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. Noting the varied linguistic needs of deaf individuals, we recognize the unique and native skills afforded by qualified Deaf interpreters which 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 Members,

SCRID is sending you, our membership, a call to action at this critical time of physical distancing and ongoing public updates as to the turn of events in our world. We ask that you 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 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 hearing interpreters to honor this space with us by using the privilege you have as an DPI/HI to secure room for Deaf interpreters in our community.

We recommend the following measures to ensure effective communication access for Deaf Communities:

- Request to work with qualified Deaf Interpreter(s) for live broadcast events
- Educate requesters on the benefits of having a Deaf Interpreter for live broadcasted events (check out the “All Hands On Press Conference Interpreting Position Paper,” and other resources found in the link below)
- Provide a recommendation of qualified Deaf Interpreters comfortable with broadcasting work. SCRID has resourced local Deaf interpreters to create a list of their recommended DIs: Coronavirus Deaf Interpreter List
- Recognize the urgency of information and variation of receptive linguistic styles in the community is best met by a qualified Deaf interpreter, and is the professional space of Deaf interpreters
- Request the use of qualified hearing interpreter(s)
- In the event a qualified Deaf interpreter is unavailable, as a working interpreter, assess whether you possess the competencies to interpret vital and emergency information on a local/state/national level 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.
- Ensure digital viewers can see the interpreter clearly on the screen at all times.
  - 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 dedicate one camera to the interpreter and insert this feed as video overlay. The interpreter may be filmed on site, or to accommodate physical distancing and public gathering limitations, they may be filmed/live-streamed from a separate location that has a live feed to work from.
- Remember, “the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf strives to advocate for best practices in interpreting, professional development for practitioners and for the highest standards in the provisions of interpreting services for diverse users of languages that are signed or spoken.” (RID Vision Statement, emphasis added)
- Click here for additional resources

Please note, we are also sending similar calls to interpreting agencies 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 service for the Deaf community.

We want to thank you for your membership in SCRID. It is through your dedication to this field and our community that we are able to grow in understanding, inclusivity, education, and love. We look with anticipation to this community rising up in support of our Deaf colleagues. For in this way we are supporting clear, native, nuanced, whole and comprehensible communication access for Deaf people.

Thank you,

SCRID Board of Directors