

Procedure for Requesting a Sign Language Interpreter

July 2, 2009

DSS Office of EEO

The following procedure is to be used by the Defense Security Service when requesting sign language interpreters as an accommodation for Federal employees, applicants and students who are in need of sign-language interpreter to participate in meetings, training, conferences or other appointments. This procedure was developed in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which set forth guidelines to ensure that programs, services, and activities are accessible to people with disabilities.

1. An authorized employee of the office scheduling a meeting or event which will require interpreting services (staff meeting, training, office function, etc.) is responsible for initiating a request for interpreter services by completing a DSS Form 231 Work Order Request, at least ten (10) working days in advance. Tentative requests for interpreter services cannot be supported. The request form should indicate the requestor's name, date and time of event, location of event, type of event and duration of event. For record keeping purposes, interpreting needs may not be covered without an official request.

NOTE: DSS Form 231 is not required when an individual needs interpretive services on a repeated basis (e.g., weekly staff meetings). The form is required only for the first request, although appropriate notice must be given each time services are needed.

2. All requests must be signed by the employee's supervisor. The supervisor will determine who will arrange the service and forward the DSS Form 231 to the appropriate focal point for Government Purchase Card (GPC) payment, as soon as possible, but in no more than five business days from receiving the request. The designated GPC cardholder will also provide the name(s) of the sign language interpreter(s) to the requestor as soon as they are identified by the service provider. The individuals designated to process requests for reasonable accommodation are: An employee's supervisor, or their designated point of contact and the Office of EEO.

3. Early notification is necessary in order to best ensure provision of this service. Advance scheduling - preferably one to two weeks - is strongly encouraged. Although it is not possible to foresee every occasion for which interpreting services may be required, failure to schedule interpreting services well in advance may result in the necessity to reschedule meetings until interpreter services are available.

4. If a meeting or event will last longer than one hour, arrangements must be made for more than one interpreter to be present, or the meeting or event must be scheduled to include sufficient rest periods, including a "sign-free" lunch break, if necessary. Generally, one interpreter can work 45-60 minutes and then needs a 15-minute break. A

break during a meeting or event does not constitute a rest period for the interpreter if s/he is expected to continue working (e.g., deaf and hearing parties wish to communicate during the break and look to the interpreter to facilitate the exchange).

When interpreter services are needed for a DSS employee attending a conference or training program sponsored by an outside organization, the sponsoring organization is principally responsible for providing interpreters; however, if these services are not offered by the sponsoring organization, DSS will procure an interpreter for the employee.

5. It is the responsibility of the requesting employee to notify their supervisor at least 24 hours in advance when:

- Employee plans to miss work or a scheduled class;
- Room, day, or time of class or event is changed;
- Class is cancelled; and/or
- Employee decides to drop the class.

Changes requested less than 2 business days in advance of a scheduled assignment may result in cancellation fees being charged by the interpreting agency providing the service.

6. Requests to change the dates of the scheduled interpreter assignment will be treated as a cancellation of the original request and an initiation of a new request.

Applicants may request interpretive services orally or in writing from any DSS employee with whom the applicant has contact in connection with the application or selection process. The managers and supervisors are responsible for training staff who are involved in the selection process to address requests for accommodation appropriately. Regional Directors and Field Office Chiefs should also ensure that all staff having contact with applicants be familiar with handling requests for these services.

Students who participate in resident courses offered onsite at the DSS Academy: DSS will provide interpretive services for individuals who indicate the need for the service at the time of course registration. If the agency is unable to secure interpreter services, the student will be contacted to discuss other possible options. DSS will make every effort possible to provide a sign language interpreter.

NOTE: For students attending non-resident Academy courses hosted/sponsored off-site: The host/sponsoring agency or the student's employer will be responsible for securing interpreter services for the student.

Interpreters do not personally participate in class discussion or activities. An interpreter's function is to facilitate communication; the interpreter is not available to act as a note-taker or messenger. Interpreters will keep all information confidential and will abide by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Code of Ethics.

The telecommunication relay service is available to all to serve telephone needs when a sign language interpreter is not available.

For additional information on sign language interpreter or relay services, please contact the Office of EEO at (703) 325-1959.