

2026 IDHHC Interpreter Conference
“ALL FLAVORS of Interpreting”
April 24-26, 2026

Two Scoops, One Cone

Mastering the Art of the
Deaf-Hearing Interpreting Team





Deaf

Deaf Family

Chicago native

**B.S. Degree from Gallaudet University in
Recreation Therapy**

Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) – Since 2005
**Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit-Relay
(CLIP-R)- since 2009**

**Full-Time CDI Staff at Circuit Court of Cook
County**



Hearing
Hearing Family
Chicago native
B.A. Degree in ASL<>English
Interpretation
Certified Hearing Interpreter (CHI) –
22 years
900+ hours of legal interpreting
trainings
Full-Time CHI Staff at Circuit Court of
Cook County





Our Secret Recipe for Success



FUN FACT ABOUT TEAM STATS WORKING TOGETHER:

- **21+ Years** of working together.
- **15,260 Total Hours** of side-by-side experience.
- **Current Pace (2015–2026):** 25+ hours per week (1,300 hours/year).

The Result:

A perfectly swirled partnership that **keeps its chill** under pressure.



OVERVIEW

- ✓ DI-HI Facts
- ✓ Team Discussions
- ✓ Prep
- ✓ Feedback
- ✓ Settings:
 - ✓ Media
 - ✓ Medical
 - ✓ Mental Health
 - ✓ DeafBlind
 - ✓ Conference/Platform
 - ✓ Legal
- ✓ Debrief



This is a **SAFE** space.

A space for learning!

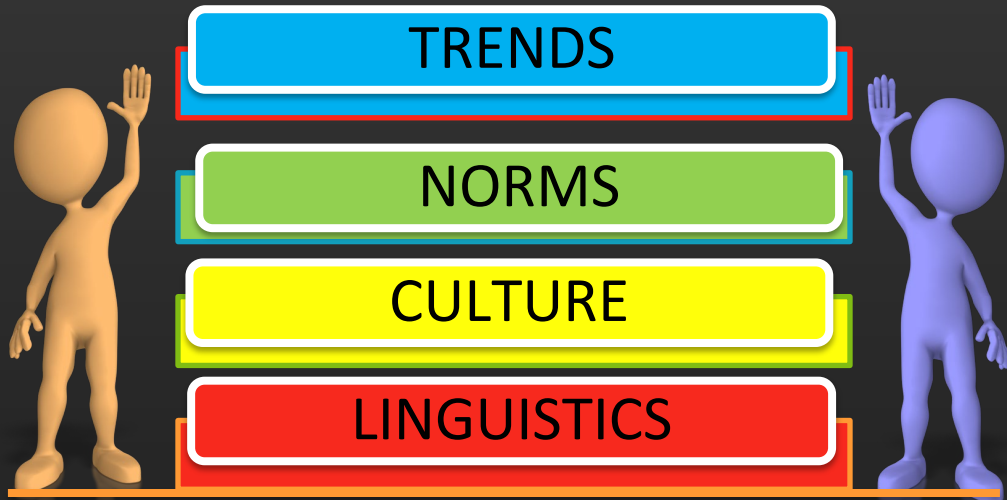
A space to grow!

Please be respectful!

Disclaimer:

May use CHI or CDI

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK



FULL SPECTRUM OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Painting A Success



TEAMWORK: def.

**Means never having
to take the
blame yourself.**



CDI= 198
CHI= 8,961



Members-at-a-Glance



14,053 TOTAL!

2,036 Members of Color

663 Deaf/HH/DB Members

40 International Members

10,049 Certified Members

116 Newly Certified

610 Student Members



CDI= 256

2026 :RID Search the Interpreter Registry



State of Illinois
Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Commission

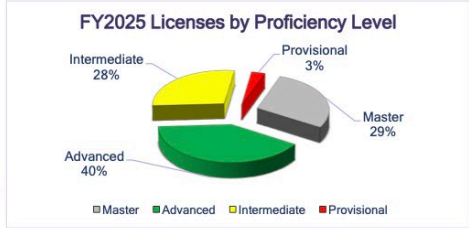
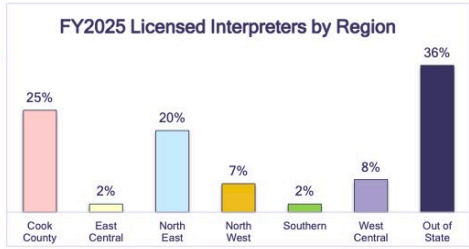
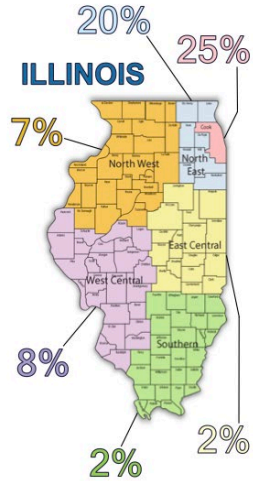
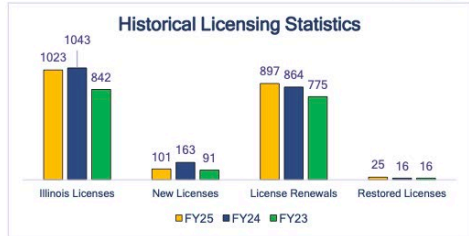


IDHHC LICENSURE

Illinois Interpreter Licensing Statistics



Fact:
The number of Licensed Deaf Interpreters increased by 44%, from 25 in FY2024 to 36 in FY2025. See page 14 for additional highlights and statistics on Licensed Deaf Interpreters.





State of Illinois
Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Commission

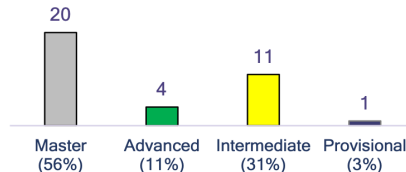
DEAF INTERPRETERS LICENSURE



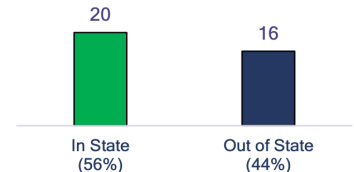
Licensed Deaf Sign Language Interpreters

During Fiscal Year 2025, 36 Illinois licenses were held by Deaf Sign Language Interpreters who fulfilled the certification requirements stipulated in the Licensure Act rules. The following provides a breakdown of these Licensed Deaf Interpreters for the fiscal year.

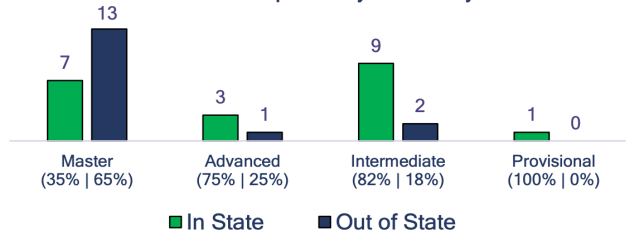
FY2025 Proficiency Levels of Licensed Deaf Interpreters



FY2025: In-State vs. Out-of-State Licensed Deaf Interpreters



FY2025: In-State vs. Out-of-State Licensed Deaf Interpreters by Proficiency Level



CHANGE YOUR THINKING



GET THAT TARGET



The Gatekeeper



Momentum Maker



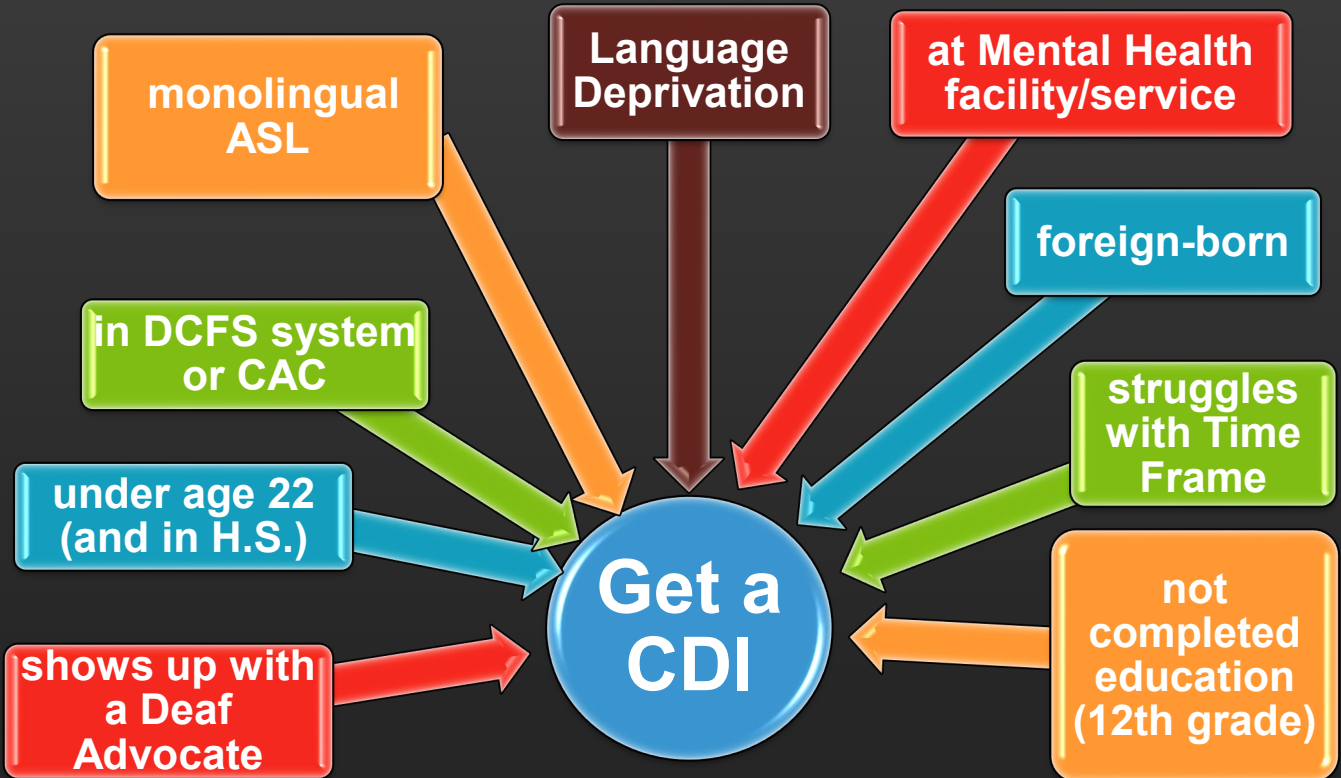
Connect Fast!



INDICATORS THE NEED FOR CDI

- ❖ The Situation
- ❖ Hearing Interpreter
- ❖ Deaf Person

WHEN THE SITUATION:



WHEN A HEARING INTERPRETER:



**CONTEXT
CONTENT
AFFECT**



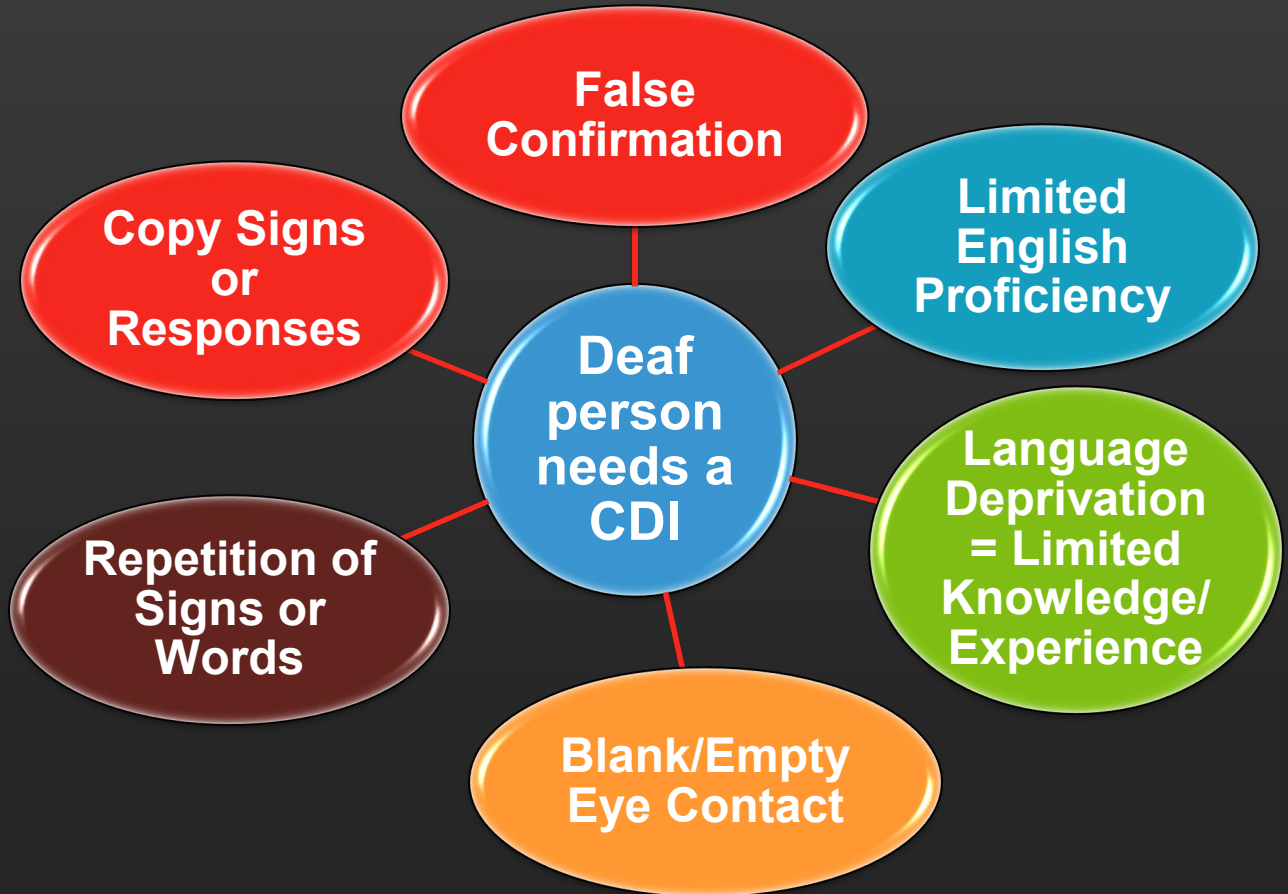
CONTEXT

CONTENT =

AFFECT
AFFECT



WHEN A DEAF PERSON:

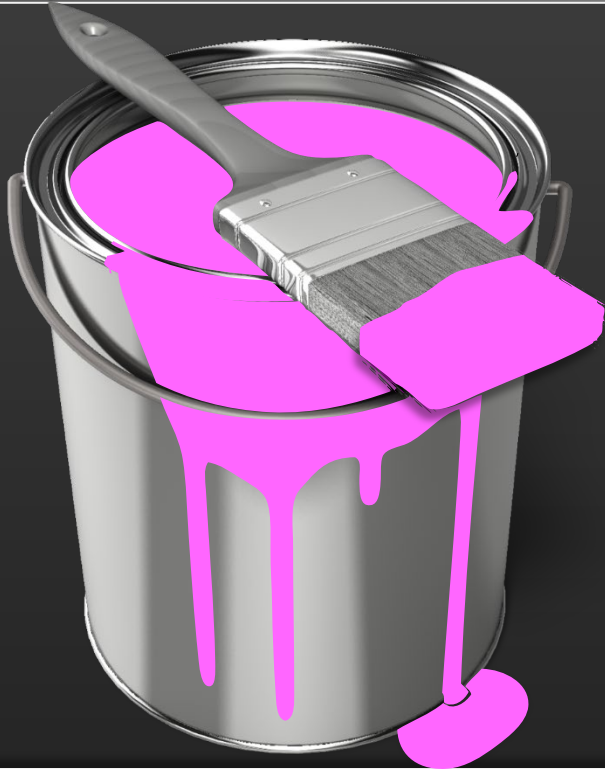


CULTURE



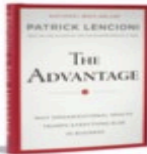
BEARING

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK



WHAT MAKES A TEAM
EFFECTIVE?

THE 5 DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM



THE ADVANTAGE: TEAMWORK MODEL



#1: Building Trust

Team members who trust one another are comfortable being open, even exposed, to one another about their failures, weaknesses and fears.

#2: Mastering Conflict

When trust is present, teams are able to engage in unfiltered ideological debate around ideas, issues and decisions that must be made.

#3: Achieving Commitment

The ability to engage in conflict and provide input enables team members to buy-in or commit to decisions.

#4: Embracing Accountability

After commitment is established, team members must be willing to hold one another accountable and remind each other when actions are counterproductive to the team.

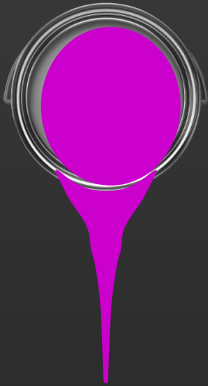
#5: Focusing on Results

Collective team results must supersede any departmental or personal objectives or pursuits.

This model originated from Lencioni's *New York Times* best-seller, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

TRUST



Foundation of team dynamics

Openly discuss skills and abilities with team

Respect

Trust develops over time

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK



**DON'T HAVE
OR LOSE**

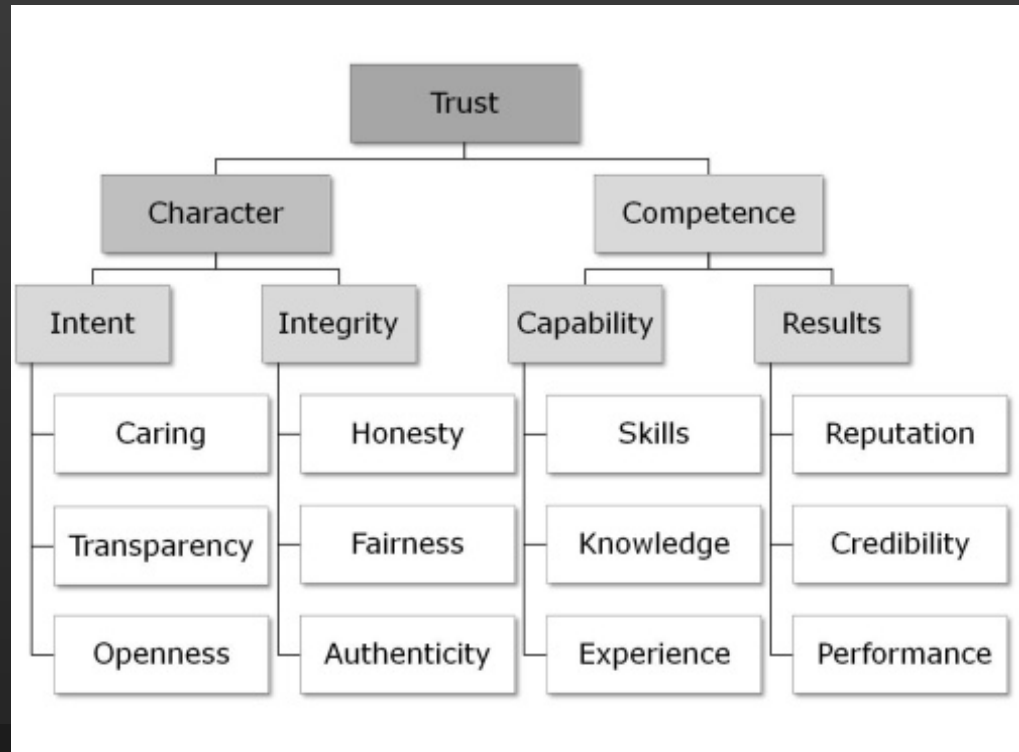
Actions and Words Inconsistent

Withholding Information

Lie or Tell Half-Truths

Closed-Mindedness

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK



EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

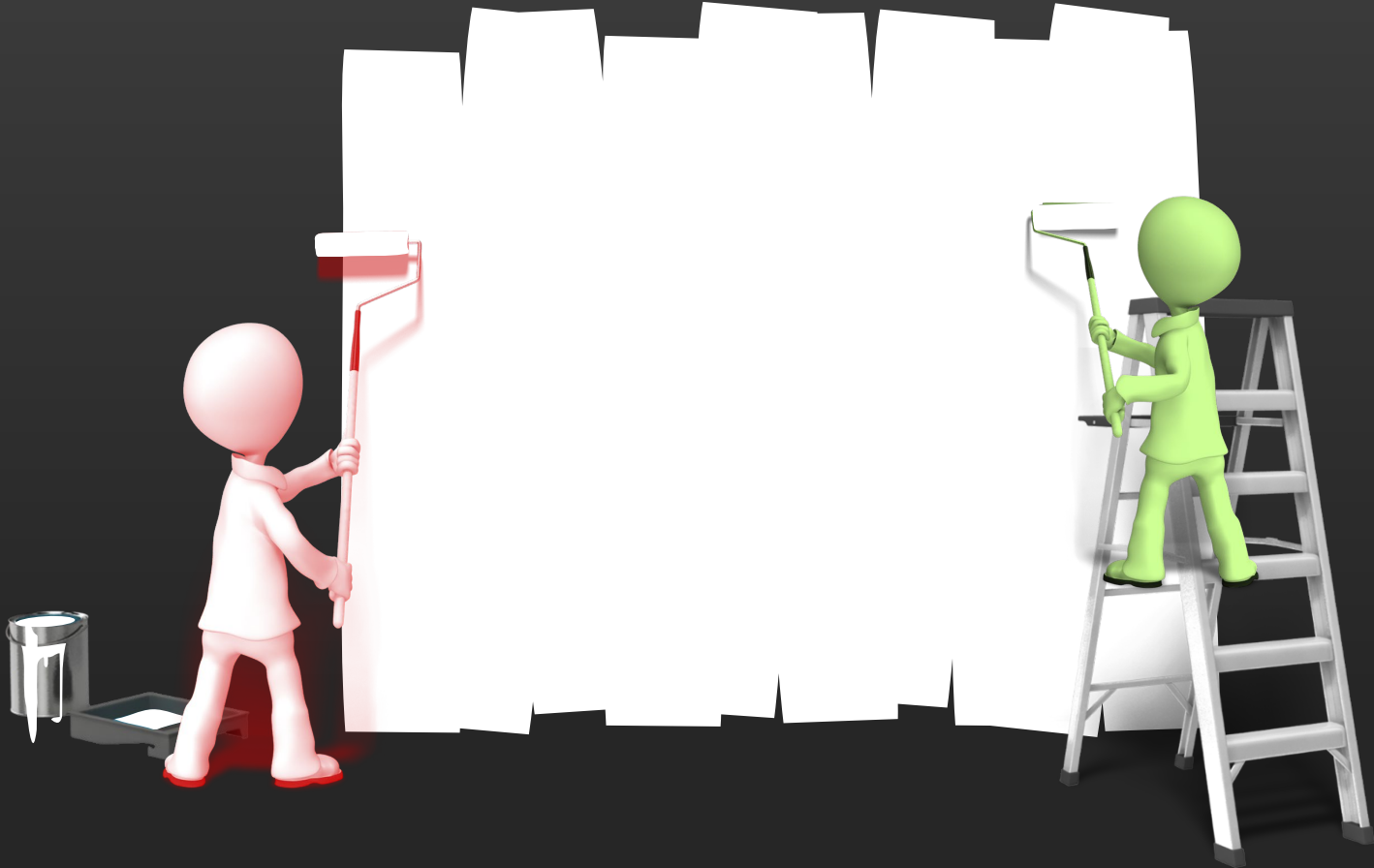


Take the lead....?

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED



PREP

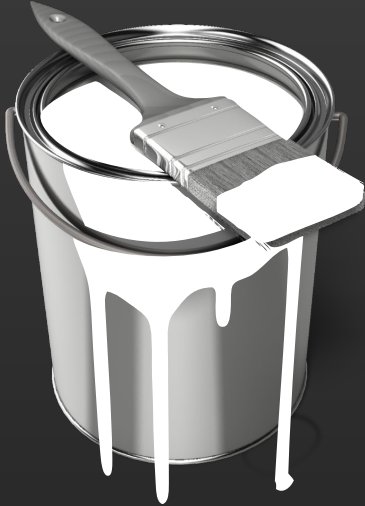


NO PREP...?



...work can get messy!!

PREP



Video Chat before
Assignment v. Email

Background (job or client)

Checklist

DEMAND CONTROL SCHEMA



Demands:

- environmental
- interpersonal
- paralinguistic
- intrapersonal

Controls:

- actions / behavior
- interpretation decisions
- internal acknowledgements

GATHERING TOOLS



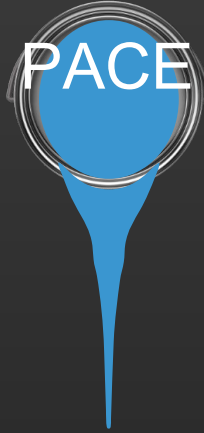
GET READY TO SKETCH:

PREP

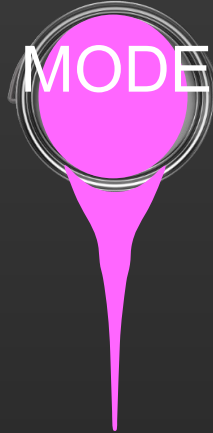
INTERACTION



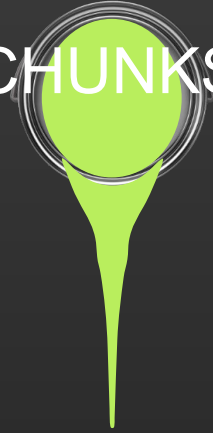
PACE

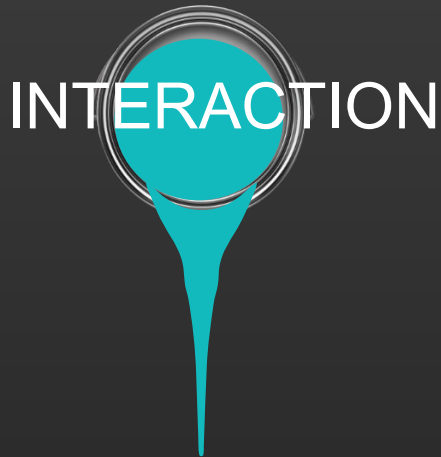


MODE



CHUNKS





Who takes the lead?

Division of responsibilities

Who explains why 2 interpreters?

Who explains roles?

Other??



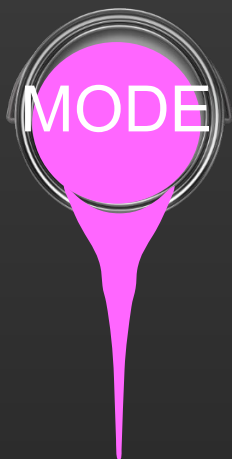
Who controls the pace?

How?

What if they don't slow down?

Taking Turns

Holding information



ASL ← → English

CONSECUTIVE

SIMULTANEOUS

CONSECUTIVE



SIMULTANEOUS



Check in and adjust if not working



CONSECUTIVE

- Higher accuracy
- Less stressful
- Be ready to signal if need a mode adjustment
- Can be used as a fix for monitoring issues



SIMULTANEOUS

- May be successful when time constraints or pressures cannot be mitigated
- Interactions have a more natural flow
- Important for team to have good monitoring skills for support



Information Chunks

Gauging the Flow

Partner Switch

Holding Information

CHOOSE A PALETTE

PREP



MONITOR



CODES

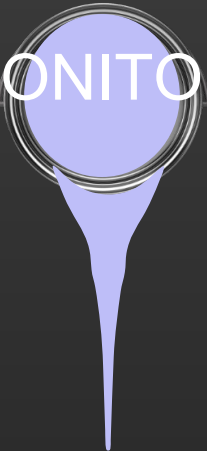


CHECK IN



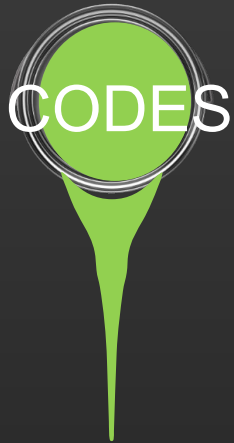
FIX

MONITOR



Goals
Tone
Understanding

Be...
present
engaged
ready to adjust for accuracy



Develop codes

“OKAY?”

“Use color code”

“Implicit meaning”

“**HELP!!!**”

HAND SIGNALS



Head Nod

Eye Contact

Notes

Communicate with team**

**Be considerate if you have 2nd set of team; distraction or helpful?



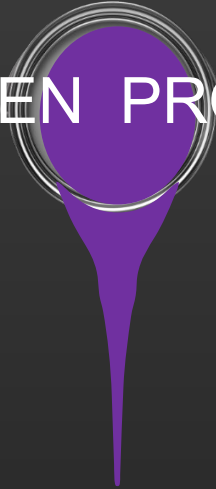
FIX

Be prepared to be honest

Consider what the misinterpretation
will affect

Open Process??

OPEN PROCESS



Don't understand

**Topic
Change**

**Speaker style
(accent, fast)**

**Difficult
concept**



Team do do?

Takes over

**Continue until team
ready again**

HOT POTATO!!



PAINTING THE SAME PICTURE

HI COPY SIGNS

DI COPY SIGNS

- HI likes what they see?
- HI thinks they are helping DI?
- DI doesn't understand HI?
- DI doesn't understand the message?
- DI may not have the skills?

ADDING DIMENSION WITH 31 FLAVORS



Give the true color and meaning of the message to give the other person a feeling of who they are.

Adaption of "31 Flavors" by Sharon Newman Solow

ADDING DIMENSION WITH 31 FLAVORS



Sign exact what you see? How much? Mockery?

Viewed interpreter as acting instead of interpreting.

How to reconcile your work with your identity in your community?



THE AWKWARD SILENCE

Be a filler
Break eye gaze

THE VANNA WHITE MOMENT

Maximize the use of
your team's presence





SIGN POSTING

Changing Topics:

Hearing Way

Intonation

Pacing

Deaf Way

Waving Hands

Stated Forgot tell you

Change space

The Art of



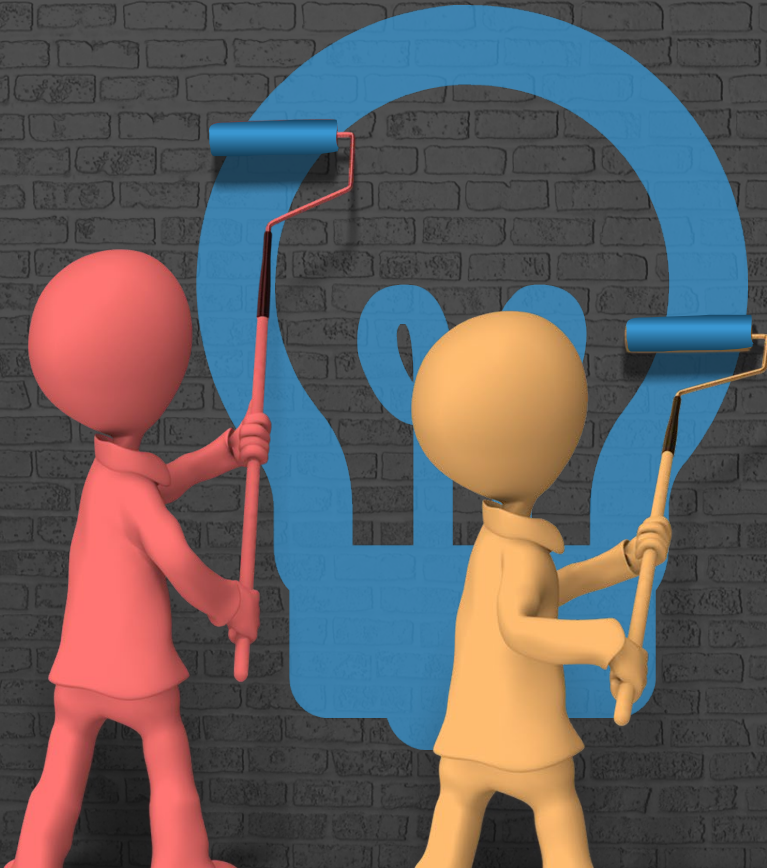
Rolling Out the FEEDBACK

A shared leadership responsibility

Create opportunities for team and individual reflection

Venting v. Complaining

Painting an Idea



Praise in public
Process in private

When teams have
problems, they
should be
resolved as a
team.

SANDWICH APPROACH

POSITIVE

AREA OF
IMPROVEMENT

POSITIVE



GLUTEN-FREE SANDWICH APPROACH

**AREA OF
IMPROVEMENT**



NO SANDWICH APPROACH



Rolling Out the FEEDBACK

Hearing interpreter to hearing interpreter - easier?

Hearing Interpreter to Deaf interpreter - challenging?

Cultural Sensitive?

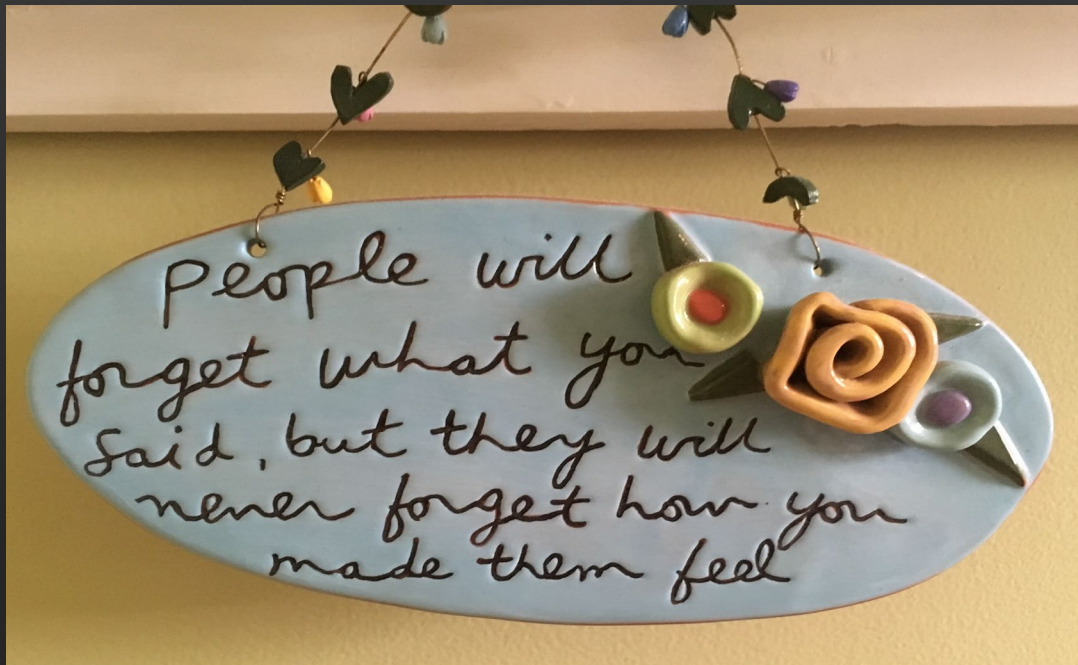
Deaf interpreter to Deaf interpreter - easier?

Deaf interpreter to hearing interpreter - challenging?

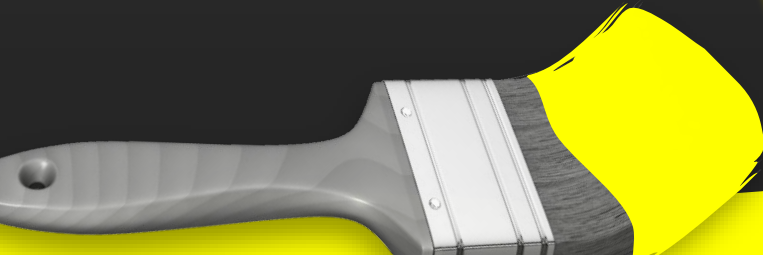
Bold because have rights?

Buffer Person

PAINTING A SUCCESS



TEAM CHECKLIST



READY TO PLAY



The
VideoPhone
Game

READY TO USE YOUR BEST ASL

- ❖ Oh, you're so sneaky—How'd you get away with that?!?
 - ❖ I think your kid has a dirty diaper - you should maybe go change it.
 - ❖ Wow, Pat was acting weird!! What were they drinking?!
 - ❖ How the hell did you get here so fast?!?
 - ❖ The guy with tie came running over to clean up the mess.
-

READY TO USE YOUR BEST ENGLISH

- ❖ PEI PEI (same with 8585)
 - ❖ POW (ANY SIGNING STYLES)
 - ❖ BING
 - ❖ NOSE FLICK THROW
 - ❖ TRAIN-GONE
-

LUNCH BREAK



Personalities test



<https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>

AFTERNOON

Advanced

Art of

Teaming



READY TO PLAY



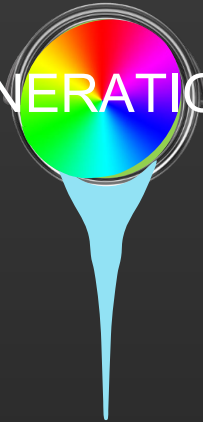
Personalities test



<https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>

EVOLUTION

GENERATIONS



Gen Z (1997-2012)

Misunderstood as: Entitled, soft, always on their phone

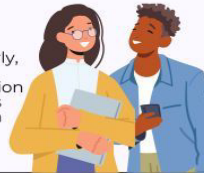
But actually are: Clear on boundaries, eager to fix broken systems, inclusive, fast learners

Common conflicts:

- "Why can't they just show up on time?"
 - *Gen Z:* We value output, not hours
- "They quit after 6 months!"
 - *Gen Z:* Career growth > blind loyalty
- "They only communicate by DMs and emojis!"
 - *Gen Z:* We move fast and meet people where they are

Lead them by:

- Explaining the why, not just the what
- Giving feedback early, often, and clearly
- Letting them question outdated workflows
- Offering flexibility in how they work - as long as the work gets done



Millennials (1981-1996)

Misunderstood as: Indecisive, praise-hungry, too sensitive

But actually are: Strong collaborators, resilient under pressure, meaning-driven, tech-savvy

Common conflicts:

- "Do they need a trophy for everything?"
 - *Millennials:* We want feedback, not flattery
- "They want flexibility AND promotions?"
 - *Millennials:* You don't have to trade one for the other
- "Why do they always need a group decision?"
 - *Millennials:* We were taught collaboration is smart, not weak

Lead them by:

- Connecting work to purpose or progress
- Offering coaching alongside autonomy
- Providing clarity on career paths
- Creating space for ideas - and acting on them



© George Stern

Gen X (1965-1980)

Misunderstood as: Checked-out, resistant to change, emotionally distant

But actually are: Self-reliant, focused on results, loyal when trusted, calm under pressure

Common conflicts:

- "They never speak up in meetings!"
 - *Gen X:* We don't talk to be heard, but when it matters
- "They're stuck in their ways!"
 - *Gen X:* We've seen fads come and go and stick to what works
- "They want to be left alone!"
 - *Gen X:* We want to be trusted, not micromanaged

Lead them by:

- Letting them own projects start to finish
- Skipping fluff and getting to the point
- Asking for input directly - they won't self-promote
- Respecting their work-life lines



Boomers (1946-1964)

Misunderstood as: Technophobic, inflexible, stuck in the past

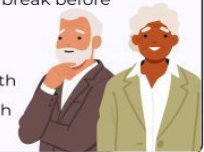
But actually are: Long-view thinkers, loyal, strong relationship builders, wise mentors

Common conflicts:

- "Why do they insist on phone calls?"
 - *Boomers:* That's how we build trust, voice to voice
- "They don't get Slack!"
 - *Boomers:* We're open to tech - just show us how it helps
- "They resist every change!"
 - *Boomers:* We ask questions because we've seen things break before

Lead them by:

- Tapping into their experience before rewriting playbooks
- Blending tradition with innovation
- Inviting them to coach others
- Giving respect first



PAINTING A SUCCESS



**I CAN DO THINGS YOU
CANNOT, YOU CAN DO
THINGS I CANNOT;
TOGETHER WE CAN DO
GREAT THINGS.**

MOTHER TERESA

READY TO PLAY

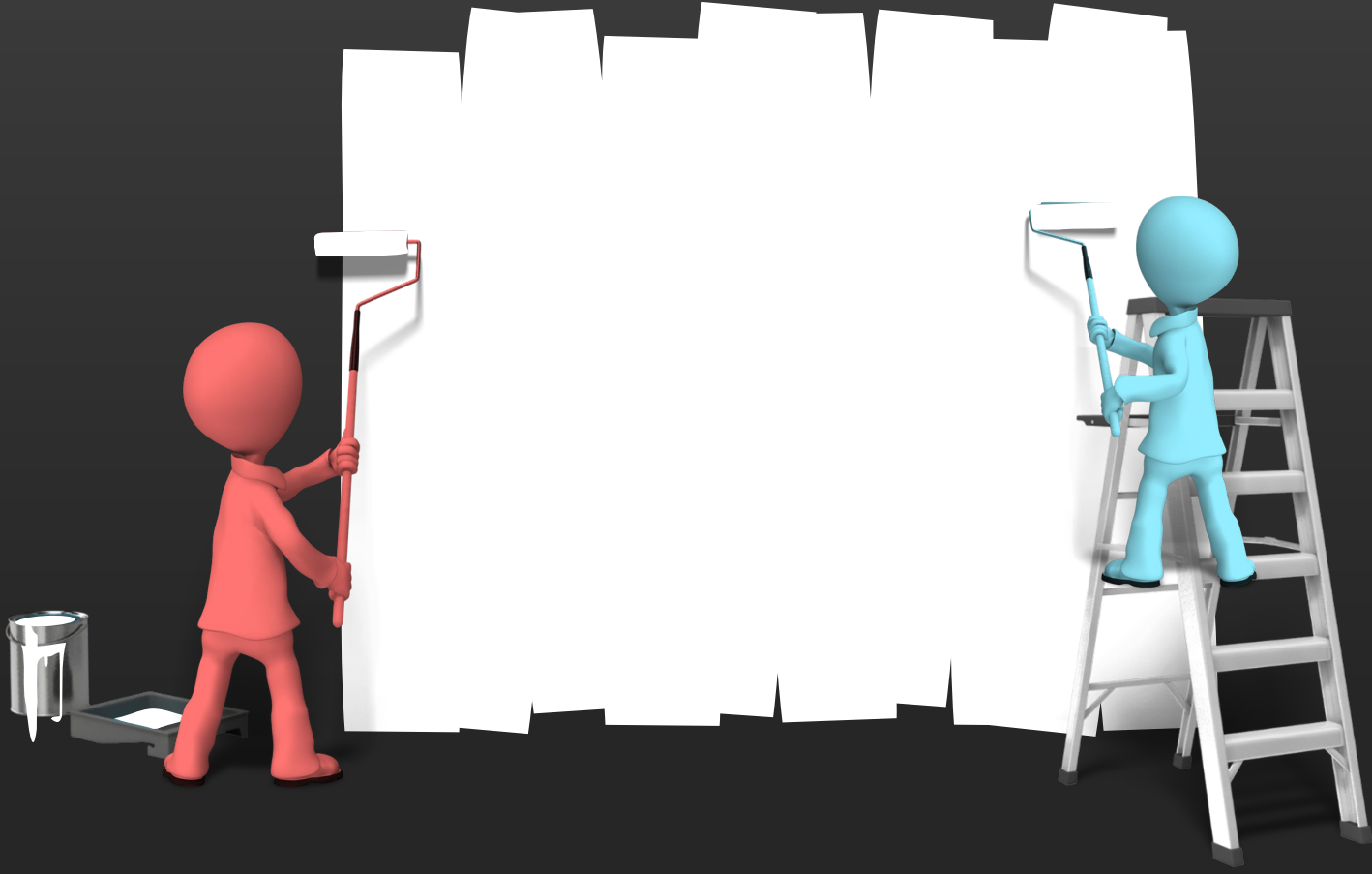


SETTINGS



- Media
- Medical
- Mental Health
- DeafBlind
- Platform
- Legal

PREP TIME



DEBRIEF



MEDIA

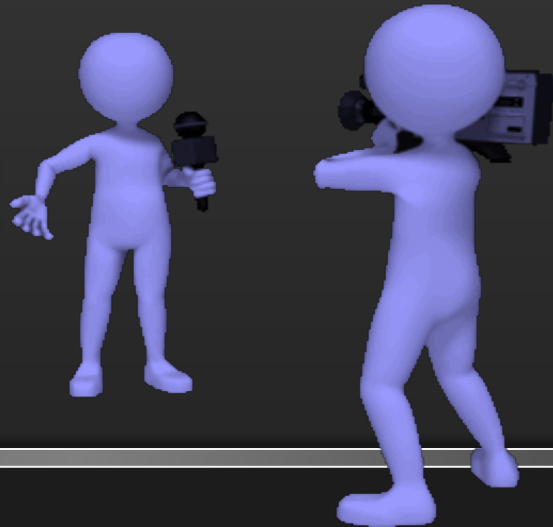
- Hurricane
- Tornado
- Shooting
- Fire
- Political



READY TO PLAY



Will you take the job?
Who picks the team?
How do ask for help?





MEDIA & EMERGENCY

Something to ponder.....

How much information do we give?

- accent
- gender
- culture
- education
- socio-economic



HI to DI

Weather Emergency: Chicago

Ideas to Share

Media



“A CDI specializes in making sure your broadcast will be understood by the most people – maximizing your reach to a larger viewership audience more successfully.”

“...and it will establish a great rapport with the deaf community to show that you truly value their safety in this emergency situation.”

MEDICAL



MEDICAL



✓ Life
Liberty
Pursuit of Happiness

Environmental Noises with
Meaning:

- Lullaby
- Rapid Response Team Call



DI-HI Team

Doctor's Office



DI-HI Team

Issue with Medicine



DI-HI Team

Bones

Ideas to Share

Medical Settings



“In order for your patient to be able to make a fully-informed decision about their medical treatment options, I will need a specialized sign language interpreter - Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI).”

“...Just as doctors specialize in areas of medicine (*cardiology/podiatry*) - interpreters also work in specialized settings. Medical interpretation is a specialization in our field.”

Ideas to Share

Medical Settings



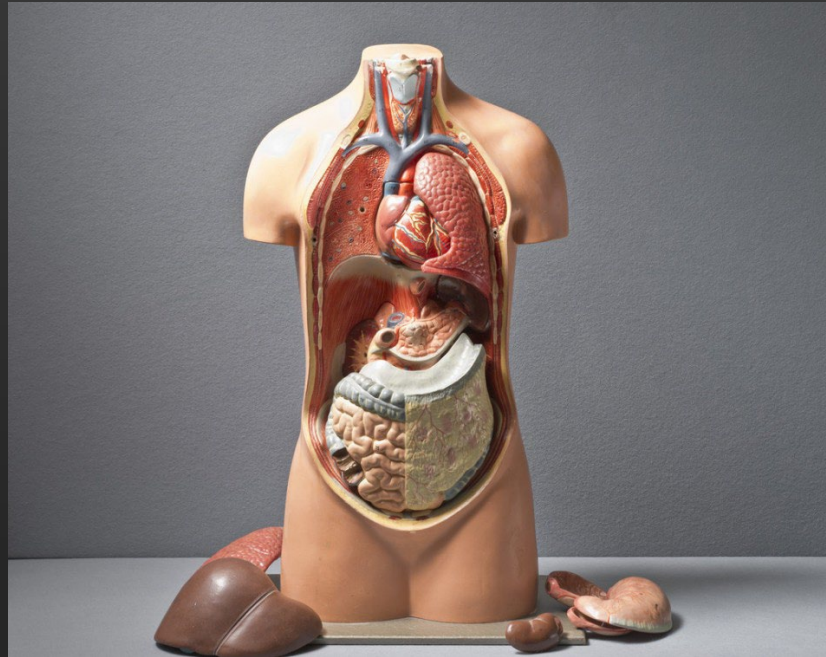
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MEDICAL SETTING & DEAFBLIND

Use physical
model if
available

Use patient's
body, when
appropriate



Painting A Success

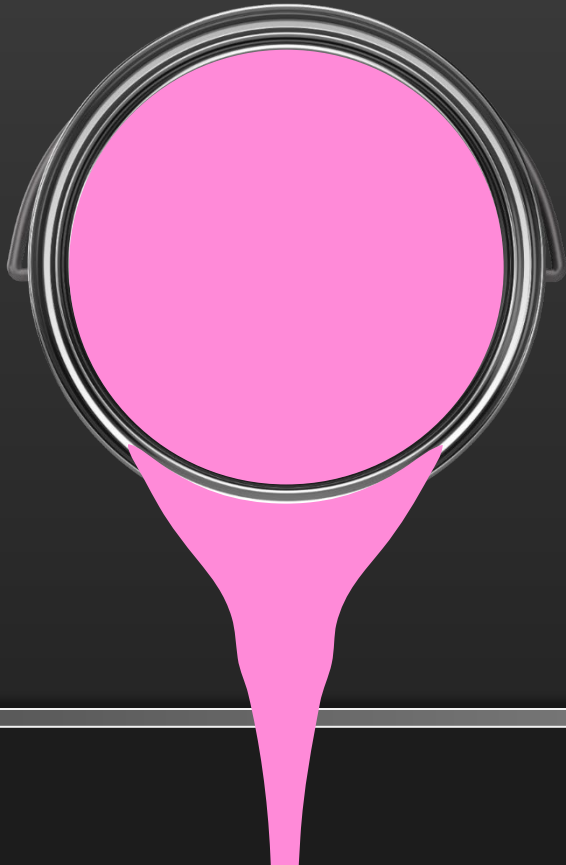


**COMMUNICATION IS
WHAT MAKES A
TEAM STRONG.**

QUOTEHD.COM

Brian McClennan

MENTAL HEALTH



Should CDIs be brought into mental health scenarios more often?

Life and Liberty?
...or Pursuit of Happiness?

PAINTING YOURSELF IN A CORNER

How does any interpreter affect a mental health setting?
A team of interpreters??

Weighing options and prioritizing

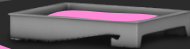
How do we give information to the treating professional?
Working with our team – TRUST

What information do we give?

Are we seeing what we think we are seeing?

What does anger look like on our face?

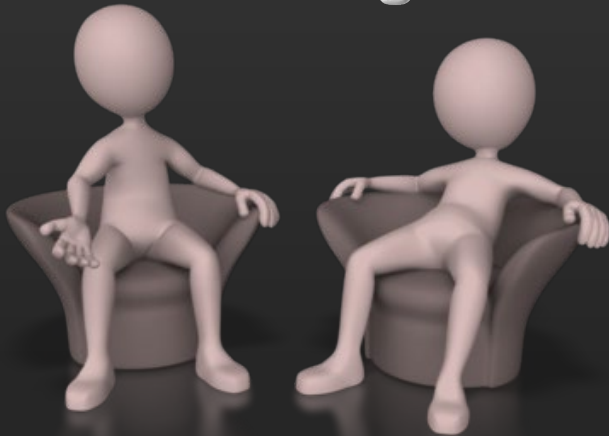
How important is the cadence of speech? Repetition?



Will the interpretation affect a diagnosis and medication?
Treatment? The ability to communicate thoughts and feelings? The ability to connect?
The ability to heal?

Ideas to Share

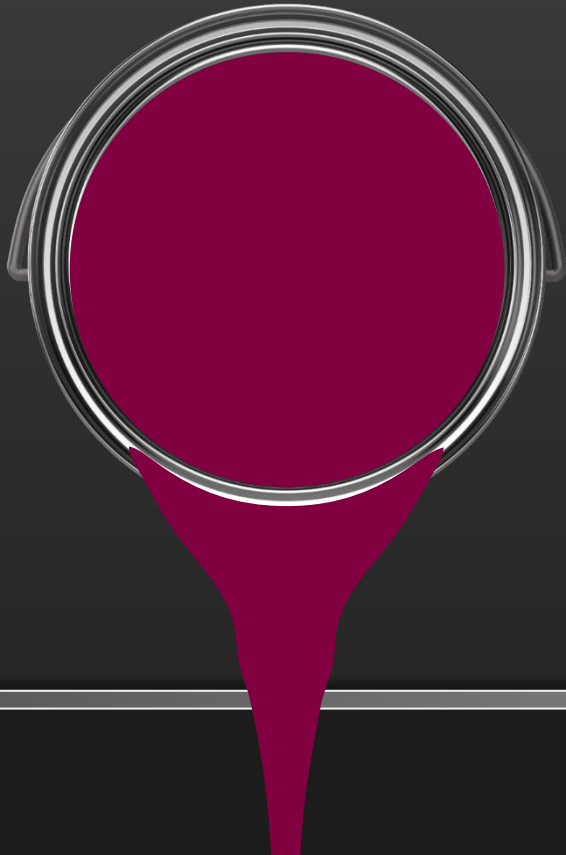
Mental Health Settings



“In order to properly diagnose this patient it is imperative to understand ALL of the nuances of their communication and responses to your questions.

This situation requires native fluency (an Advanced Communication Access Specialist) to ensure the proper course of treatment.”

DEAFBLIND



DI-HI TEAM

DI-DI TEAM



DEAFBLIND

Timing - 20 minutes or not

Protactile/Haptics+ timing

Logistics: seating

Get your feeds from the room

- eyedropping?
- captions?

READY TO PLAY



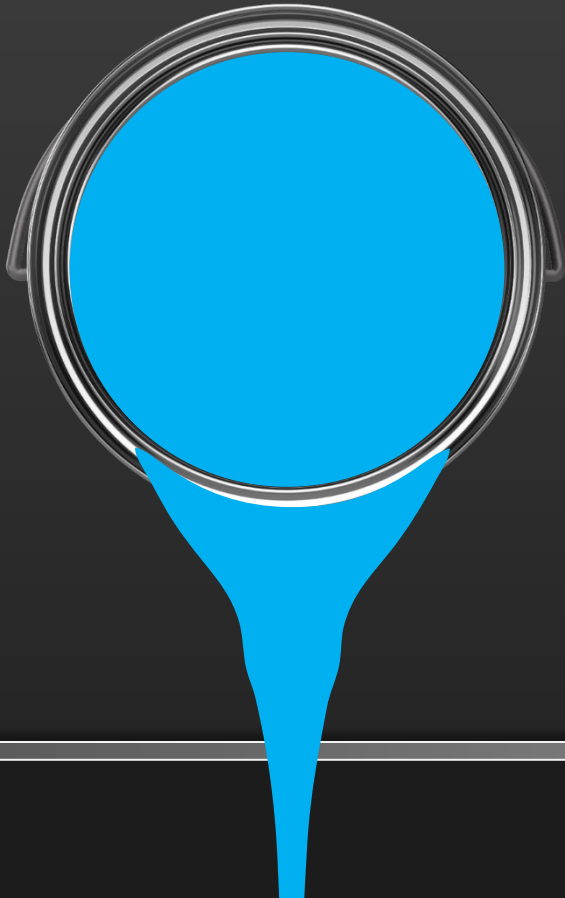
Youth Acrobat

READY TO PLAY



Sean Forbes
"Let's Mambo"

CONFERENCE / PLATFORM



CONFERENCE / PLATFORM

Platform Interpreting

Audience Interpreting

Mirror Interpreting



CONFERENCE / PLATFORM



Logistics/ Sight Line

Feed

Challenges

Audience Interpreting

Asking for Help

CONFERENCE / PLATFORM



Consider distance between DI and HI

IMAGINE...

You are on platform and someone in the back has a question or a comment. You can not see the person. What do you do?



CONFERENCE / PLATFORM



CONFERENCE / PLATFORM

2 HI Voicing & 1 DI Mirror

Hearing Interpreters

Deaf Interpreter



Deaf: Speaker/Performer/Audience



CONFERENCE / PLATFORM

2 HI & 1 DI

Roles/Expectations:

2 HI Voicing & 1 DI
Monitoring



IMAGINE...



A Deaf presenter is on stage with dense ASL.

- What do you do?



2 HI voice - 1 DI assist

Life is like a bottle of wine



Painting A Success



We are not
A TEAM
because we
work together.

WE ARE
a team because
*We respect,
trust, and care
for each other.*

LEGAL



Police Station

Courtroom

Deposition



POLICE STATION

HONEST SELF-ANALYSIS BEFORE ACCEPTING WORK

- Prep with officers
 - cultural mediations
 - interpretation challenges
- Frame the police perspective
 - terminology
 - goals
- Be clear and confident with boundaries and needs

DO NOT BE AFRAID TO STOP

- Ask for statements to recorded
 - video for signs
 - audio for spoken
- Camera needs to see HI, *DI, and *Deaf person

*minimum requirements

Ideas to Share

Law Enforcement Settings



“To get the most complete and accurate statement and to improve the chances that you won’t have issues with the statement and/or charges in court, this situation requires a full team.”

“Bringing in a CDI reduces accidental errors through misunderstanding and strengthens your case.”

“In moments of stress, people revert to natural communication styles – ASL is my second language. My partner has native fluency.



COURTROOM

KNOW THE RULES OF THE ROOM BEFORE YOU ENTER

- Observe first
- Get training
- Make a clear record

- Identify who is speaking
 - point fingers??
 - establish person and space
 - (HI viewpoint - DI memorize from the back)

DEPOSITION



MUST FOLLOW COURTROOM RULES

- Ask for testimony to recorded
video for signs
audio for spoken
- Camera needs to see HI, *DI, and *Deaf person
- Can DI check voicing work on court reporter screen?

*minimum requirements

Ideas to Share



Legal Settings



”Your honor, I am not able to establish effective communication as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act without a CDI. We will need a continuance in order to get the proper interpreters here.”

“I am not able to abide by my oath to interpret accurately without a CDI.”

“As an officer of the court, I am bound by my duty to inform the court of any impediments to my performance in accordance with Canon 8 of the National Center for State Courts’ (NCSC) Model Code of Professionals Conduct for Interpreters in the judiciary.”

Interpreting is an Art, not a Science... DEBRIEF



Step 1

Vent

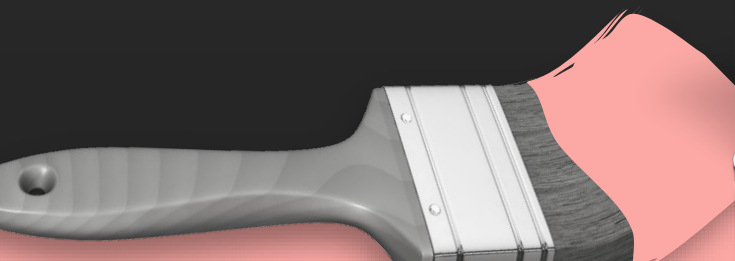
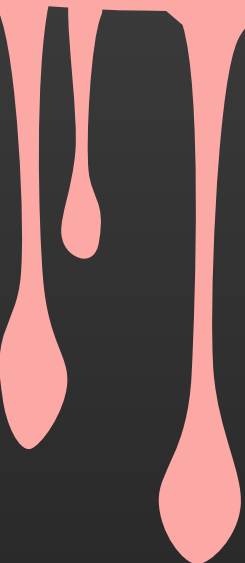
Step 2

1 thing that went right

1 skill to improve together

Step 3

Feedback



EVERY
INTERPRETER
IS AN
ARTIST

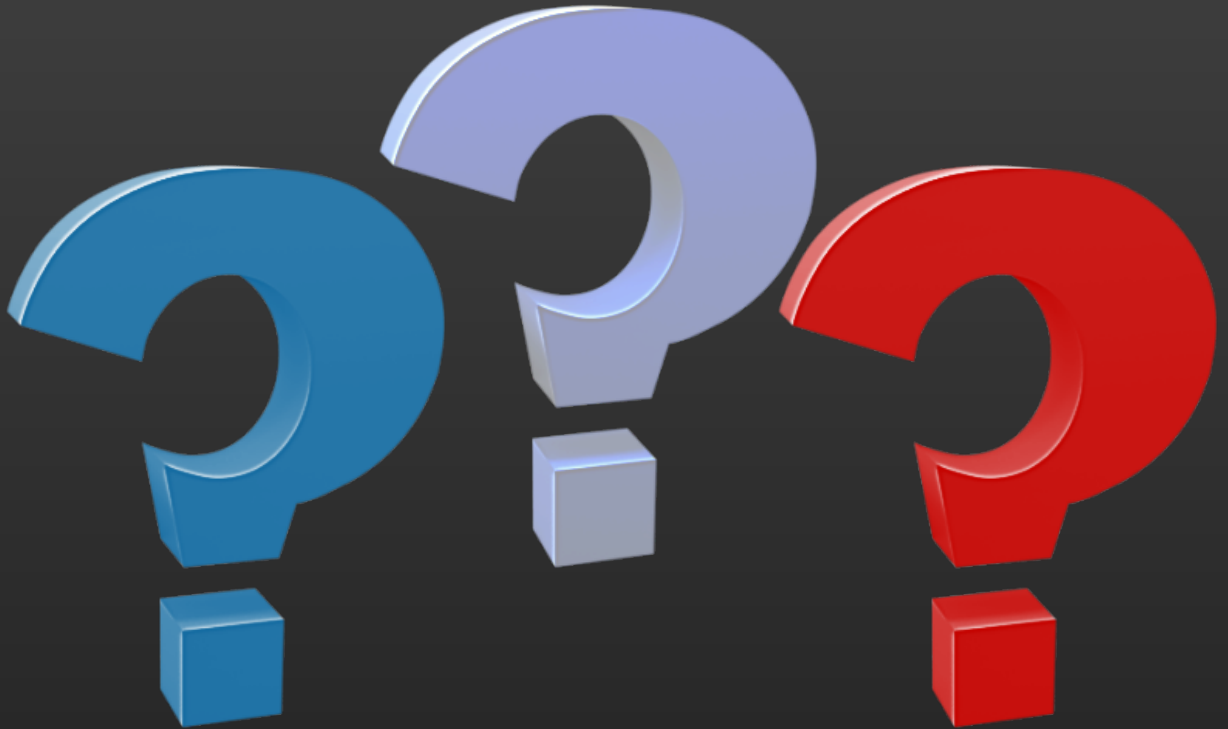
THE BEAUTY OF TEAMING

Art is not what

you see

But what you
make others see.

-Edgar Degas



QUESTIONS?

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2026 IDHHC Interpreter Conference
“ALL FLAVORS of Interpreting”
April 24-26, 2026

