Deaf People are Being Left Out of Public News Briefings 
about the Coronavirus Pandemic

Southern California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (SCRID) is committed to promoting communication accessibility for Deaf community members during the coronavirus pandemic. Due to the varied linguistic needs of deaf individuals, we recognize the unique and native skills afforded by qualified Deaf interpreters allow greater informational access to the Deaf communities at large. As such, SCRID encourages the use and uninterrupted visibility of qualified Deaf interpreters at any and all venues announcing vital health and/or emergency information to the public.

23 March 2020

Dear Interpreting Agency,

As the organizational representative of the profession of sign language interpreting in the Southern California region, and in light of responses to recent ongoing and far reaching events, the Southern California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, SCRID, is reaching out in support of our Deaf communities. SCRID recognizes the position of power and privilege entrusted to sign language interpreting service providers, agencies, and coordinators. It is through these individuals which Deaf people typically navigate education, employment, medical issues, sorrows, and celebrations. It is they whom Deaf people find themselves hoping to trust as they access and respond to the auditory system in which we live.

Clearly, the decisions made by interpreting service agencies in their provision of services to the Deaf community at large have the potential to cause long lasting ramifications, both intentional and unintentional, toward the betterment of the community, or toward its continued suppression. SCRID is placing here a call to action. We ask that agencies commit to standing as a leader in the community, making all decisions with clear intent toward the best outcome for the Deaf community. We ask that you stand strong in these actions, encouraging others to join until we all stand, united, in support of the liberties and rights of Deaf people.

Critically, SCRID would like to ask you as a sign language service agency to please join us, in conjunction with the leadership of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and the growing national standard of practice, and strongly encourage the use of qualified Deaf interpreters during announcements for local/state/national news. We recognize that in our varied community it is Deaf interpreters who are best equipped to provide an interpretation accessible to the widest linguistic range of deaf people. For this reason, emergency and other news broadcasts
fall within the realm of our Deaf colleagues. We ask all sign language service agencies to honor this space with us by using the privilege you have as an agency owner and/or coordinator to secure room for Deaf interpreters in our community. Through this, we can begin to correct some of the confusion and lack of understanding felt by many Deaf in the community at this time, as they attempt to navigate the Coronavirus pandemic with little effectual access to communication.

The Southern California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf recommends the following measures to ensure clear communication accessibility for Deaf Communities during live broadcast events:

- Prioritize securing Deaf Interpreters for all live broadcast events. Click here to view a list of local Qualified Deaf Interpreters, recommended by their DI peers for broadcast work.
- Ensure clear interpretation is provided in a manner which is linguistically accessible to the Deaf community at large. This must include monolingual Deaf individuals who process heavily visual/spatial language rather than linear (word-for-word) structure.
- Contact Deaf interpreters first to secure availability and request their preferred team. Understand that most DIs have a list of hearing co-interpreters they know and work well with, facilitating greater quality of interpretation.
- Ensure securing the highest possible qualified interpreters to work as a Deaf/hearing team for live broadcasted and/or life-impacting information.
- Ensure both the Deaf and hearing interpreters understand the critical nature of the assignment, the urgent need for clear, complete, highly visual/spatial language on the screen, and have thoroughly self-assessed before accepting the assignment.
- Ensure the requester of services is aware of the need to keep the interpreter clearly visible on the screen at all times. The interpreter should be visible vertically approximately from the waist to a foot above the head, and horizontally approximately two feet on either side.
- Request access for the interpreters to the speaker’s slides and/or notes as early as possible prior to the assignment. At a minimum, key proper nouns (entities, locations, individuals, etc) should be provided to the interpreters prior to the assignment to allow for visual and contextual preparation.
- In working with the requestor, note that an alternative to a wide angle view that allows the interpreter to stand six feet from the presenter, yet often poses difficulty in clear visibility of the interpreter, is to insert video overlay.
  - To accommodate a limited number of personnel in the room, a workaround would be to film in a separate room and add an overlay to the main streaming monitor.
- Engage in the advancement of the Deaf community and the interpreting profession in your coordination of accessibility services.
- Click here for additional resources.

Please note, we are also sending similar calls to interpreters servicing this area, and reaching out to local government, news, and health agencies with information on the importance of
requesting Deaf interpreters for this work. Together, we can make great strides toward better services for the Deaf community.

We look forward with anticipation to standing in solidarity with you in support of our Deaf colleagues. For in this way we are supporting clear, native, nuanced, whole and comprehensible communication access for Deaf people. Through your help we can together do our part to ensure all Deaf people are able to access clear information during these critical times, and ongoing.

Thank you,

The Southern California Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

SCRID