

Successfully Coping with Interpreter Shortages

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San Diego Community College District

Abstract

Providing accommodations to Deaf and hard of hearing students in postsecondary education is an on-going challenge. Faced with a shortage of interpreters in the 1998-1999 academic year, the San Diego Community College District took a number of steps aimed at increasing the number of interpreters available and reducing the negative impact of the shortage. Additionally, three Office of Civil Rights (OCR) complaints were filed in the Spring of 1999 related to interpreting services. The OCR findings and process will be reviewed. The importance of a collaborative approach between students, administrators, DSPS staff, and interpreters will be emphasized.

Introduction

A discussion regarding the supply and demand of interpreting services will be covered. This presentation will provide some helpful 'tips' that pertain to your institutional needs to allow you ways of alleviating shortages of interpreters. While we cover 'alternate' options, the issues discussed, in addition to the forms attached for review are items for which OCR gave us their 'stamp of approval.'

Your institution's goal: to be able to follow a 'goal' for your program, you need to clearly develop a goal that is for students, interpreters, and all parties involved when providing services. Without a goal, you are unable to strive towards something for accomplishment. For example, our institution's goal is:

To provide consistently high quality interpreting and captioning services.

Having a goal allows you to understand the purpose behind it through the provision of services and how you want it to affect the involved

parties. It gives the department 'an expectation' to meet and an expectation to which they feel obligated.

Outside Experts

We asked WROCC to come and do a program review of our institution's interpreting services department. We also included the ADA/Section 504 Officer to participate with the revision of forms, policies, and procedures.

Communication

Communication is a key factor involved in successfully providing services. Some of the people you need to communicate with are:

- Interpreters
- Counselors
- Students
- Faculty/Staff

Interpreter Involvement

Recruiting interpreters is almost always something we pursue. Your current staff is almost always the source of 'PR' that goes around in the community. Therefore, work closely with your current staff, address concerns or issues, and reward them—they in turn will provide 'positive' recruitment possibilities!

Incentives

While we may offer a variety of incentives, we continue to strive more to fit the needs of today's interpreters. A list of the following incentives are ways you can prolong your pool of interpreters' interest in staying with your institution:

Guaranteed Hours—provide those only with higher levels and most available schedules to accommodate your needs. In return they will receive guaranteed hours which shows they are of ‘higher priority’ as well.

Prep Time—we expect our interpreters to go into a class/assignment – **READY!** Build in prep time in their schedule, depending on the type of course load they have. It shows you want them to do their job prepared, which becomes ‘high quality’ services provided.

Professional Development—just like many counselors, supervisors/managers, clerical staff, faculty, etc., interpreters attend professional development opportunities/conferences during their working hours; therefore, they should be paid to attend them as well. If they want to obtain CEUs, then they need to cover those costs themselves.

Scheduling Options—Give them their ‘choices’ of classes they’d like to interpret, schedule by priority, and try to work around their preferred schedule.

- **Materials/Books** – Provide materials and books needed for their assignments; this is also used in addition to Prep Time to help them become familiar with ‘tomorrow’s’ assignments, and be prepared. We also have a ‘office/lounge’ for them, storage for their books, tv/vcr for video practice/prep, etc.
- **Parking/Mileage** – Give them **STAFF** parking privileges, mileage to and from other sites, and field trips. Give them staff parking because you want them to arrive to their assignments relaxed, not late or frustrated due to the overcrowded student parking, if you treat yourself as staff – they should be treated with the same privilege!
- **Teams**—we provide teams for classes of 50 minutes or more, depending on the class (lab, low demand, etc). You will prevent injuries and burnout, and quality as well as support are better due to the relief time they have in team situations.
- **Mentoring**—self explanatory, depending on your program size, abilities; check with them to see what type of mentoring program they’d like. This shows you want to see their skills en-

hanced, you are providing ‘evaluations’ through this use!

- **Monthly Meetings**—Keep staff informed of things (big or small), and make them feel important!
- **Pagers**—provide pagers to those with 20 hours or more, and open schedules to allow you to use them for sub assignments, adhoc, special requests. Save yourself the trouble of calling a dozen answering machines! You will get a faster response and confirmation from them!

Advertise

Advertise for any interpreting position through all means of publications possible! Don’t narrow your areas! Some of the places we advertised in were: Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Views Newsletter, local chapters; local organizations and affiliations; college ITP; community; and networking Groups.

Handbook Policies & Procedures

When developing handbooks for interpreters, include them in this process, because they are ‘on the job’ and can provide valuable input. This is also a way of ‘recognizing’ their importance with the institution—the administration or other departments that create the handbook do not always create them from an interpreter’s perspective or role.

- Developed policies which included input from interpreters on staff.
- Covered the handbook during staff meetings to ensure all were up to date on policy changes or new procedures.
- Obtained input on developing a standard protocol for assigning interpreters into classes appropriately.

Skill Development Opportunities

We provide skill development workshops on a frequent basis. One of the ways to determine what types of workshops is through a survey from your interpreters regarding what they’d like. One of the incentives we discussed earlier

was that we provide these workshops, and we PAY them to attend—the idea is to align with interpreters just like with any other staff professional who are often ‘required’ or encouraged to attend professional development workshops/seminars.

- Prior to each semester, offer three days of skill development workshops related to interpreting, and pay hourly interpreters for attendance.
- Offer one workshop ‘mid-semester’ that is open to all interpreters within post-secondary interpreting experiences.
- Staff development—Allow interpreters to meet each other and see who they will work with (as a team) by providing an informal gathering (ie: BBQ)

Collaboration with ITP

Many ITPs require some type of field work/intern hours completed—this is an intimidating experience for anyone new to this field! Staff interpreters are a good source of those facing ‘reality!’ and can help alleviate the fears ITP students may have. Getting the most experience from their field work is through actual professionals!

- Provides ‘pillar’ of support for incoming/newcomers getting into the interpreting field.
- Establish connections with future potential interpreters to work for the District and already have some type of ‘rapport’ with them beforehand.
- Experience/expertise given to new interpreters, and benefits as well as further fulfills the Deaf Community needs.

Establish Criterion:

To determine interpreter assignments if/when a shortage exists:

1. Assign priority by date of request for interpreting services.
2. When different sessions of the same class are offered, provide incentives for students to voluntarily group in the same class session.
3. Designate specific sections of high demand courses districtwide which are guar-

anteed to have an assigned sign language interpreter.

4. The establishment of an English class for Deaf students taught by an instructor fluent in ASL.

5. Explore accommodations that might serve as an alternative to the District’s almost exclusive reliance on sign language interpreters to accommodate Deaf students.

6. When allocating sign language interpreters, prioritize academic courses over non academic courses, such as physical education (unless it is vocationally related).

To determine whether a Deaf student in a particular class will be assigned real-time captioning:

1. The class is offered at an impacted time.
2. The course has a prerequisite or advisory reading skill level of 5.
3. The course is primarily lecture.

Counselor Involvement

- Regular ISO/Counselor Meetings—keep each other informed of students concerns, and issues and address them immediately. You want to avoid ‘surprises’
- Email communication—we all have busy schedules, and we try to meet with students, faculty, staff, etc. There is no reason you can’t email each other with even ‘not so urgent’ information.
- Meet with students and counselors regarding their services and/or concerns—if you have tried to work with the student on the provision of their services, often times a meeting with their counselor in addition will allow you to address other options. Counselors may also have additional input that correspond with students’ services.

Faculty/Staff Involvement

- Provide notices too faculty regarding a Deaf student using interpreting or Real-time Captioning (RTC) services in their class. We developed a ‘letter/notice’ that includes students’ names and which class, brief tips, etc.

- Develop a pamphlet for instructors to obtain a quick overview of how the services work and tips on working with them. The pamphlet should be designed for instructors and include information on the interpreters' roles, tips on utilizing them efficiently, why there are two (team), what to do if the interpreter does not show up, and a fingerspelling chart. Keep this simple and to the point, instructors often don't read pages of literature.
- Offer a workshop during Flex/In Staff Day to cover interpreting and RTC Services. Provide a workshop to allow instructors get a first-hand idea of what it is like having an interpreter in the classroom by having an actual team of interpreters interpreting the workshop; have a demonstration of RTC.

Managing Demand

This section of our presentation deals specifically with what steps were taken to minimize the adverse impacts of interpreter shortages. The most significant measure that can be taken is to communicate *frequently* with students and others in your college(s).

Identify stakeholders

An essential step in coping effectively with the demand for interpreters is to identify those constituencies who have an interest in this area. Clearly Deaf and hard of hearing students are of utmost importance. While these students are the "consumers" of these services it is critical that frequent and open communication also occur with the following people:

- Interpreters
- Counselors working with Deaf/hard of hearing students
- Instructional Faculty
- DSPS Coordinator
- Administrators
- Deaf Community

A team approach

In the San Diego Community College District DSPS counselors work directly with Deaf students to determine class schedules. In order to keep counselors fully informed, we found it essential to have regular meetings between DSPS counselors and Interpreting Services Office (ISO) personnel. These meetings facilitated the timely and accurate sharing of information regarding upcoming deadlines, problem identification and problem solving, updated information on interpreter supply and demand, and joint planning on communications with students. By keeping counselors thoroughly updated, they could in turn share accurate information with students, thereby helping students make informed decisions as to what classes to register for each term.

Communications with students

Examples are attached (see appendices) of letters that were sent from the ISO approximately two weeks before the beginning of priority registration, encouraging students to take advantage of early registration. Additionally, an extensive orientation program for new and returning Deaf students was held before the beginning of the fall semester at which interpreting services information was shared and discussed.

An integral part of the orientation program was exposure to real-time-captioning (RTC) technology. A captionist was present at the orientation to interpreting services and students had the opportunity to have hands-on use of this technology and understand its advantages and limitations. At the orientation program students were also educated about their rights and responsibilities under ADA as well as informed about the Office of Civil Rights decisions.

Letters were also sent out by DSPS counselors regarding registration, and these too are attached. An essential part of these letters was information to the students regarding grouping. Students were informed in these letters about which classes were already assigned an interpreter and were encouraged to register for these classes if they were appropriate for that student.

Outside Expert

Jeanne M. Kincaid, Esq., an attorney with extensive experience dealing with the ADA and laws relating to students with disabilities, was hired by the District to meet with staff and students regarding the OCR report and its implications. Ms. Kincaid also met with ISO staff and DSPS staff to review policies, procedures, and forms.

Alternative accommodations when interpreters are not available

In order to clearly establish that interpreters are not available, it is necessary to document a diligent search. This means that you must do everything possible to recruit and hire interpreters, including advertising outside of your geographical area, offering competitive wages, contacting local interpreting agencies, etc. It is essential that everything you do with regard to this activity be documented in order to prove that you have done an exhaustive search.

Once you have done an exhaustive search (please note that this search needs to be on-going), and you are at the point where you have a request for interpreting services that you are not able to meet, then you need to document an offer of alternative services, being clear as to what the student must do to obtain these services.

Real-time-captioning is one alternative service that is available. It has been our experience that early in the scheduling/registration process a letter needs to go to students for which RTC may be an alternative and who are registered in classes, informing them of this potential. A copy of this letter is attached. This letter outlines the criteria used to determine the assignment of RTC and indicates that if the ISO is not able to obtain interpreting services then RTC will be provided as an alternate accommodation.

The criteria that the San Diego Community College District has used to determine if a class is appropriate for RTC is as follows:

- The class is offered at an impacted time. (Impacted time is defined as that time when the demand for interpreters exceeds the supply of interpreters.)

- The class has a prerequisite or advisory reading skill level of 5. This is the reading level of the lowest level English class required for matriculation.
- The class is primarily lecture format.

What we've learned and then shared with stakeholders from our experiences with OCR

A. Have a process in place to address interpreter shortages.

To develop this process we did self-evaluations, consulted with outside experts and implemented recommendations from a WROCC review of our interpreting services program.

B. Not all students requesting sign language interpreting services will necessarily receive them. (A common misperception is that ADA "entitles" students to interpreting services. It is our understanding that this is not the case.)

C. The SDCCD also uses the following set of questions to assist in determining where to assign its limited interpreting services:

1. Is this the last course the student needs for graduation?
2. Is this a basic academic course that the student needs in order to succeed in any other course of study?
3. Is this a critical course for the major?
4. Are there several sections of this class offered?
5. Is this course offered anywhere else in the District or at a different time?
6. Is this a course that is offered every semester at a variety of times?
7. Will any alternate times work for the student?
8. Does the subject matter lend itself to the use of RTC?
9. How was the student affected by the shortage of interpreters during the previous semester(s)?

Attachments

Date

Dear

Greetings from Mesa College! I hope you are having an enjoyable summer. All of us at Mesa College are BUSY preparing for August 23, the start of the Fall semester.

In an effort to maximize sign language and real time captioning interpreting services students have been requested to plan their schedules carefully with the assistance of the DSPS Counselor. I will also discuss with you the factors which will be considered if interpreting requests need to be prioritized: date of request for interpreting service; classes with more than one deaf student; designated high demand courses; real time captioning options; etc.

I am concerned because I have not yet heard from you regarding classes for the Fall semester, which begins in 4 weeks. It requires time to set up quality support services (sign language interpreting, notetaking, real time captioning, test proctoring, etc.).

For your convenience, two drop-in-scheduling parties are available:

Tuesday July 27 9:30-noon room I108

Wednesday July 28 11: 30-1 : 30pm room F262

A schedule of classes where sign language or real time captioning interpreting services have already been authorized is posted in the DSPS office room H202. Please take a look at the schedule and consider joining these classes, as appropriate. Some benefits of "grouping" with other deaf students are:

- Save skilled interpreters' time (more time available to interpret other classes).
- You can have a deaf study partner from your class.
- If you are absent, you can get the lecture information from other deaf students.
- Priority for receipt of interpreting services.

I look forward to working closely with you to meet your educational and service needs for the Fall 1999 semester.

Sincerely,

Julie Pludow
DSPS Counselor Specialist

Disabled Students Programs and Services

STUDENT DISCLAIMER

Student Name: _____

I have requested sign-language interpreting or real-time-captioning services for:

Semester	Class	CRN	Days/Time
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I have been advised that there is/are _____ other section/s of _____ open and available which have an assigned sign-language interpreter or real-time-captionist. I have chosen to take a different section instead of joining a class with an assigned sign-language interpreter or captionist.

I have been advised that every effort will be made to find a sign-language interpreter or captionist for my requested class, but one **may not** be available for my class.

I have been advised that due to my decision I will need to take advantage of other available support services including a notetaker. I have been advised to talk with my DSPS Counselor to request alternative supportive accommodations as soon as possible.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

DSPS Counselor: _____

Disclaimer799.doc

White: Student

Yellow: DSPS Counselor

Disabled Students Programs and Services

STUDENT DISCLAIMER –IMPACTED CLASSES

Student Name: _____

I have requested sign-language interpreting or real-time-captioning services for:

Semester	Class	CRN	Days/Time
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I have been advised that this is an “impacted” time, meaning that a large number of students have requested sign-language interpreting or real-time-captioning services at this same time.

I have been advised that every effort will be made to find a sign-language interpreter or captionist for my requested class, but one **may not** be available for my class.

I have been advised that due to my decision to request sign-language interpreting or captioning services at an impacted time I will need to take advantage of other available support services including a notetaker. I have been advised to talk with my DSPS Counselor to request alternative supportive accommodations as soon as possible.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

DSPS Counselor: _____

Disclaimer-Impacted799.doc

White: Student

Yellow: DSPS Counselor

Interpreting Services Office
Mesa College – Room F204d
(858) 627-2993 tty
(858) 627-2481 fax
(858) 627-2944 voice

IMPORTANT!!

Student Name:

Date:

You were absent on _____ from your _____ class and did not call the Interpreting Services Office 24 hours before the beginning of your class. It is your responsibility to tell us 24 hours before your class starts that you will be absent.

CALL:

(858) 627-2993 (tty) – 24 hour answering machine

_____ **First Notice**

_____ **Second absence without calling in 24 hours before the beginning of your class. Interpreting services are suspended. You must meet with your DSPS Counselor to request reinstatement of services.**

DSPS Interpreting Services Supervisor

Comments:

White: Student
Services Supervisor

Yellow: DSPS Counselor

Pink: Interpreting

To: Mesa College Deaf Students
From: Julie Pludow, Counselor Specialist
Jennifer Brinkley, Deaf Peer Counselor
Date: November 1999
Re: Spring Registration

Are you ready for this?!?! Spring Registration!

As you know, priority registration for Spring 2000 semester will begin Monday, November 29. We strongly encourage you to use priority registration so you can register in the classes you want and so you can request DSPS services **EARLY**.

Please make an appointment with your counselor to discuss classes, get questions answered, get help with financial aid forms, plan class schedule, and request services (interpreting, notetaking, real-time captioning, etc.).

In order to maximize interpreting services, we are encouraging you to “group” with other deaf students, when appropriate. Some benefits of “grouping” are:

- Save skilled interpreters’ time (they have more available time to interpret other classes)
- You can have a deaf study partner from your class
- If you are absent, you can get the lecture information from other deaf students
- Priority for receipt of interpreting services.

Class schedules were mailed November 15 week. Please use the information below to begin planning your schedules.

Classes with Sign Language Interpreting

<u>CRN</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
81202	English 101	TTh	2-3:30	3	G-115	T. Moran
04813	History 109	MW	11-12:30	3	H-309	T. Valverde
73056	History 151	MWF	11-12	3	H-304	N. Miller
40899	Math 95	MTWThF	1-2	5	H-215	L. Clark
41090	Math 96	MTWThF	12-1	5	K-213	B. Peters
Any	Computer Business Tech	F	12-2	Any	K-405	Any

Classes taught in ASL

<u>CRN</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
40445	College Success 127	MW	1-2:30	3	K-210a	J. Pludow J. Brinkley
71690	English 07	MTWTh	9:30-11	6	I3-401	T. Moran
46373	English 08	MTWTh	9:30-11	6	I3-401	T. Moran
46384	English 09	MTWTh	9:30-11	6	I3-401	T. Moran
46396	English 10	MTWTh	9:30-11	6	I3-401	T. Moran
82792	English 55	MTWTh	11-12	3	I3-401	T. Moran
02000	ASL 101	TTh	1-3	3	F-113	B. Clary
04271	ASL 200	TTh	1-3	3	F-218	Buchannan
05666	ASL 201	MW	5-7	3	F-218	J. Halcott

Please contact your counselor if you have any questions at (858) 277-1968 tty. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Thank you.

August 13, 1999

Jane Doe
5555 Address Way
San Diego, CA 92103

Dear Jane:

You have requested sign-language interpreting services for Political Science 101, Th 6:30p.m.-9:30 p.m., room H-305, Mesa College. This class has been determined to be eligible for real-time-captioning (rtc) services based on criteria listed later in this letter. A major factor in the decision to consider rtc services for this class is that this class occurs at an “impacted time,” when the demand for sign-language interpreters is greater than the supply of sign-language interpreters. While we realize this is not your first choice in terms of access to this class we believe that real-time-captioning will provide you access to this class. Additionally, educational experts in education of Deaf students suggest that increased exposure to written English, as provided by rtc, will support Deaf students’ learning the increasingly complex vocabulary found in upper level college classes, especially in four year universities and graduate programs.

The following criteria are used to determine if a class is appropriate for rtc services:

- R5 prerequisite or R5 advisory. (This suggests that your advanced level of English reading skills will allow you to benefit from rtc services.)
- The class is primarily lecture.
- The class is offered at an impacted time. A time when the demand for sign language interpreters is greater than the supply of sign language interpreters.

If, as the semester progresses, sign-language interpreters are available we will contact you to see if you would like to switch from rtc service to sign-language interpreting service.

The SDCCD DSPS Department is very interested in your academic success. We are committed to providing high quality rtc services and we believe that rtc service will provide you access to your Political Science 101 class. The attached sheets describe rtc and what you can expect from this service. If you have questions or concerns about rtc services you are encouraged to talk with your DSPS counselor.

Sincerely,

Lauren M.B. Kinast
Interpreting Services Supervisor

CC: Julie Pludow, DSPS Counselor, Mesa College
Interpreting Services Office
rtcletter