



Directory of Deaf Interpreters

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About OASLI

The Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters (OASLI) is one of two professional associations of ASL-English Interpreters in Ontario. Along with our sister chapter Sign Language Interpreters of the National Capital (SLINC), we are an affiliate chapter of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC).

OASLI members work alongside Deaf individuals and organizations to improve the quality of interpretation services by promoting the use of professional service providers.

OASLI is committed to

- providing sign language interpreters with professional development and networking opportunities
- offering venues for sign language interpreters to share best practices, and discussing trends and issues in the field
- promoting the standards set by the AVLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct which emphasizes confidentiality, impartiality, integrity and accuracy of all interpreted information
- acting in an advisory capacity to service providers, agencies, and interpreter training programs
- raising awareness about the field of interpreting through public education

A volunteer board of directors, responsible for the administration and governance of the association, is elected annually by the membership. While OASLI is not a referral agency, this directory is published each year to provide information for contacting interpreters.

Exclusive Use of Active AVLIC Members

The Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters (OASLI) supports the exclusive employment of qualified professionals who are Active members of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC). We believe that it is the right and the responsibility of all citizens of Ontario who employ the services of a sign language interpreter to contract only those providers who agree to uphold the guidelines of the profession as set out by our national association.

The Issue:

The field of American Sign Language (ASL)-English Interpretation is currently unregulated. This leads to many people who are considered competent “signers” making a living as interpreters in communities across Ontario. As they are not Active members of AVLIC, they

- are not required to follow AVLIC’s Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct (COEGPC)
- cannot be held accountable for their actions through AVLIC’s Professional Conduct Review Process (PCRP)
- may not have graduated from a recognized interpreter training program

This has led to a lack of quality assurance and disempowerment of consumers throughout the province.

Rationale

OASLI is an Affiliate Chapter of AVLIC and as such all of our members have a minimum three years of post-secondary training or equivalent. Members are also bound by AVLIC’s Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct, which include

- Professional Accountability

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- Professional Competence
- Non-discrimination
- Integrity in professional relationships
- Integrity in business practices

AVLIC is responsible for the development and administration of the Canadian Evaluation System, Canada's only ASL-English interpreter certification process. The ultimate goal of AVLIC is to certify all of its members. AVLIC also provides Deaf and Non-Deaf consumers with a formal complaint mechanism called the Professional Conduct Review Process (PCRP). Unfortunately this process may only be utilized in instances where the interpreter is an active AVLIC member, and does not apply to non-members.

For all reasons stated above, OASLI supports the exclusive use of interpreters who are Active AVLIC members.

Booking a Deaf Interpreter

Whether you are contracting with an interpreter who operates an independent business or with a referral agency, securing interpreting services is a business transaction. There are a number of factors and terms that need to be discussed and negotiated.

The following factors will help a Deaf Interpreter determine if they are qualified for the assignment

- the nature of the appointment
- availability of adequate preparation materials (information related to the appointment that will help the interpreter prepare)
- identities of the individuals involved
- composition of the interpreting team
- the need for related professionals - Deaf Interpreter, Deaf Advocate

If the Deaf Interpreter deems themselves to be qualified, the following terms will need to be confirmed

- date, time and location of the appointment
- fees
- payment for time preparing for the appointment
- payment for travel expenses/travel time
- cancellation policy

In some circumstances, it may be useful to have a signed service agreement outlining mutually agreed upon terms. In other circumstances, emails clearly laying out terms prior to confirming the booking may be sufficient. Many Deaf interpreters work as independent contractors. For this reason, there are variations among business practices.

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Because of the increasing demand for Deaf interpretation, the availability of many interpreters fills up very quickly. For this reason, OASLI suggests that you contact and secure a Deaf Interpreter a minimum of 2-3 weeks ahead of the actual appointment.

Accreditation & Employer Screenings for Deaf Interpreters

OASLI supports the exclusive use of AVLIC members for all assignments requiring ASL-English interpretation. That being said, AVLIC membership itself is not an accreditation. AVLIC membership guarantees, under the present membership criteria, that the interpreter

- has graduated from a recognized interpreter training program (ITP) or has completed all equivalency criteria
- has committed to following AVLIC's Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct (COEGPC)
- is subjected to AVLIC's Professional Conduct Review Process (PCRP)

Furthermore, OASLI recognizes there are currently no accreditation or screening processes available in Canada for Deaf Interpreters. Because of this, OASLI strongly encourages businesses to only hire Deaf Interpreters that are AVLIC members.

A Note about RID Certifications

Some Deaf Interpreters working in Canada hold certification granted by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). RID is a national professional association of interpreters based in the United States. RID grants accreditation based upon their own criteria and as such OASLI cannot comment on nor endorse those accreditations.

Field of Practice

Deaf Interpreters (DI)¹

A Deaf interpreter (DI) uses their native sign language, along with gestures and other communication strategies, to foster culturally and linguistically appropriate interpretation for consumers. In Canada, American Sign Language (ASL) and la Langue des Signes Québécois (LSQ) are the national signed languages used. In addition, Canada also has two regional varieties of signed language – Inuit Sign Language (ISL) and Maritime Sign Language (MSL).

Deaf Interpreters provide service in a wide variety of settings and situations. These are often settings where the outcomes can have serious and long lasting impacts such as

- medical
- legal
- employment
- mental health
- other

Consumers who benefit from the services of a Deaf Interpreter include, but are not limited to

- non-native signers (i.e., newcomers and/or visitors to Canada) who use another signed language
- Deaf and hard of hearing people who have idiosyncratic language use (sometimes referred to as “home signs”)
- individuals with a physical disability that affects their ability to produce a signed message

¹ Copied from OAD’s Position Paper on Deaf Interpreters, 2015.

- individuals with a cognitive challenge
- Deaf children

In addition, Deaf consumers with fluent language use may also benefit from the services of a Deaf Interpreter. A Deaf Interpreter possesses a native comprehension of Deaf life experiences, which are unfamiliar to the hearing interpreter.

Deaf Interpreters may work as part of a team with a hearing interpreter. As a team, the interpreters will

- ensure that the spoken language message reaches the Deaf consumer in a form that is understandable
- ensure that the Deaf consumer's signed message is conveyed accurately into the spoken language

A Deaf Interpreter may also work without a hearing interpreter. A Deaf Interpreter may work alone or in a group of Deaf Interpreters when

- translating between written language and signed language
- interpreting from one signed language directly into another (this often occurs at national and international conferences and gatherings)

The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) is the national professional association for sign language interpreters. Deaf Interpreters who are members of AVLIC are required to follow the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct which focuses on

- professional accountability
- professional competence
- non-discrimination
- integrity in professional relationships
- integrity in business practices

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