

Guide for Securing Sign Language Interpreters or CART at Event

While Disability Services and Programs provides classroom and coursework-related accommodations for students with disabilities, outside of the classroom, campus units are responsible for providing accommodations to individuals with disabilities for any events they host. This includes securing, coordinating, and paying for services. Students who are deaf/hard-of-hearing (DHH) typically request sign language interpreters or CART services (also known as “real-time captioning” or “live captioning” services). Individuals with disabilities generally know which type of aid is most effective for them.

USC policy requires the campus unit hosting the event to provide sufficient funds to cover accommodation costs. USC offices and groups that believe they do not have an adequate budget to cover the cost of accommodations at an event should contact Zarita Abbott at zabbott@usc.edu or 213-740-5243 to discuss appropriate escalation plans.

Inviting Requests for Accommodations

Event planners should include in their materials the following event accessibility statement:

“Individuals with disabilities who need accommodations to attend this event may contact [insert event sponsor’s name, phone, and email address]. It is requested that individuals requiring accommodations or auxiliary aids such as sign language interpreters and alternative format materials notify us at least 7 days prior to the event. Every reasonable effort will be made to provide reasonable accommodations in an effective and timely manner.”

Scheduling Interpreters or CART

The department sponsoring the event will need to contact vendors who provide interpreting or CART services (also referred to service providers or “SP’s” for this document). It is suggested that SP’s are secured two weeks in advance. You may not be able to do this if the DHH individual does not request services that early or registers at the last minute. In the event that a student or guest makes a late request, you still need to put forth a good faith effort to secure services.

When contacting SP’s, you will need to have the dates, times, and location of your event. Other information such as consumer (deaf individual) name, event address, on-site contact person and phone number, etc. will be needed as well, but the main thing is that you have the dates and times when you make the initial call.

Cost

Most SP's are paid for a 2-hour minimum, while others charge a 3- hour minimum. The cost of one SP generally ranges \$65-\$90 per hour per SP. If the request is more than 1.5 to two hours, a second SP may be needed to form a team. This will mean \$130/hour to \$190/hour. Services providers often work in teams and switch every 20-30 minutes to prevent repetitive use injuries and to allow continued efficient cognitive processing. Generally, agencies are more costly than directly hiring independent SP's, however, using an agency is less work for the USC employee who is coordinating services.

Departments may want to consider having a line item in their budget each year specifically for accommodations for events.

Parking

A parking reservation should be made for the SP. Specific instructions, along with a link to the university map, should be given to the SP's regarding the location of the parking area and entry gate.

Cancellation Policy

You will need to confirm the cancellation policy with the SP or the agency. Generally, there will be a 48-hour cancellation policy, i.e., if the deaf consumer cancels within 48 business hours, the SP still needs to be paid. This is standard business practice in the field of DHH services.

Seating Arrangements at the Event

Seating is often reserved for DHH individuals near the front, although they may not opt to sit there. It is suggested that you ask the deaf attendees before the event. Chairs should also be provided for the SP's. If the event is at a large venue and interpreters are there, then it is usually best to have the interpreter on stage close to the speaker.

Multiple DHH Attendees

If there is more than one deaf person and the event offers a choice of breakout sessions, the deaf attendees should have the option to go to separate groups if they choose, and not have to stay together merely because there are not enough SP's. If your event has breakout sessions, ask the deaf attendees which breakout groups they plan to attend. They may agree on the same group, but if not, then another set of SP's will be needed. If the breakout sessions are short, then one additional SP is acceptable. You can discuss this with the SP's or agency before the event.

If you have any questions or need referrals, you may contact Kathi Neuenschwander in Disability Services & Programs at 213-740-8079, or kneuen@usc.edu.