



How to Become a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI)

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Becoming a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) is not a quick and easy process, and involves much more than simply being fluent in ASL and comfortable with written English. It requires a significant amount of training, passing national exams, becoming licensed by the state of New Mexico, maintaining membership in the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs) each year.

Language Fluency

The first requirements to becoming a CDI are to be fluent in ASL, comfortable with written English, and highly competent in communicating effectively with Deaf individuals with a broad range of language skills, including those who use ASL, SEE, signed languages from other countries, or no formal language at all.

Training

A prospective CDI must meet the training requirements established by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), which include 40 hours of training covering the following topics:

- NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct - 8 hours
- Introduction to Interpreting - 8 hours
- Process of Interpretation - 8 hours
- Other topics of your choice - 16 hours

Details about the training requirements can be found on the RID website at this link:

<http://rid.org/rid-certification-overview/cdi-certification/>

The most complete resource for CDI training and information is the Deaf Interpreter Institute: www.diinstitute.org. The "Training Opportunities" link contains a list of workshops. Not all apply to CDI training directly, so look for those labeled "Preparation for the RID CDI Knowledge written/ASL Exam" which are held a few times each year at locations around the country.

Certification

Signed Language Interpreters, including CDIs, are certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), the national professional organization of signed language interpreters. The process includes passing a written test and a performance test. The cost to take the written test is \$200, and the cost of the performance test is \$285. Detailed information regarding the CDI certification process can be found at this link: <http://rid.org/rid-certification-overview/cdi-certification/>

In order to be eligible to take RID's certification tests, interpreters must satisfy the RID Education Requirement. Currently, deaf interpreters must hold an associate's degree, and that requirement increases to a bachelor's degree in July of 2016. Degrees may be in any field, and interpreters who don't hold a degree may satisfy the education requirement via RID's Alternative Pathway. Details regarding the educational requirement and alternative pathway are available here: <http://rid.org/rid-certification-overview/alternative-pathway/>.

Licensure

New Mexico requires all signed language interpreters to be licensed in order to protect deaf and hard of hearing consumers. Practicing without a license is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 364 days in jail and/or up to a \$1000 fine. Interpreting is defined as any form of facilitating communication in a visual form, regardless of the individual's job title or position description. The statute, rules, forms, and other details may be found at the website of the New Mexico Signed Language Interpreting Practice Board (SLIPB): www.rld.state.nm.us/boards/Signed_Language_Interpreting_Practices.aspx.

After completing the 40 hours of required training, prospective CDIs are eligible for a Provisional License, which costs \$40 the first year and \$25 subsequent years. This may be held for up to five years while working toward certification. This license also requires an interpreter to be an Associate Member of RID, which costs \$130 per year. Once the CDI certification is achieved, the interpreter is eligible for a Community License, which allows the CDI to work in any setting except court. Community License cost is \$65 for the first application, then \$50 every two years. At that time, the interpreter will be a Certified Member of RID, at a cost of \$160 per year. CDIs who wish to interpret in court and legal settings will have to take additional training specific to legal work.

Continuing Education Requirements

All signed language interpreters are required to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to maintain their license and certification. Interpreters with Provisional Licenses must earn 2 CEUs per year - which equates to 20 contact hours. CEUs are offered around the country, including in New Mexico, and tend to cost between \$10 and \$50 per contact hour. Certified interpreters must earn 8 CEUs (80 contact hours) within a four-year cycle. More information on CEUs can be found at <http://rid.org/continuing-education/>.

Business Practices

Most signed language interpreters work as self-employed freelance interpreters. They must maintain their own records, file and pay their federal income taxes as a business, and pay their Gross Receipts Taxes (in New Mexico). Interpreters in Albuquerque are also required to hold a city Business License, at a cost of \$35 per year. Gross Receipts Tax information is available through New Mexico Taxation and Revenue (www.tax.newmexico.gov/Businesses/gross-receipts.aspx) and most interpreters file their taxes with the assistance of a CPA or other professional tax preparer. Costs for membership dues, license fees, CEUs, and other training can be deducted from federal income taxes, but interpreters must maintain very careful records to do so.