

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND (SCSDB)  
SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY, POLICY, AND PROCEDURES  
FOR STUDENT TEACHER & INTERN APPLICANTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	pages
SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY .....	1
SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION POLICY.....	1
PROCEDURES .....	2
APPLICATION.....	2
PRE-INTERVIEW INFORMATION .....	2
INTERVIEW .....	2
RATINGS & SHARING OF RESULTS.....	2
SCPI FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS .....	2
USE OF SCPI VIDEOTAPES FOR TRAINING, DEMONSTRATION AND/OR RESEARCH.....	2
APPENDIXES & ATTACHMENTS	
A. SCPI APPOINTMENT AND INFORMATION MEMO.....	3
• THE SCPI: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION .....	4
• SCPI: INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES .....	5
• SCPI: TIPS FOR CANDIDATES.....	6
• SCPI RATING SCALE .....	7
• SCPI CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	8
B. SCPI REPORT OF RESULTS MEMO.....	9
• SCPI RATING SCALE .....	10
• PERMISSION TO USE SCPI VIDEO FOR TRAINING, DEMONSTRATION, AND RESEARCH.....	11
C. SCPI RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM FOR SHARING SCPI RESULTS .....	12

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND (SCSDB)  
SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY, POLICY, AND PROCEDURES  
FOR STUDENT TEACHER AND INTERN APPLICANTS

### SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY

The South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB) is a community of learning in which individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing and hearing work together, learn together and interact on a daily basis. Because of this, SCSDB recognizes the need for all individuals to live in an accessible environment. Basic to an accessible environment for all children and adults is a communication rich environment in all aspects of daily life. SCSDB envisions a culture in which the use of clear, understandable language is the norm in every aspect of campus life. As we work together to develop this culture, the principles below should guide us:

***Principle 1: Students at SCSDB, to the best of their ability, need to develop a rich and complex language system to communicate with others.***

***Principle 2: SCSDB must provide an environment that is communication accessible to all individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, including staff and people from the community, as well as students.***

***Principle 3: Effective sign language communication reflects the mission of SCSDB.***

### SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION POLICY

Because SCSDB is the center of educational and outreach services for deaf and hard of hearing persons in the state, and in order for the agency to fulfill its mission, it is important for staff to be equipped with the necessary skills in the area of sign language. The primary purpose of these guidelines for potential student teachers and student interns is to support an optimal setting of communication for all individuals. In consideration of this, and careful analysis of the frequency, length and criticality of interaction required with deaf and hard of hearing persons, and the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) Rating Scale (see page 8), sign language communication skill level standards have been established for the following areas of student internship and student teaching:

- ***Student Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing*** at the School for the Deaf & Palmetto Achievement Academy (PAA), and selected positions at the School for the Multihandicapped, Division of Educational Services (Health & Related Services, Department of Library & Media Services), Outreach Services & Strategic Planning (Department of Outreach Services), Career Education Technology and Residential Life Services  
Standard: Intermediate or Above
- ***Counselor Interns*** with Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students  
Standard: Intermediate or Above
- ***Speech/Language Interns*** with Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students  
Standard: Intermediate or Above
- ***Audiological Interns*** with Division of Educational Services (Health & Related Services)  
Standard: Intermediate or Above
- ***Interpreter Interns:*** with Division of Outreach Services & Strategic Planning and Mainstream Interpreters within the School for the Deaf and Palmetto Achievement Academy (PAA)  
Standard: Advanced Above
- ***ASL Instructor Interns*** with the Division of Human Resources (Department of Sign Language Communication)  
Standard: Advanced Plus or Above

Potential student teachers and student interns are required to meet their skill level standard by the semester before they are accepted for an internship at SCSDB. SCSDB accepts documented SCPI results from approved programs in lieu of taking the SCPI at SCSDB.

SCSDB selected the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) for use with SCSDB staff and student teacher and student intern applicants because: (a) the SCPI provides a rating and description of a person's current sign language communication skills, and (b) SCPI follow-up meetings provide a person with the opportunity to review, discuss, and better understand his/her sign language communication skills, and to discuss suggestions for improving these skills if appropriate. The SCPI is a nationally recognized sign language assessment process that was developed during the early 1980's by Dr. William Newell and Dr. Frank Caccamise of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). The SCPI is widely used among schools and agencies serving deaf and hard of hearing persons.

## PROCEDURES

1. **APPLICATION:** The SCSDB Volunteer/Facilities Coordinator contacts the designated person(s) at the student teacher/intern applicants' program with approval for applicants to schedule an SCPI. These designated persons then inform applicants of the approval and the need for applicants to contact the SCSDB Department of Sign Language Communication (DSL) to schedule a SCPI.
2. **PRE-INTERVIEW INFORMATION:** Student teacher/intern applicants taking the SCPI receive a memo informing them of their interview dates, times, and locations (see Appendix A, page 3). This memo is sent/given with:
  - A. The SCPI: A Brief Description (Attachment A-1, page 4)
  - B. SCPI Information for Candidates (Attachment A-2, page 5)
  - C. SCPI: Tips for Candidates – Provides hints on strategies to use during SCPI in order to do well (Attachment A-3, page 6)
  - D. The SCPI Rating Scale (Attachment A-4, page 7)
  - E. SCPI Candidates' Questionnaire (Attachment A-5, page 8)
3. **INTERVIEW:** The SCPI interview involves a one-to-one videotaped conversation between a candidate/interviewee and a trained SCPI interviewer. Interviews are conducted in sign language only. This principle is followed because research and experience have shown that people generally demonstrate their best sign language communication skills when using sign language alone. Interviews are generally 20 – 25 minutes in length.
4. **RATINGS AND SHARING OF RESULTS:** All SCPI interview videotapes are rated by trained SCPI raters. The basis for ratings, as stated earlier and in Attachment A-1, is the SCPI Rating Scale (Attachment A-4). Results are reported in SCPI Report of Results Memos (see Appendix B, pages 9-10) as one of the following SCPI Ratings:
 

A. Superior Plus	G. Survival Plus
B. Superior	H. Survival
C. Advanced Plus	I. Novice Plus
D. Advanced	J. Novice
E. Intermediate Plus	K. No Functional Skills

SCPI Report of Result memos are shared with (a) SCSDB student teachers and student intern applicants taking the SCPI, (b) the applicants' Principals and/or Intern Supervisor(s) at SCSDB, and (c) student teacher or student intern applicants' program contact persons. The names of SCSDB administrators and applicants' program contact persons who will receive SCPI results are shared with SCSDB student teachers and student intern applicants prior to taking their SCPIs. Individual results may only be shared with others if applicants sign release of information forms that specify with whom their SCPI results may be shared (Appendix C, page 12).
5. **SCPI FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS:** Results memos state the option for applicants to schedule SCPI Follow-Up Meetings. At SCPI Follow-Up Meetings applicants have the opportunity (a) to review their SCPI videotapes, (b) to discuss their sign language communication skills, and (c) to discuss suggestions for improving their sign language communication skills. Applicants should schedule follow-up meetings within four (4) weeks of receiving their SCPI results.
6. **USE OF SCPI VIDEOTAPES FOR TRAINING, DEMONSTRATION, AND/OR RESEARCH:** When sharing results of a SCPI and/or during an SCPI Follow-Up Meeting, SCSDB may request that applicants provide permission to use their SCPI videotapes for training demonstration, and/or research. This is Voluntary (see Attachment B-2, page 12). If such permission is not granted, SCSDB student teacher and intern applicants' SCPI videotapes will not be used, shown, or otherwise viewed and will be erased three (3) months from interview dates. For videotapes that permission is granted, if after three (3) months from interview dates these tapes are no longer needed for training, demonstration, and/or research, tapes are erased.

## APPENDIX A

## SCPI APPOINTMENT AND INFORMATION MEMO

To: NAME, SCSDDB Student Teacher/Intern Applicant  
 From: NAME, SCSDDB Sign Language Communication Coordinator  
 Date:  
 Subject: Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) Appointment & Information

Your SCPI has been scheduled for DATE at TIME in LOOCATION. NAME will be conducting your interview.

Enclosed are the following to help you prepare for your SCPI:

1. The SCPI: A Brief Description (Attachment A-1)
2. SCPI: Information for Candidates – Explains SCPI procedures and the basis for evaluating your sign language communication skills (Attachment A-2)
3. SCPI: Tips for Candidates – Provides hints on strategies to use during the SCPI in order to do well (Attachment A-3)
4. The SCPI Rating Scale (Attachment A-4)

Also enclosed is a SCPI Candidates' Questionnaire. We would appreciate it if you would fill this out and return it to me prior to your interview (Attachment A-5).

Based on your SCPI, you will receive a report of your American Sign Language (ASL) communication skills; that is, a rating from No Functional Skills to Superior Plus from the SCPI Rating Scale (see Attachment A-4). After receiving your report, if you wish to review your SCPI videotape and discuss your sign language communication skills, please contact me to schedule an SCPI follow-up meeting. At this follow-up meeting you will have the opportunity (1) to discuss your sign language communication skills, and (2) if appropriate, to discuss suggestions for improving your sign language communication skills.

If you have any questions about your scheduled SCPI, please contact me.

Note: We would appreciate it if you would wear medium-to-dark, solid colored clothing to your interview. Please do not wear white or light colored clothing. Thank you.

c: NAME, Receiving Principal and/or Intern Supervisor(s) (memo only)

## ATTACHMENT A-1

THE SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI):  
A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Frank Caccamise & William Newell  
National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)  
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)  
52 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY 14623-5604  
February 2003

The SCPI, a conversational approach to sign language communication skills assessment, is based on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) (also known as the Language Proficiency Interview/LPI). Like the O/LPI, the SCPI permits interview content to vary according to the job responsibilities, background, and interests of each person interviewed. Consistent with the O/LPI, the goal of the SCPI is to assess how well people are able to use sign language for their communication needs, and, as appropriate, to assist people in development of their sign language communication skills.

The SCPI involves a one-to-one conversation between the interviewer and candidate/interviewee, with interviewees videotaped and subsequently rated independently by SCPI raters. [See Attachments 2 and 3 for SCPI candidate information and tips.] The basis for ratings is the SCPI Rating Scale (Attachment 4), a standard scale based on highly skilled, knowledgeable native/native-like signers.

The SCPI assesses American Sign Language (ASL) as it is used among skilled sign language communicators in the United States. This use includes the full range of ASL from pure, linguistic descriptions of ASL to English influenced signing. This full range is characterized by (a) meaning-based sign language vocabulary selection consistent with standardized signs in current use by skilled language users, and (b) a variety of grammatical features that are consistent with effective use of gestural/visual language for communication. These grammatical features include: (a) space, indexing, eye gaze, sign movement directionality, and body shifts to separate ideas and to identify and discuss persons, places, and objects present and not present; (b) classifiers for describing and representing persons, places and objects and their movements (for example, use of the index finger to represent “a person”); (c) sign-word order which facilitates effective communication in gestural-visual language ; and (d) facial expressions and other body movements (non-manual signals) to support and add to information communicated (for example, affirmative and negative head movements). In addition to vocabulary and grammatical features, clarity of sign production, fluency, and comprehension are important to effective communication when using a gestural-visual language, and therefore, are considered in SCPI ratings. Further explanation of what is assessed by the SCPI is provided in the *SCPI Notebook*, Section 5, “Skills Important for Effective Sign Language Communication and Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) Rating Levels.” Copies of this paper are available from the SCSDB SCPI Coordinator.

As we have discussed consistently in SCPI presentations and published materials, follow-up is critical to successful use of the SCPI. Thus, SCPI candidates are encouraged to schedule SCPI Follow-Up Meetings. During follow-up meetings candidates have the opportunity to meet with sign language specialists to review and discuss their SCPI videotapes as a basis for planning skill development activities based on their individual communication skills and needs.

## ATTACHMENT A-2

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI):  
INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

1. We will have a conversation about social and work topics. I will ask you questions, and you may ask me questions.
2. We want to get the best sample of your American Sign Language (ASL) skills.
3. In order to elicit your best ASL skills, I may ask you to “re-sign” (restate) some responses.
4. We will evaluate your ASL skills, including: (a) ASL vocabulary; (b) clarity and control of sign production; (c) use of ASL grammar (for example, use of space, sign directionality, classifiers, time indicators, and sentence and discourse structure); (d) nonmanual behaviors such as facial expressions and body shifts; (e) fluency or smoothness of sign and fingerspelling production; and (f) comprehension (skill in receiving ASL).
5. Please try to maintain a good “signing posture;” that is, please sit upright. This should help you show your best ASL skills.
6. Please answer my questions as completely as possible.

Do you have any questions? Please use ASL.

NOTE: PLEASE USE YOUR BEST ASL.

## ATTACHMENT A-3

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI):  
TIPS FOR CANDIDATES

1. **RELAX:** Sip a cup of coffee, rub your hands, talk about the weather—anything that will help you relax and be confident.
2. **RATE OF SIGNING:** Sign at a rate that is comfortable for you. If you know that you make many mistakes when you sign quickly, slow down.
3. **KEEP SIGNING:** Don't stop the conversation by answering simply YES or NO. Be generous. Give details, explain your point, develop your thoughts, and make comparisons. Anything that shows you can discuss a topic in depth will help you perform better. If you are not a "talkative" person by nature, you must make an extra effort to communicate during the interview.
4. **DON'T DOWNGRADE YOURSELF:** Don't apologize for your signing skills. Be positive. Let the interview show your skills.

## WHAT TO DO...

1. **IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE:** If you know you made a mistake, correct it and continue. Correcting a mistake can help your performance.
2. **IF YOU ARE LOST IN A LONG EXPLANATION:** Stop. Think. Say something like, "let me tell you again – it is complicated." Then try again. Don't worry about what happened. No one expects you to sign without mistakes.
3. **IF YOU BECOME NERVOUS DURING THE INTERVIEW:** The interviewer will know you are nervous and help you. You can stop for a few seconds and get control. Relax. Admit that you are nervous and joke about it. Often this is enough to make you comfortable again.
4. **IF SOMETHING IS INTERFERING WITH YOUR SIGNING:** If the air conditioner bothers you, say so. If you can't see the interviewer clearly, say so. Remember that this is your interview. You should have the best possible interview conditions.



## ATTACHMENT A-4

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI) RATING SCALE<sup>a</sup>

<u>RATINGS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTORS<sup>b</sup></u>
<u>Superior Plus</u>	<b>Able to have a fully shared and natural conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> All aspects of signing are native-like.
<u>Superior</u>	<b>Able to have a fully shared conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> Very broad sign language vocabulary, near native-like production and fluency, excellent use of sign language grammatical features, and excellent comprehension for normal signing rate.
<u>Advanced Plus</u>	<b>Exhibits some superior level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</b>
<u>Advanced</u>	<b>Able to have a generally shared conversation with good, spontaneous elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> Broad sign language vocabulary knowledge and clear, accurate production of signs and fingerspelling at a normal/near-normal rate; occasional misproductions do not detract from conversational flow. Good use of many sign language grammatical features and comprehension good for normal signing rate.
<u>Intermediate Plus</u>	<b>Exhibits some advanced level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</b>
<u>Intermediate</u>	<b>Able to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally 3-to-5 sentences.</b> Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed.
<u>Survival Plus</u>	<b>Exhibits some intermediate level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</b>
<u>Survival</u>	<b>Able to discuss basic social and work topics with responses generally 1-to-3 sentences in length.</b> Some knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary with many sign vocabulary and/or sign production errors. Slow-to-moderate signing rate. Basic use of a few sign language grammatical features. Fair comprehension for signing produced at a slow-to-moderate rate with some repetition and rephrasing.
<u>Novice Plus</u>	<b>Exhibits some survival level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</b>
<u>Novice</u>	<b>Able to provide single sign and some short phrase/sentence responses to basic questions signed at a slow-to-moderate rate with frequent repetition and rephrasing.</b> Vocabulary primarily related to everyday work and/or social areas such as basic work-related signs, family members, basic objects, colors, numbers, names of weekdays, and time. Production and fluency characterized by many sign production errors and by a slow rate with frequent inappropriate pauses/hesitations.
<u>No Functional Skills</u>	<b>(May be) Able to provide a short single sign and “primarily” fingerspelled responses to some basic questions signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.</b>

<sup>a</sup>Adapted from US Foreign Service Institute & ACTFL LPI Rating Scales by William Newell & Frank Caccamise

<sup>b</sup>For all SCPI rating descriptors, **first statement (in bold type) always a statement of ASL communicative functioning**, with all remaining statements (regular type) descriptors of ASL form (vocabulary, production, fluency, grammar, and comprehension).

March, 1999 (revised edition)

*Last Revised February 2006  
Student Teacher/Intern Policy*

ATTACHMENT A-5

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI)  
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE (Before Interview)

Frank Caccamise & William (Bill) Newell  
February 2003

Please fill-in the information requested below and prior to your scheduled SCPI, please give/send to NAME, SCPI Coordinator, ADDRESS, FAX #. Thank you.

Note: All responses for individuals are used with strict confidentiality; that is, no individuals will be identified in any reports generated based on the information provided on this form.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please check one: Deaf \_\_\_\_\_ Hard-of-Hearing \_\_\_\_\_ Hearing \_\_\_\_\_

4. Age began to learn/acquire Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please rate your ASL skills by circling one of the numbers below:

1	2	3	4	5
no skills	basic skills	fair skills	good skills	excellent skills

6. Are you left or right handed (dominant signing hand)? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left \_\_\_\_\_

7. Other information you wish to share with us relative to your sign language skills (how you learned sign language, situations in which you use sign language, etc.):

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(Use other side of page if you wish)

## APPENDIX B

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI)  
REPORT OF RESULTS MEMO**To:** NAME, SCSDB Student Teacher/Intern Applicant**From:** NAME, SCPI Coordinator**Date:****Subject:** Your (Date) SCPI Results

Your Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) rating is RATING.

The SCPI Rating Scale attached will help you understand your rating (see Attachment B-1).

If you wish to review your SCPI tape and discuss your sign language communication skills, please contact the Department of Sign Language Communication (PHONE #, OR EMAIL ADDRESS) to schedule a SCPI follow-up meeting. At this meeting you will have the opportunity (a) to review your SCPI videotape, (b) to discuss your sign language communication skills, and (c) to discuss suggestions and opportunities for improving your sign language communication skills if appropriate. You should request this meeting within four weeks from the date you receive this SCPI rating report.

If this box is checked, a form requesting permission to use your SCPI video for training, demonstration, and research has been attached. Please consider completing this form and returning it to me at ADDRESS OR FAX #.

Thank you.

c: NAME, SCSDB Receiving Principal/Intern Supervisor(s)

## ATTACHMENT B-1

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI) RATING SCALE<sup>a</sup>

<u>RATINGS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTORS<sup>b</sup></u>
<u>Superior Plus</u>	<b><u>Able to have a fully shared and natural conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</u></b> All aspects of signing are native-like.
<u>Superior</u>	<b><u>Able to have a fully shared conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</u></b> Very broad sign language vocabulary, near native-like production and fluency, excellent use of sign language grammatical features, and excellent comprehension for normal signing rate.
<u>Advanced Plus</u>	<b><u>Exhibits some superior level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</u></b>
<u>Advanced</u>	<b><u>Able to have a generally shared conversation with good, spontaneous elaboration for both social and work topics.</u></b> Broad sign language vocabulary knowledge and clear, accurate production of signs and fingerspelling at a normal/near-normal rate; occasional misproductions do not detract from conversational flow. Good use of many sign language grammatical features and comprehension good for normal signing rate.
<u>Intermediate Plus</u>	<b><u>Exhibits some advanced level skills, but not all and not consistently.</u></b>
<u>Intermediate</u>	<b><u>Able to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally 3-to-5 sentences.</u></b> Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed.
<u>Survival Plus</u>	<b><u>Exhibits some intermediate level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</u></b>
<u>Survival</u>	<b><u>Able to discuss basic social and work topics with responses generally 1-to-3 sentences in length.</u></b> Some knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary with many sign vocabulary and/or sign production errors. Slow-to-moderate signing rate. Basic use of a few sign language grammatical features. Fair comprehension for signing produced at a slow-to-moderate rate with some repetition and rephrasing.
<u>Novice Plus</u>	<b><u>Exhibits some survival level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.</u></b>
<u>Novice</u>	<b><u>Able to provide single sign and some short phrase/sentence responses to basic questions signed at a slow-to-moderate rate with frequent repetition and rephrasing.</u></b> Vocabulary primarily related to everyday work and/or social areas such as basic work-related signs, family members, basic objects, colors, numbers, names of weekdays, and time. Production and fluency characterized by many sign production errors and by a slow rate with frequent inappropriate pauses/hesitations.
<u>No Functional Skills</u>	<b><u>(May be) Able to provide a short single sign and “primarily” fingerspelled responses to some basic questions signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.</u></b>

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from US Foreign Service Institute & ACTFL LPI Rating Scales by William Newell & Frank Caccamise

<sup>b</sup> For all SCPI rating descriptors, **first statement (in bold type) always a statement of ASL communicative functioning**, with all remaining statements (regular type) descriptors of ASL form (vocabulary, production, fluency, grammar, and comprehension).

March, 1999 (revised edition)

ATTACHMENT B-2

PERMISSION TO USE SCPI VIDEOS FOR  
TRAINING AND DEMONSTRATION

Dear

In order to help ensure we are able to provide quality SCPI services, in-service training is provided for current SCSDB SCPI Team Members, and training is sometimes necessary to add additional SCPI Team Members. In addition, persons who may be taking the SCPI often request the opportunity to see examples of signers who achieve each of the SCPI rating levels.

Given the above, we wish to request your permission to use your SCPI Interview videot to assist us in conducting SCPI training, demonstration, and/or research.

If you are willing to give us permission, please sign below and return this form to NAME, Sign Language Communication Coordinator, ADDRESS, FAX#. Thank you.

My signature below signifies my granting permission to the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind to use my DATE SCPI video for training, demonstration, and research purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI)  
RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

I request that the South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB) share results of my DATE Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) with the following individuals /groups (please include addresses):

My signature below is my permission for SCSDB to share my SCPI results as requested above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Individual Making Request

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return this form to NAME, SCPI Coordinator, ADDRESS, FAX #.