



# New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

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## 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.

### 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 knowledge test and a performance test administered by the Center for the Assessment of Sign Language Interpretation (CASLI) – the testing organization for RID certifications. The lowest cost to take the knowledge test is \$280 and \$395 for the performance exam. Additional information is available at the CASLI website: [www.casli.org/exam-preparations/for-cdi-candidates](http://www.casli.org/exam-preparations/for-cdi-candidates). Costs for all CASLI exams can be found here: [www.casli.org/taking-the-exam/creating-an-account-in-casli-exam-system/payment-information](http://www.casli.org/taking-the-exam/creating-an-account-in-casli-exam-system/payment-information).

To be eligible to take CASLI's performance tests, interpreters must satisfy the RID Education Requirement. Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree 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>.

### Training

RID removed the training requirement to take the Generalist Knowledge Exam in June 2021 to create equity with hearing interpreters. However, training is still critical for both Deaf and hearing interpreters to pass certification exams and to qualify for licensure.

There are several entities that offer occasional trainings for Deaf Interpreters:

Deaf Interpreter Academy: [www.deafinterpreteracademy.com](http://www.deafinterpreteracademy.com).

National Deaf Interpreter: [www.nationaldi.org](http://www.nationaldi.org).

Deaf Interpreter Workshops: <http://diworkshops.com/home>.

True-Biz ASL: [www.truebizasl.com/dito](http://www.truebizasl.com/dito).

Deaf Interpreter Conference: [www.deafterpconf.com](http://www.deafterpconf.com).

Deaf Interpreting Intensive: <https://onenonlyrup.wixsite.com/diit>.

Gallaudet University: [www.gallaudet.edu/center-for-continuing-and-online-education/working-as-a-deaf-interpreter](http://www.gallaudet.edu/center-for-continuing-and-online-education/working-as-a-deaf-interpreter).

## 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.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/signed-language-interpreting-practices](http://www.rld.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/signed-language-interpreting-practices)

To qualify for a Provisional License, both Deaf and hearing interpreters must submit documentation of training. In lieu of proof of completion of an interpreter training program, Deaf applicants must submit proof of training as required by the SLIPB. They require Deaf applicants to have at least 40 hours of training in topics such as the Fundamentals of Interpreting, Ethics and Cultural Responsiveness, and the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. The Provisional license 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 \$165 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 \$205 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). Gross Receipts Tax information is available through New Mexico Taxation and Revenue: [www.tax.newmexico.gov/businesses/gross-receipts-overview](http://www.tax.newmexico.gov/businesses/gross-receipts-overview). 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 detailed records to do so.