

Working with Deaf* Individuals

Tip Sheet

*The term “Deaf” is used as an inclusive term to include Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and DeafDisabled individuals.

Request services in advance.

Interpreters can book out 4-6 weeks in advance due to the nationwide shortage of ASL interpreters. If you know you need interpreters for a meeting a few months out, go ahead and make the [request](#). Please review [NC State’s website](#) for more information or contact [Taylor Ofori](#) with any questions about making requests.

What services does NC State offer?

Some common examples of services offered include: [Communication Access Realtime Translation \(CART\)](#) services, ASL Interpreters, [Protactile](#) interpreters, Captioned Media, [Tactile ASL Interpreters](#), Oral Transliterating, [Cued American English](#), and [Speech to Text services](#) such as [C-Print](#) or [TypeWell](#).

Get comfortable with pauses.

Whether the interaction is happening in person or virtually, there may be times where the interpreter or Deaf client will need to pause to get clarification.

- If there are disruptions or interruptions to a conversation, such as a screen freezing in a Zoom meeting, please **pause** the meeting to ensure all individuals are able to participate before the meeting moves forward.
 - When presenting materials visually, such as leading a PowerPoint presentation, reviewing a research article, etc., either in-person or virtually, **pause** before speaking or read everything on the slide out loud.
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Plan for the interpreter to sit or stand near the speaker.

Deaf clients will decide where they want to sit based on various factors. Don’t be alarmed if they opt to sit elsewhere. Best practice is to save a section of seats that have a direct line of sight to the front of the room and/or to the speaker. This will also benefit other attendees with disabilities if they need an ADA seating area.

Speak to the Deaf person directly.

Avoid phrases like “can you tell them...” Simply say what you want to say directly to the Deaf individual, and the interpreter will interpret it. Remember, this is a conversation between you and the Deaf individual, and therefore, speak directly to them.

Look at the individual you are speaking to, not the interpreter.

It may feel odd if you hear the interpreter’s voice and want to look at them, but they are interpreting what the Deaf person is saying in real-time. Look directly at the Deaf person speaking, this helps to establish connections and build relationships.

Utilize turn-taking.

Don’t speak over each other. Similar to how it is hard for people to hear multiple speakers at once, it is impossible to interpret for multiple people at the same time.

- Setting expectations for meeting management at the start of any meeting can be helpful, including:
 - Reminding people to speak one-at-a-time.
 - Reminding people to state their name before speaking.
 - Ensuring all participants are able to engage in the conversation.
 - There will be a slight delay in the interpretation process. Ensure you are **pausing** to allow the Deaf individual the opportunity to participate in the conversation.
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State your name before speaking.

Introduce and re-introduce yourself when speaking. This allows the Deaf client and the interpreter to identify who is speaking (culturally, this is very important). It also allows all participants in the room to learn who is in attendance and note who they might want to connect with after the meeting.

- “This is Tuffy from NC State, my question is about...”
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Learn more about Deaf culture.

If you are interested in **learning more** about Deaf culture, please review the following links.

- [National Deaf Center article about Deaf Awareness](#)
- [“Deaf Culture: What is Deaf culture?” on Youtube.com by Sign Language 101](#)
- [Tips from the National Deaf Center on Communicating with Deaf Individuals](#)