



# PIE à la mode



PIE's Finest News Source

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## Deaf/hearing TEAM Interpretation

by Lisa Perry Burckhardt and Sandy Peplinski

(This is the first in a series of four articles on Deaf/hearing team interpretation. Editor.)

“PIE sends Deaf interpreters more often than needed”. This is an accusation that has been made against PIE. It is a statement with which we completely disagree. It is the policy of PIE to use a Deaf interpreter when the risk of less than optimal communication is too great. PIE's policy has always been to send a Deaf interpreter to situations in which there is a potential need. If the Deaf interpreter is not needed or used, there is no charge to the customer. We find this superior to and preferable to sending a single interpreter into a high-risk situation, a situation that could lead to communication failure. The Deaf interpreters PIE works with are committed to their craft and their profession. Their goal is not to take advantage of customers but to respect and defend the communication rights and needs of the Deaf individuals they serve.

A respected Deaf and hearing interpretation team has written an article for this edition of the à la Mode. I will reserve further comment until I read and consider what they have to say. I hope you will do the same.

Stephanie Kerkvliet

Communication barriers can overshadow any interpreter's work in spite of their level of experience and their certifications. Every interpreter has experienced this. To understand and to be understood: These are the goals. When using every professional tool available to the single interpreter does not work, that's when the certified deaf interpreter (CDI) is key.

“Why do we need two interpreters for one deaf consumer?” we often hear. Simply put, there are two languages (English and American Sign Language) being used in the communication process.

Before a more detailed explanation can be given as to the rationale for two interpreters, one who can hear and one who is deaf, a language assessment must be completed. The deaf interpreter is the trained American Sign Language expert, a native user of the language, and a lifelong participant in Deaf culture. The need for a deaf interpreter does not necessarily have to do with the deaf consumer's intelligence. The deaf consumer may not have had any formal training in ASL. Instead, he may use it in an idiosyncratic manner while still incorporating many of the structural/grammatical components of the language (gestures, facial expression, body language).

Deaf individuals are used to adapting their language mode to the hearing interpreter. Even though we interpreters may think we are matching the deaf person's language mode, deaf individuals are continually code switching to accommodate us. With the use of a certified deaf interpreter, the deaf individual is able to use his or

her *own* language to exchange information and to be expressive in a comfortable communication setting. The invisible language barrier disappears, and the deaf person can now communicate through *one of their own*.

Being a deaf individual, a native user of ASL, and a person immersed in Deaf culture does not necessarily qualify an individual to be a deaf interpreter. The Deaf author of this article, Lisa Perry Burckhardt, has worked for seven years building her skills and acquiring knowledge about the profession.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) requires that a deaf individual who wants to become a deaf interpreter complete 32 hours of training prior to taking the RID exam: 8 hours of training in role and function of a deaf interpreter, 8 hours in code of ethics, and 16 hours related to team interpreting. In the authors' professional opinion, 16 hours of training is not nearly enough for interpreters to learn about the teaming process, a process that is vital to interpreting. The deaf interpreter *must also* learn more about the process of interpreting and the tools used within the profession. Ignoring this as a requirement prior to team training leaves a large gap in understanding the interpreting process and the standard practice of professionalism in our field. Basic foundational training is not widely offered to deaf people. There are very few highly qualified trainers providing foundational CDI training. This is probably the leading reason for the high failure rates of those currently taking the CDI exam.

The requirements for deaf interpreters are far less than the stringent requirements currently or soon to be in place for interpreters who can hear (i.e. completion of a formal Interpreter Training Program, Bachelor's degree, ongoing workshops for professional development). For a deaf interpreter to be effective in their work they must have a number of often overlooked qualities including: A high level of trust with their hearing teams, a good understanding of the interpreting process, command of both languages (ASL and English), training to work with a team interpreter, and specialized training to work in legal, medical or mental health settings. We believe that RID should increase the training required for deaf interpreters enabling them to be an integral and equal member of the TEAM.



Interpreting is like a garment held together by many threads. If one thread breaks, a seam pulls apart. So it is with our work. If there is a missing piece, the messages may not be equivalent. Interpreters must learn to think outside of the box, to concentrate on the work they are producing, and to remove the focus from the interpreter. Monitoring needs to expand to consider all perspectives and assess any inconsistencies in understanding. Interpreters have a responsibility to act ethically in their

decision-making process. They must set pride aside and look at the situation and interpreting process from all perspectives to look for indicators that the deaf consumer understands the interpreter, and that the interpreter understands the deaf consumer.

Deaf individuals continually code switch to match an interpreter's mode of communication, a stark indication that we are not living up to the expectation of *equal access* in the deaf person's preferred mode of communication. Hearing interpreters must realize that their critical and analytical thinking skills are different from those of someone who is deaf. How we think and talk about information is very different in both languages. Hearing interpreters need to learn to think of information from the deaf person's perspective. Discourse *is* different in ASL than it is in English.

What does information look like in the deaf individual's own language? This should be *our target* language. Another rationale to support the use of a deaf interpreter is that hearing interpreters are not able to express themselves in the same way a deaf person does. Involving a deaf interpreter provides the deaf consumer with a means to express himself and to receive information in a natural and comfortable manner.

Some interpreters view their need to work with a deaf interpreter as a weakness, a reflection of their abilities and inabilities. Most often interpreters with the highest credentials and the most experience are the ones who ask for deaf interpreters. These highly qualified interpreters have learned to recognize indicators that a deaf interpreter is needed and have learned to assert themselves to ask for what they need. *Deaf interpreters are our specialists*. Do we frown upon our doctor or think less of them if they want to call in a specialist? No. Rather, they build our trust and we think more highly of them.

Hearing interpreters should make use of a deaf interpreter's skills and training each and every time we are in a situation where we feel communication is not quite what it should be. Deaf interpreters will enhance our work, help us become better interpreters, and allow deaf consumers to have the access to the communication they deserve, in their own language. ♡

## STAFF UPDATES!

Tracy Vetter, veteran interpreter coordinator, and ITP graduate, has recently moved into a half-time apprenticeship position. We are THRILLED to be working with Tracy in this new capacity, and sorely miss her in the office when she is not there!

All right. This is it: The column I've been avoiding since I began writing about safety. Let's talk cell phones and pagers, people! I've avoided writing this for a long time because I'm as guilty as anyone when it comes to this issue. But, guilty or not, the fact does not change that this is an important safety issue.

You already know that it's not safe to drive while talking on your cell phone. I can't make you stop, but I'm ready to give you some information to help you think about this topic.

The issue here is not so much about where your hands are as it is about where your brain is. At any one time your brain is capable of doing multiple tasks. Hey, we're interpreters. We already know that! (And, lest we forget, office staff knows how to multi-task too!) However, your primary focus is on only one of those at a time. Your attention goes one place only, and all other tasks are running in the background: Automatic Pilot.

When we are driving, it behooves us to focus on the road as much as possible. Keeping your mind on the road as your primary task is critical to safety. If at all possible, other tasks should be left for the side of the road or be part of your prep before you hit the road.

Directions: How often do we pull out our directions and re-read them while driving? Is there a safer way to do this? Instead of detailed directions hidden in the megabytes of the palm device, how about doing an outline of the directions? Just write a few major markers and directions, BIG, on a piece of paper that can be used as a quick reference. For example: From PIE parking lot, Right onto Layton. Right onto 84<sup>th</sup> Street, Left onto Hwy 43, Right onto 45, etc. Make it so a quick glance can refresh your memory rather than reading extensive directions.

Cell phones: If it rings, let it take a message. Call back as soon as you're parked. If it's a call you're waiting for, pull off the road and answer, pull off the road and call back, or (worst choice) answer and ask the person to hold while you pull over.

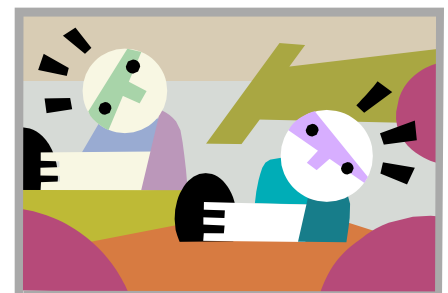
Pagers: I don't want to minimize the danger of using the cell phone, but this is even worse. Using your pager while driving means that you take your attention off the road AND you take your eyes off the road. Driving conditions change in an instant! While reading the pager, the car in front of you that had been coasting at 70 could very easily have put on his brakes because of unforeseen road conditions. DON'T put yourself in the position of having to explain why you weren't watching the road.

Maps: Like pagers, reading maps takes your eyes off the road. Use the maps to help you prepare, and if you have to refer to them again, pull off. Using a map to find an intersection in an unfamiliar city is not a job to be doing while piloting 2000 pounds of moving metal. This work is far too detailed to be done while driving.

Food: Yes, food. In some countries (England for example) it is illegal to eat while driving. In addition to dividing your attention, hot coffee can spill, as can the pickles on your hamburger. You have to stop focusing on the road to put a drink in a cup-holder. And when that hamburger slides apart, are you more worried about what the car in front of you is doing, or where the ketchup is going to land?

It could be that you'll never have a problem multi-tasking while driving. It could be that all you'll ever do is have a few close calls. But, if the day comes that you're in an accident, while using a cell phone, a pager, eating, etc., you will find yourself more responsible for the accident because you were doing two things at once. In addition, the cell phone itself produces a record of your call, and that record, and even the person you were talking too, could potentially be used as evidence. I ain't a lawyer, but you know there's a record of your calls in that phone.

Please, ALWAYS remember to give yourself two to three seconds of breathing room between you and the vehicle in front of you. And ALWAYS remember to give your primary attention to the road where it belongs. 🙏



## Get in Touch with PIE

To Send E-Mail:

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- Stephanie: [skpie@tds.net](mailto:skpie@tds.net)
- Time sheets/Accounting: [piebilling@tds.net](mailto:piebilling@tds.net)
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- Training: [thschmechel@tsrnet.com](mailto:thschmechel@tsrnet.com)



To visit our Website:

- [www.pieinc-wi.com](http://www.pieinc-wi.com)

## ASL MENTORING PROGRAM OFFERED BY PIE

~AMP~

**SIGNING SKILLS FIZZLED OUT?  
NEED TO ENERGIZE YOUR INTERPRETING?  
PLUG INTO AMP!!**

WHO is the mentor? Lisa Perry Burckhardt, CDI-P, Deaf Mentor, Mentor Interpreter Coordinator, ASLTA Instructor and 5<sup>th</sup> Generation ASL user.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM BEING A MENTOR PROTÉGÉ?

- Current students or recent graduates of interpreting programs
- Working interpreters
- Certified interpreters who want to be more native-like in their signing
- Certified or experienced interpreters who need to enhance their skills in specialized or complex settings, such as medical or legal
- Parents of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Teachers or other school staff that work with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Social workers, police officers, or anyone who has contact with Deaf or Hard of Hearing people and wants to communicate more clearly in ASL
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing people who want to learn ASL or improve their skills. Example: Late-deafened adults, Deaf people who had an educational background that emphasized oral communications or language systems other than ASL

CONTACT MENTOR COORDINATOR LISA PERRY BURCKHARDT OR SCHEDULER LAURA COOK AT [PIEINC@TDS.NET](mailto:PIEINC@TDS.NET) OR CALL 414-282-8115

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT PIE *à la mode*: November 30<sup>th</sup> or earlier!**

Contact PIE at [pieinc@tds.net](mailto:pieinc@tds.net), or call 414-282-8115 or 888-801-9393. PIE's web address is [www.pieinc-wi.com](http://www.pieinc-wi.com).  
Send newsletter info to [piealamode@tds.net](mailto:piealamode@tds.net). Send Training and Development info/questions to [tjschmechel@tsrnet.com](mailto:tjschmechel@tsrnet.com).