

Sign Language Interpreter FAQs January 2013

*Audience:
Administrators (AEA/LEA);
IEP Teams, including Parents and Interpreters*

Q: Do I need to have a license in order to interpret sign language in Iowa?

A: Yes. On July 1, 2005 the Iowa law went into effect which requires every person providing sign language interpreting or transliterating services to be licensed. It is the responsibility of each interpreter to become familiar with the licensing requirements and subsequent updates. The Iowa Board of Professional Licensure website is <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/licensure/>. A list of all licensing boards are on the left-hand side of the page. Select 'Board of Sign Language Interpreters & Translitterators.'

Q: Are there exceptions to the licensing law?

A: There are exceptions to this law as stated in Chapter 154E.4 EXCEPTIONS.

1. A person shall not practice interpreting or transliterating, or represent that the person is an interpreter, unless the person is licensed under this chapter.
2. This chapter does not prohibit any of the following:
 - a. Any person residing outside of the state of Iowa holding a current license from another state that meets the state of Iowa's requirements from providing interpreting or transliterating services in this state for up to fourteen days per calendar year without a license issued pursuant to this chapter.
 - b. Any person from interpreting or transliterating solely in a religious setting with the exception of those working in schools that receive government funding.
 - c. Volunteers working without compensation, including emergency situations, until a licensed interpreter is obtained.
 - d. Any person working as a substitute for a licensed interpreter in an early childhood, elementary, or secondary education setting for no more than thirty school days in a calendar year.
 - e. Students enrolled in a school of interpreting from interpreting only under the direct supervision of a permanently licensed interpreter as part of the student's course of study.

Regarding 'b.' above: interpreters who work in religious schools that receive government funding must be licensed.

Regarding 'd.' above: see the Substitute Educational Interpreters document for more information. Note that any part of one day, whether 10 minutes or 10 hours, is considered one day.

Note:

- According to the Assistant Attorney General's interpretation, a person with an inactive license can substitute in a school using the exception in 154E.4(d).
- An interpreter with an inactive license may not substitute for a vacant position.

Q: I need to renew my temporary license. Tell me what to do.

A: It is the responsibility of each interpreter to become familiar with the licensing requirements and subsequent updates. The licensure's current process allows interpreters to have a temporary license (those who have not yet passed a test) for two biennium periods.

To find the date you were licensed, go to www.licensediniowa.gov search for your name, and note the 'Issue Date.'

Q: I took the EIPA. When will I get my results?

A: Currently it takes approximately 120 days to receive your results.

Q: I took the EIPA and am awaiting the results. What happens if I do not get a 3.5? Can I try again at another time or do I have to be a currently working interpreter to take the test again?

A: You do not need to be a currently working interpreter to take the EIPA test again. Your EIPA results will suggest areas for improvement. It would be in your best interest if you worked on these areas for improvement before taking the test again. The TASK-12 organization provides the EIPA test to thousands of interpreters yearly. They have found that interpreters who take the test again in less than a year typically don't make huge gains in EIPA scores. They have found that if there is no intervention (training), there will be no improvement in score. They also do not see an advantage to taking the same form of the test the second time.

Q: I was recently married and changed my last name. Do I have to notify the licensing board?

A: Yes. You are required to submit name changes and mailing address changes to the Bureau of Professional Licensure. Licensees must notify the board of a change of name or current mailing address **within 30 days** after the change occurs. Failure to notify the board of changes may result in your license being placed on inactive status.

Q: I moved recently. Do I have to notify the licensing board?

A: Yes, you are required to submit name changes and mailing address changes to the Bureau of Professional Licensure. Licensees must notify the board of a change of name or current mailing address **within 30 days** after the change occurs. Failure to notify the board of changes may result in your license being placed on inactive status.

Q: How do I get my EIPA score to the licensing board so that I can prove that I am ‘licensed by examination?’

A: Once you receive a score of 3.5 or higher on the EIPA, you are eligible to have your licensure status changed from “temporary” to “licensed by examination”. The licensing board must receive the EIPA score directly from Boys Town. An ‘authorizing release’ is located online under “Related Links” at <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/licensure/SignLanguageInterpretersandTransliterators.aspx?pg=Links>. That information will ensure that your score is sent to the licensing board. It is your responsibility to follow up with the licensing board to ensure they received it.

Q: How do I register for the EIPA?

A: Go to the Training and Assessment Systems for K-12 Interpreters (TASK-12) website at <http://www.task12.org/>. Click on ‘EIPA Registration.’ Since Iowa is a part of the TASK-12 organization, Iowa interpreters can test in any state listed. Occasionally states may limit their testing to local interpreters, as Iowa has done previously. You may now register and pay online.

Q: How do I prepare to take the EIPA?

A: The website www.classroominterpreting.org has a wealth of information about the EIPA test and preparation. Also see the EIPA FAQs on www.task12.org. The Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) Resource Library and Iowa Office of Deaf Services (formerly DSCI) have materials at www.iowaschoolforthe deaf.org/ (go to ‘Community’ then ‘Statewide Resources’ then click on ‘Resource Library’) and at www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/ds/ (click on ‘library’). Boys Town Press has Educational Interpreting Practice DVDs available. See <http://www.boystownpress.org/index.php/catalogsearch/result/?q=EIPA>. These DVDs may be available at either of the above libraries or at your local AEA library.

There are also interpreting agencies that provide training to prepare for the test. The EIPA report provides detailed explanation on areas on which to improve.

Q: How do I know which test I take? What are ASL, PSE and MCE?

A: The following descriptions are taken from the TASK12 website under EIPA FAQs. You must determine which best describes what you use and select accordingly.

American Sign Language (ASL) is a language of signs separate from English. ASL has its own unique grammatical structure. ASL signs are those generally used by the Deaf community. Raters expect to see non-manual markers, use of classifiers and space during the Interpretation.

Pidgin Sign English (PSE) is using ASL signs in English word order. PSE can use ASL structure at times and the interpreter is not penalized by the rater for doing so. Raters expect to see non-manual markers, use of classifiers, use of space and other aspects of visual languages during the interpretation. English is not consistently mouthed, although key words may be mouthed. Markers are not used. PSE has also been called Contact Sign Language or Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE).

Manually Coded English (MCE) is a category of sign systems that includes Signed English and Signing Exact English (SEE 2). Raters expect to see consistent use of the morphological markers associated with the system used, whether Signed English or SEE 2. Raters expect to see English being mouthed all the time while signing, with the exception of appropriate use of non-manual markers. The raters do expect to see aspects of visual languages including the incorporation of classifiers, use of the signing space to represent verb agreement, pronouns to indicate locations of referents, cause and effect statements, etc.

Q: I work in a rural area. How do I stay connected with other interpreters?

A: Frequent access to a computer is a necessity. The Iowa State Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (ISRID), the affiliate chapter of the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), provides two conferences yearly, Fall and Spring. You can earn CEUs by attending local conferences. Membership has its advantages. See the ISRID website at www.iowastaterid.org. Search the internet for other RID affiliates and private companies that provide training. Marsha Gunderson, State Consultant, also sends information via email. Contact her to ensure your email address is included (mgunderson@iowaschoolforthe deaf.org).

Q: Our interpreter cannot renew his/her license and has not taken the EIPA. Can we call him/her an aide, paraprofessional, Communication Coach or teacher associate and rehire him/her next year?

A: If a person performs interpreting or transliterating in the course of his/her job, then he/she is considered an interpreter under the law, regardless of job title. The school can rehire the person in a different position – but not as an interpreter or as a person who interprets or transliterates in the course of his/her job. All interpreters are mandatory reporters and must report unethical actions to the licensing board.

Interpreting without a current license is unethical and illegal.

Communication Coach is the title given to some paraprofessionals who provides non-signing communication support to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. Training is provided locally for this paraprofessional to learn how to provide communication and language support services which includes explaining, expanding, and ensuring understanding. Typically used with younger students and phased out as the student becomes older, more mature and more independent.

It would not be appropriate for an IEP team to change the use of an interpreter with a student to a non-signing aide without data indicating the appropriateness of such an action.

Q: I've heard the EIPA test is too hard. Why do we give a test that no one can pass?

A: The stimulus-version of the EIPA has been given nationally since January 2000. The interpreter watches a videotape of a classroom situation while he or she stands in front of a video camera. The interpreter also watches a signed conversation between an interviewer and student and voices what the student says. The videotape of the interpreter is evaluated by trained evaluators at Boys Town National Research Hospital EIPA Diagnostic Center. Evaluators rate each interpreter according to a rubric. The interpreter receives a score between 0.1 and 5.0, with 5.0 being high. The majority of states that require an EIPA score require a 3.5. Recently, states have begun to require a 4.0. Iowa initially proposed to require a 4.0. Due to public input, the minimum, entry-level required score was dropped to 3.5.

The Training and Assessment Systems for K-12 Educational Interpreters (TASK-12), of which Iowa is a member, has given over 3,000 tests in the past six-and-a-half years. Approximately 38% have passed with a level 3.5 or above. 'No one can pass' is simply not true. Deaf and hard of hearing students' education depends on qualified interpreters. The EIPA is a valid and reliable test. Interpreting in classrooms is a difficult task. The EIPA was developed to ensure that children who rely on interpreting services have quality interpreting to allow them to receive a Free, Appropriate, Public Education.

Q: Why do I have to sign up so early to take the EIPA?

A: There is only one national center, Boys Town National Research Hospital which evaluates EIPA tapes. Iowa is a member of the Training and Assessment Systems for K-12 Educational Interpreters, a partnership of 14 states. TASK-12 provides educational interpreters the opportunity to evaluate their skills with at least two sites yearly in each partner state. Educational interpreters in member states can take the EIPA in most any TASK-12 state. Exceptions are sometimes made, as when Iowa had to restrict testing slots because of licensing deadlines.

TASK-12 must report to Boys Town the number of tests to be evaluated the first of the month prior to testing. For example, this means that all September slots must be filled by August 1st. Any slots that TASK-12 is not using then are released for states who arrange for their own local testing. The EIPA is a national test.