the interpreters.
- The event organiser should ideally coordinate the gathering of preparation materials, and sending these materials to the interpreter.
- Ideally interpreters should receive preparation materials at least two or three days in advance of the event. Interpreters will keep this information fully confidential and will either hand the materials back to you after the meeting or will dispose of them safely.
- If audio or video samples will be used, these will need to be seen in advance by the sign language interpreters. Video material without subtitles is especially difficult to interpret because often there are multiple speakers, some sounds are heard off-screen and room lights are usually dimmed while viewing.

Presenters

- You should inform presenters in advance that sign language interpreters will be present. Make sure you ask them for their speech notes or presentations in time for you to share them with the interpreters.
- Allow the sign language interpreters to meet with presenters in advance to explain the interpreter's role and to allow presenters to ask any questions and address concerns they may have.
- If there is a deaf presenter or if there is an opportunity for audience members to ask questions, provide the sign language interpreters with a separate microphone.

Physical environment

- Ask the sign language interpreters for advice to arrange lighting and their position. Depending on the circumstances and the number of deaf participants, the sign language interpreter(s) may be standing on stage near the presenter, or be seated off-stage facing the audience.
- If the sign language interpreters will be standing on stage, ensure that they are not placed behind the lectern or loudspeakers as they will not be able to hear the presenter.
- Reserve seating for deaf participants where they will be able to see the presenter, the sign language interpreter, and the screen clearly.

During the presentation or conference or public event

Presenters can assist sign language interpreters, and thereby improve access for deaf people to their presentation, by:

- Speaking at a normal pace, not too fast or too slow. It is helpful to pause occasionally after sentences.
- Speaking naturally and not reading directly from speech notes. The grammar of written language is different from that of spoken/signed language and there are often fewer natural pauses and hesitations. If quoting from written material, allow extra time and pause between sentences.
- Allowing time for the audience to read presentation slide or watch video clips before speaking. Deaf people need to divide their attention between the sign language interpreter and other sources of visual information.
- Using clear references to objects or pictures, and name them explicitly instead of pointing generally. For example, say “the second bullet point” rather than “this point over here”.

Radio, television, or other recorded event

This section describes key things to think about when organising an event that will be recorded for reuse or broadcast.

- Make sure everyone involved knows what is happening and what they need to do.
- Understand what arrangements are needed when using sign language interpreters and how these may be different from your usual practice when recording events.

Before the event

- Check with the deaf person if they have any preferred sign language interpreter(s).
- Inform the sign language interpreter(s) in advance if an event will be recorded. Permission should be sought from the interpreters if they are going to be visible or audible in the recording.
- Provide as much preparation material as possible: for example, notes, a list of interview questions, a list of names of people likely to speak, background papers, or statistics that will be discussed.

- Ensure that lighting is adjusted so that the sign language interpreter(s) will be clearly visible and their face is not in shadow.
- Arrange for the sign language interpreter(s) to have a lapel microphone if they are interpreting from New Zealand Sign Language into English.
- Discuss where the sign language interpreter(s) and/or the deaf person will be seated.
- There are specific requirements in terms of framing the video, camera angles, and so on. Brief camera operators on these requirements (see below).
- Important: if you are producing a product for non-live public broadcast (for example, a DVD) and want to make the information accessible to deaf people (by using New Zealand Sign Language interpretation), you should consider using a deaf person as well as or in place of a sign language interpreter. Native users of sign language (that is, deaf people) will usually be more effective in communicating information to other native users than a hearing person (such as an interpreter).

During the event

- To ensure the broadcast is accessible to a deaf audience, the person using New Zealand Sign Language (that is a deaf person or the sign language interpreter) must be visible during the entire time they are signing. This requires a continuous wide frame (rather than a close up of the face, for example). The frame should also include the person using New Zealand Sign Language from the top of their head to about waist height. New Zealand Sign Language is a visual language and uses spatial gestures to convey meaning, which may include more than hand movements.
- During live broadcasts, allow for the time lag between the speaker and the sign language interpreter. In the case of a radio broadcast, you may need to explain to the audience why there is a delay (or silence).
- For radio broadcasts where a deaf person is being interviewed, you may wish to explain that the voice being heard is that of the sign language interpreter and not the deaf person.

After the event

- You may want to provide a transcript of radio programmes which have had the involvement of deaf people.
- During editing, you may need advice from someone who understands New Zealand Sign Language. This will ensure, for example, that a New Zealand Sign Language user is not cut off mid-way during a sentence.
- For a pre-recorded radio programme, it may be appropriate to consider re-recording an interpretation to replace the original recording. Live sign language interpreting may have interruptions, hesitations or mistakes (just as any live speech). Where this would disrupt the natural flow for the listener, a re-recording may be useful.
- It may also be the case that a preferred sign language interpreter was not available for a radio recording but can be available for later editing. Ask the deaf person and/or the sign language interpreter involved in the original recording for advice.

Telephone interpreting

This section describes key things to think about when a sign language interpreter uses the telephone to facilitate communication between a deaf person and a hearing person.

- Understand that using the telephone to communicate with a deaf person will be different to talking with a hearing person.
- Telephone interpreting will usually be initiated by a deaf person.

Before the event

- Sign language interpreting through the telephone is different to telephone interpreting for other languages. Most telephone interpreter services are a way of contacting an interpreter who is remote from the person and service provider. However, sign language interpreters will be in the same location as the deaf person making the telephone call.
- You will not usually have any booking or payment responsibilities for the sign language interpreter. Instead, the deaf person who wishes to make the telephone call will book the interpreter.
- Because there is no face-to-face contact and telephone calls may be received at any time, it is not usually necessary or possible to prepare for a specific call. You should, however, ensure that relevant staff (such as receptionists, secretaries, case workers) are aware that interpreted calls may be received and that they are up-to-date with departmental policies on interpreted telephone calls (for example, what to do when customer identification is required).

During the event

- At the start of the call, it is usual to say upfront that it is an interpreted telephone call. For example, the deaf person may introduce themselves by stating their name and that they are speaking through an interpreter.
- Just as with face-to-face interpreting, there will be a delay while the interpreter processes the information they have heard and translates it into the other language. When you cannot see the other participants in a conversation, the pauses may seem very long. Please be patient and allow time for the deaf person to receive the information via the interpreter.
- Overlapping speech and signing can be difficult to control on a telephone call where there is no visual contact between parties. The sign language interpreter may need to interrupt more frequently to ensure communication happens smoothly.
- Take extra care when saying names, providing telephone numbers or contact details, or other information that the deaf person may need. The interpreter may ask you to repeat such details slowly to ensure that they are accurately conveyed. The deaf person will not be able to write these details down at the same time as looking at the sign language interpreter.

Working with deaf staff members

This section discusses how to ensure effective communication with deaf staff in your organisation.

- Making a workplace inclusive for deaf people may mean doing some things differently.
- Check with the deaf people involved to understand how you can make sure they are included in work activities on an equal basis with others (both job-related and social).

Employing deaf staff can result in increasing a department's accessibility to, and contact with, the deaf community. As the deaf employee is a member of the deaf community, their presence may change the reputation of the department so that it is perceived as more welcoming of deaf people. This section assumes the deaf staff member uses New Zealand Sign Language, but this may not always be the case.

Before being employed - the recruitment process

The recruitment and selection process should be inclusive of deaf people. This means making it clear that sign language interpreters can be provided if needed, such as for interviews.

After being employed - an inclusive workplace

Ask the deaf staff member about their communication requirements, such as how they may want to use sign language interpreters and whether they prefer a certain booking arrangement or booking agency.

Provide sign language interpreters throughout a deaf staff member's induction, including some 'social' time to allow the new staff member to get to know colleagues.

Discuss with the deaf staff member who will be responsible for booking sign language interpreters. Ensure that the person taking on this responsibility knows what to do to ensure effective communication happens - you should not automatically leave it with the deaf staff member, as the issue is about ensuring staff can communicate and work effectively together.

You should book an interpreter for all situations where there is a lot of information being exchanged or many people involved, such as staff meetings, training sessions, or performance appraisals.

Much of the day-to-day office interaction will be missed by a deaf staff member. Arranging for a regular catch-up session (not necessarily a formal meeting) where a sign language interpreter is present is essential for the deaf staff member to be included as part of the team.

You may want to consider other ways to ensure the deaf staff member does not miss out on important information or informal interactions with other staff, such as using email to share information from conversations or impromptu meetings.

Arranging meetings at regular times, and in advance, will increase the chance of having an interpreter available.

If possible, book the same interpreter(s) for the same series of meetings. This will help with continuity, and knowledge of language and content specialised to the department.

Be aware that sign language interpreters may not immediately understand the jargon of your workplace. Provide the interpreters with a list of commonly used abbreviations, any relevant background documents, and technical terms prior to the meeting.

Employing a sign language interpreter

It may be more practical and economical to employ a sign language interpreter on a part-time or full-time basis, rather than using a booking agency or hiring freelance sign language interpreters. This is particularly the case if there is more than one deaf staff in your department, or the deaf staff member's job involves a lot of meetings and/or public contact.

Having a sign language interpreter on your staff means that ad hoc or rescheduled meetings can take place more easily, and that the deaf staff member can be more fully included in day-to-day office interactions.

Sign language interpreters working in the office on a part-time or full-time basis still require regular breaks during their active interpreting time.

Ensure that lunch, morning and afternoon breaks are kept free of interpreting tasks. If there is a shared coffee/tea session in which the deaf staff member takes part, ensure that the interpreter is able to take their break before or afterwards.

A desk and office space will be required for the sign language interpreter. Having a desk opposite the deaf staff member will make interaction easier.

Preparation materials for meetings are still required. Schedule time into the interpreter's day when they can read through preparation materials.

If there are significant parts of the day where no interpreting is required, discuss any additional duties (for example, translation, developing resources or administrative tasks) with the sign language interpreter. Such duties should be formally included in their job description and contract.

Some events (for example meetings longer than two hours) will need an additional sign language interpreter booked to work with the staff interpreter. Make sure it is clear who will be responsible for making and co-ordinating such bookings.

It can be difficult for sign language interpreters employed in the workplace to reconcile their duties under the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) Code of Ethics with their position as colleagues of deaf and hearing staff. For example, they should never interject their personal opinion during an interpreting assignment. However, if they are expected to interpret throughout the day this does not mean that they should not speak to their colleagues at all. Discuss such issues with the interpreter and the deaf staff member before the interpreter starts employment and regularly review how things are going.

Sign language interpreters employed in the workplace should take part in performance appraisals and professional development just as other members of staff.

Part 5: Resources and further information

This section has further information about topics covered in this guide, a sample booking form, other communications professionals, and principles for government agencies.

Sample sign language interpreter booking form

A sample form to use when booking sign language interpreters is available for your use. It contains key information needed by the booking agency/interpreter when first considering a booking request.

When making first contact, you need to give:

- Organisation billing address – who is paying?
- Contact person – who is organising the meeting/event
- Date, time and location of meeting/event
- Name(s) of deaf people involved
- Description of the meeting/event – what is going to happen?
- Description of information about the meeting/event that will be provided to the sign language interpreter in advance.
(A sample form is available at the end of this document.)

In the following sections, read more about:

- What is New Zealand Sign Language?
- Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand
- Other communication professionals
- Department policy on sign language interpreting
- Contact addresses
- New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 – Principles for government agencies.

What is New Zealand Sign Language?

New Zealand Sign Language (commonly abbreviated to NZSL) is one of the three official languages of New Zealand. It is a language based on vision rather than sound. Ideas are expressed through signs, facial expressions and body language. Most countries have their own national sign language. Signing is not a 'universal language'. New Zealand Sign Language has developed naturally, over time, through being used by the deaf community in New Zealand. It is not an artificially created communication system.

Just like spoken languages, sign languages have grammatical rules for creating sentences. The rules of New Zealand Sign Language are different from the rules of English. The word order in a sentence in New Zealand Sign Language is often different to that in an English sentence. There is also not always a one-for-one correspondence between an English word and a New Zealand Sign Language sign.

From questions asked in the 2006 Census, some 7,000 - 9,000 New Zealand Sign Language users are estimated to be deaf people.

In the past, misconceptions about the nature of sign language (thought to be an inferior mode of communication and not really a language at all) led to the active prohibition of New Zealand Sign Language in New Zealand schools. This prohibition has had far-reaching consequences for many deaf people, including low academic achievement, low levels of literacy in written and spoken English, and limited career options as a result.

The recognition of New Zealand Sign Language through the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 is a major step forward in improving the lives of deaf people. However, this recognition is still too recent to have had a significant impact on the many inequalities that deaf people face on a daily basis.

Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ)

The Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand (SLIANZ) is the national professional body for sign language interpreters. SLIANZ represents and advances the profession of sign language interpreting by keeping members and consumers informed, and by promoting high standards of practice and integrity in the field.

Directory of New Zealand Sign Language interpreters

All SLIANZ-member interpreters listed in the directory have completed the minimum of diploma training or equivalent / higher overseas training. In the directory, the interpreter's year of qualification is listed (giving some indication of level of experience) as well as preferred areas of work. SLIANZ is not a booking agency. Sign language interpreters listed in the directory should be contacted directly if a booking is desired. Go to download the SLIANZ directory at: <http://slianz.org.nz/index.php?page=interpreter-s-directory>

Code of Ethics

Impartiality

Interpreters shall never counsel, advise or interject personal opinions during the interpreting assignment. Interpreters shall not allow their personal interests and beliefs to influence the interpreting assignment. Interpreters shall remove themselves if the interpretation is influenced by a lack of impartiality

Confidentiality

Interpreters shall treat as confidential any information gained through an assignment, including the fact of their having undertaken an assignment

Competency

Interpreters shall only accept assignments in which they can reasonably expect to interpret competently having ascertained the level of skill required, the setting and the consumers involved. If an interpreter believes he/she is not able to interpret competently he/she will inform both parties and negotiate an acceptable solution

Accuracy

Interpreters will, to the best of their ability interpret the meaning of the message in the manner in which it was intended without adding or omitting anything

Professional Development

Interpreters shall continue to further their knowledge and skills by attending professional development or training activities, maintaining good working relations with colleagues, and keeping abreast of current literature and practice in the field

Complaints procedure

If you have a complaint about an interpreter who is registered with SLIANZ, your first point of call should be the interpreter themselves, or the agency through which the interpreter was booked. If the complaint cannot be resolved in this way, please contact the SLIANZ Secretary by email:

secretary@slianz.org.nz . Read the SLIANZ complaints procedure: <http://slianz.org.nz/index.php?page=complaints-procedure-2>

Other communication professionals

This section describes other professionals involved with facilitating communication between different kinds of people.

Relay interpreters/visual language specialists

In some situations providing a sign language interpreter alone is not sufficient to ensure effective communication. A deaf person who works as an intermediary (or relay) between the interpreter and the deaf person may be needed.

The role of this relay interpreter is to communicate the message using gesture and other visual strategies that are modified to suit the deaf person. They clarify any unusual, foreign, or personal signs that the deaf person is using which the sign language interpreter will not understand.

You should consider using a relay interpreter if you are aware that the deaf person has difficulty communicating using a sign language interpreter, or if you suspect that this may be the case.

For example, the deaf person may:

- have minimal language competence, so that they have difficulty in communicating clearly in any language form
- have mental health difficulties, which affect their ability to communicate clearly
- be deafblind
- use a foreign sign language for which no sign language interpreter can be found.

The use of visual language specialists/relay interpreters is still relatively new in New Zealand, although it is increasingly common overseas. For example, it has been used in overseas courts and mental health situations.

There is currently no training or qualification for visual language specialists/relay interpreters in New Zealand.

Where a visual language specialist/relay interpreter is required, you should talk with Deaf Aotearoa or other interpreter booking meeting.

Oral interpreters for lip readers

An oral interpreter is someone who will silently mouth a speaker's words so that a deaf/hearing impaired person, who does not use sign language, can lip-read. The oral interpreter may paraphrase what is being said, choosing words that are easier to lip-read. They may also use facial expressions, gestures or fingerspelling to communicate effectively.

The training programme for sign language interpreters in New Zealand has some limited training on oral interpreting. Some oral interpreters may have trained overseas where the role is also sometimes known as lipspeaking. Requests for oral interpreters are rare - if you do receive a request, your booking agency may be able to assist.

Electronic note-takers and captioners

Electronic note-takers are typists who type summarised notes on a laptop. The notes may be projected onto a screen or sent to another laptop where they can be read by the deaf/hearing impaired person.

Captioners use specialist software and/or specialist keyboards (such as a stenographer's keyboard) to take a word-for-word record of what is being said.

There are very few captioners in New Zealand, and most trained electronic note-takers are employed in the education sector. If you are looking for an electronic note-taker for a one-to-one meeting or small group meeting, you could ask an administrator or minute taker with typing skills to perform this role.

Department policy on sign language interpreting

This section suggests it is useful for departments to have an agreed policy on using sign language interpreters.

The New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 urges government departments and agencies to increase the accessibility of their services to deaf people through the use of New Zealand Sign Language.

Development and implementation of a New Zealand Sign Language interpreting policy can be useful for a department, so that there is consistent awareness of a deaf person's right to have an interpreter during meetings (whether staff or the public) throughout all levels of the organisation. It should also make clear responsibility for booking and paying for the interpreters.

Budgeting (including a budget for interpreting services) will be a crucial part of departmental policies around sign language interpreting.

Departments are expected to cover any costs from their baseline budgets as part of their general responsibilities to ensure the public can access and use their service. Interpreters should not be viewed as special add ons.

We suggest that you first check whether your department or agency has New Zealand Sign Language and/or interpreting policies in place. There may be a general interpreters and translators' policy, for example, that may be adapted to incorporate the specific needs of sign language interpreting.

Contact addresses

This section lists contact addresses for sign language interpreter associations, booking agencies, and other organisations providing services for deaf people.

Specialised sign language interpreter booking agencies

Deaf Aoteaora

PO Box 15 770, New Lynn, Auckland

Phone: 09 828 3282 (also TTY number) Fax: 09 828 3235

Email: national@deaf.co.nz

Website: <http://www.deaf.org.nz>

iSign

PO Box 15 770 , New Lynn, AUCKLAND

Phone: 09 820 5176 Fax: 09 820 5039

Email: info@isign.co.nz

Website: <http://www.isign.co.nz>

Advanced Interpreting Management Services (AIMS)

7A Spring Street, PO Box 13-498, Onehunga, Auckland

Email: aims@aims.nz

Website: <http://www.aims.nz>

SLIANZ directory of sign language interpreters

Website: <http://slianz.org.nz/index.php?page=interpreter-s-directory>

General interpreting booking agencies

Interpreting New Zealand

61 Taranaki Street, PO Box 6472, Wellington Website: <http://www.interpret.org.nz>

Phone: daytime (9am to 5pm) 04 384 2265 or after hours (24 Hours) 04 384 2849

Email: info@interpret.org.nz

Sign language interpreting services in health-related settings

Auckland District Health Board Interpreter Service

Level 5, Building 4, Greenlane Clinical Centre, 214 Green Lane West, Epsom, Auckland

Phone: 09 630 9943 Email: bonniey@adhb.govt.nz or sapnam@adhb.govt.nz

Website: <http://www.adhb.govt.nz/Sites-Services/interpreting.htm>

Health Interpreting and Translation Services

Middlemore Hospital, PO Box 98 743, South Auckland Mail Centre, Auckland

Phone: 09 276 0044 Fax: 09 276 0198 Email: its@middlemore.co.nz

Website: <http://www.middlemore.co.nz/Funded-Services/Hospital-Specialist/Services/Middlemore/interpreting.htm>

Waitemata Auckland Translation and Interpreting Services

Private Bag 93 503, Takapuna, Auckland 1332

Phone: 09 443 3211 Fax: 09 486 8307 Email: watis@waitematadhb.govt.nz

Website: <http://www.healthpoint.co.nz/default,51125.sm?solo=supportServices&index=3>

Organisations of deaf people

Deaf Aoteaora

PO Box 15 770, New Lynn, Auckland

Phone: 09 828 3282 (also TTY number) Fax: 09 828 3235 Email: national@deaf.co.nz Website: <http://www.deaf.org.nz>

DeafBlind New Zealand

54 Stewart Drive, Newlands, Wellington

Phone: 04 477 2114 Fax: 04 477 2115 Email: dbnz@ihug.co.nz Website: <http://www.deafblind.org.nz>

Training in New Zealand Sign Language

Auckland University of Technology (AUT)

Programme Coordinator, Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting, 55 Wellesley St East, Auckland, Private Bag 92006, Auckland

Phone: 0800 288 864 or 09 921 9999 Fax: 09 921 9957

Website: <http://www.autuni.ac.nz/languages/study-options/Diploma-in-Sign-Language-Interpreting/>

Professional associations of interpreters

Sign Language Interpreters Association New Zealand (SLIANZ)

PO Box 6090, Wellesley Street, Auckland

Email: secretary@slianz.org.nz Website: <http://www.slianz.org.nz>

New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI)

PO Box 109-677 , Newmarket, Auckland 1149

Email info@nzsti.org Website: <http://www.nzsti.org/>

Providers of services for deaf people

Deaf Mental Health Service (Richmond New Zealand)

PO Box 12599, Penrose, Auckland

Phone: 09 579 8415 Fax: 09 579 5952 Email: adubbelt@richmond.org.nz Website: <http://www.richmondnz.org.nz>

LIFE Unlimited Hearing Therapy Services

Level 5, 26 Brandon Street, PO Box 25 173, Wellington

Phone: 04 499 5851 Fax: 04 499 5853 Email: htsinfo@life.nzl.org Website: http://www.life.nzl.org/page/life_11.php

National Foundation for the Deaf

205 Parnell Rd, PO Box 37729, Parnell, Auckland

Phone: 0800 867 446 or 09 307 2922 Fax: 09 307 2923 Email: enquiries@nfd.org.nz Website: <http://www.nfd.org.nz>

NZ Relay Service

Private Bag 4, Pukekohe, Auckland

Phone: 0800 4 712 712 Website: <http://www.nzrelay.co.nz>

Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind

Awhina House, 4 Maunsell Road, Parnell, Private Bag 99941, Auckland

Phone: 09 355 6900 or 0800 24 33 33 (information and advice line)

Fax: 09 366 0099 Email: general@rnzfb.org.nz

Website: <http://www.rnzfb.org.nz/ourservices/servicesforspecificgroups/deafblindservices>

New Zealand Sign Language Act - Principles to guide government departments

Section 9 of the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 specifies principles to guide government agencies for the purpose of promoting access to government information and services for the deaf community:

- (1) A government department should, when exercising its functions and powers, be guided, so far as reasonably practicable, by the following principles:
 - (a) the deaf community should be consulted on matters relating to NZSL (including, for example, the promotion of the use of NZSL):
 - (b) NZSL should be used in the promotion to the public of government services and in the provision of information to the public:
 - (c) government services and information should be made accessible to the deaf community through the use of appropriate means (including the use of NZSL).
- (2) Consultation carried out by a government department under subsection (1)(a) is to be effected by the chief executive of the government department consulting, to the extent that is reasonably practicable, with the persons or organisations that the chief executive considers to be representative of the interests of the members of the deaf community relating to NZSL.
- (3) The purpose of the principles in subsection (1) is to promote access to government information and services for the deaf community, but nothing in subsection (1) is to be read as conferring on the deaf community advantages not enjoyed by other persons.

SLIANZ Occupational Safety and Health Standard Practice paper

The following information is provided by SLIANZ as a position paper/standard practice paper/best practice paper.

As with all occupations in New Zealand, Sign Language Interpreting is covered by the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. One of the major health and safety concerns for Sign Language interpreters is Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS); this is also known by many other names such as Repetitive Strain Injury, Cumulative Trauma Disorder, Cumulative Motion Injury.

In 2005 SLIANZ undertook a major study of various aspects of interpreting, part of this study was to survey members regarding the occurrence of OOS. Results showed that 64% (23/36 respondents) of interpreters either have or have had a work related injury of some kind. This percentage can be compared to overseas figures Australia 32% (Madden: 1999) USA 82% (Scheuerle, Guilford and Habal: 2000) Areas affected by injury include lower back, upper back, neck, shoulder, upper arm, outside elbow, inside elbow, lower arm, wrist and fingers.

Injury can occur in sign language interpreters due to the forceful, speedy, repetitive movements of signing whilst working under the pressure of the mental processing involved in interpreting, often combined with insufficient rest breaks and awkward positioning. The continuous occurrence of these factors can place an interpreter at risk of injury.

“Excessive repetitive movements with out adequate rest breaks cause micro traumas to the tissues. With a rest break, the body can heal itself. Without the break, the body then begins its inflammatory response in order to heal the injury. During the inflammatory response, the body sends signals to let us know that the healing process has begun: redness, pain, swelling, warmth and loss of range to the range of motion. If during the healing process, the muscles are used repeatedly, the injured area begins to swell more and more edema can develop.” Gary Sanderson (date unknown)

As a professional association for Sign Language interpreters in New Zealand we believe provision of interpreters is important in any situation where a Deaf person or sign language user needs to access information. We also believe that any provision of interpreting services must take place in a safe and healthy environment. To allow this to happen the following should be applied.

- Provide 5 – 10 mins of rest break for each 30 – 45 mins of interpreting
- In assignments exceeding 1 hour in length, use or book 2 interpreters
- Ensure adequate preparation materials are provided to interpreters at least 24 hours prior to the assignment taking place. This includes copies of notes, PowerPoint slides, speeches and also any audio-visual materials such as videos.
- Encourage interpreters to learn how to identify risks to themselves and undertake training on prevention of OOS Discuss and work with the interpreter to analyse the work environment. Work together to identify and eliminate possible risk factors. Examples of this may include use of chairs which can be adjusted to meet ergonomic needs of individual interpreters, remaining in one place for long periods of time, interpreting in awkward positions, lighting, temperature control.

Interpreters also need to take responsibility for their own health and safety in the workplace. We recommend interpreters work with employers to ensure the above points are utilised in an assignment and also put the following into use as part of their professional practice.

- Use your discretion to ensure a team interpreter is booked where required for assignments over one-hour duration.
- Make sure adequate breaks are taken during the day. Ensure you have a proper morning, lunch and afternoon break.
- Balance working hours over a week.
- If returning to work after a lengthy break, ease back into full time work slowly, building up to 5 or 6 hours a day over the course of a week or two.
- If problems occur bring them to the attention of management immediately. Don't carry on working in an unsafe environment. Report any potential hazards as soon as possible.
- Think about your signing style, can it be modified to lessen stress on joints.
- Make a habit of stretching before and after an assignment.
- Educate yourself to the risk factors involved in your profession and undertake measures to lessen the risk to yourself.

References:

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Scheuerle, J Guilford, M & Habal, M. B: Work-Related Cumulative Trauma Disorders and Interpreters for the Deaf (2000) in Applied occupational and Environmental Hygiene Volume 15(5): 429-434, 2000

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