

Technical Standards

The ASL-English interpreting profession is cognitively and physically demanding. Students admitted to the ASL-English Interpretation program must meet certain technical standards to ensure they can acquire the necessary knowledge and develop the skills essential for successful completion of the program and for professional practice.

These standards reflect the linguistic, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and physical abilities required to perform effectively as a sign language interpreter in a variety of settings. Individuals will need to demonstrate these skills with or without reasonable accommodation. This career may require additional support or accommodations to meet professional expectations.

A complete list of essential abilities and attributes is available at <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/handbooks/board-evaluation-interpreters/chapter-1-general-interpreter-certification-policies-procedures#1-3-essential-functions-of-a-bei-certified-interpreter>

Linguistic Abilities

- Superior proficiency and flexibility to communicate in a wide range of situations in spoken English
- Ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words
- Ability to communicate information and ideas in spoken English by speaking so that others will understand
- Ability to watch and understand information and ideas presented through signs, gestures, classifiers, and fingerspelling
- Ability to communicate information and ideas through signs, gestures, classifiers, and fingerspelling so that others will understand

Cognitive Abilities

- An understanding that interpreting is a complex process
- Ability to process visual and auditory information quickly and accurately
- Ability to quickly recall English words and ASL signs under time pressure
- Visual memory for sign placement and movement
- Ability to sustain attention over long interpreting tasks
- Ability to understand complex explanations and narratives
- Ability to divide attention between speaker/signer, content, and audience
- Ability to monitor output while still processing input

Emotional and Interpersonal Abilities

- Ability to emotionally handle an interpreting assignment
- Ability to portray the feelings and emotion of the speaker, whether voice or sign interpreting

- Ability to understand your own feelings, recognize others' emotions, and use that awareness to communicate, work with others, and handle challenges in healthy, respectful ways
- Capacity to manage dynamic environments while maintaining professionalism and confidentiality

Physical Abilities

Hearing: Students must be able to accurately perceive and comprehend spoken English at a level sufficient for interpreting tasks. Assistive listening devices (e.g., hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM systems) may be used to meet this requirement as long as the student can consistently understand spoken language without relying on speechreading or visual cues.

Speech: Interpreters must be able to speak clearly, be audibly heard, and portray the feelings and emotion of the speaker. Because the interpreter's voice serves as the Deaf consumer's voice, speech patterns that significantly alter, distract from, or misrepresent the consumer's intended tone or message do not meet program standards. Speech differences are acceptable as long as they do not create an inaccurate or distracting representation.

Vision: Students must be able to visually perceive another person's handshapes, movements, facial expressions, and nonmanual signals clearly enough to accurately interpret. This includes the ability to see signing at a typical classroom distance. Corrective lenses or other vision supports may be used to meet this requirement.

Facial Expression: Ability to control the muscles of the face to manipulate the eyes, eyebrows, cheeks, mouth, and nose

Manual Dexterity: Ability to make coordinated movements of one hand, a hand with its arm, or both hands and arms quickly and accurately

Finger Dexterity: Ability to make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands

Wrist-Finger Speed: Ability to make fast, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists

Limb Movement: Ability to move the arms above the head and extend them outward in various directions

Limb Movement Speed: Ability to quickly move the arms as needed during interpreting

Dual-Limb Coordination: Ability to coordinate movements of both arms while sitting or standing

Head Control: Ability to nod and turn the head smoothly as required by the visual nature of interpreting

Physical Stamina: Ability to sustain moderate physical exertion, including extended periods of signing, for at least 30 minutes without becoming winded or fatigued