

# Sign Language Interpreters and IEP Meetings

## January 2013

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

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The Iowa Board of Sign Language Interpreters & Transliterators, Bureau of Professional Licensure, Iowa Department of Education licenses all sign language interpreters and transliterators in Iowa, including those who work in school settings. Iowa Code 154E.1 provides the following definitions:

- *“Interpreting”* means facilitating communication between individuals who communicate via American sign language and individuals who communicate via spoken English.
- *“Transliterating”* means facilitating communication between individuals who communicate via a manual form of English and individuals who communicate via spoken English.

A person who facilitates communication among deaf, hard of hearing and hearing individuals is considered an interpreter, regardless of the job title. A sign language interpreter is considered a ‘related service’ provider who has knowledge or special expertise of the child and therefore a member of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. The IEP team is responsible for developing, reviewing or revising the IEP of a child with a disability. The IEP team members are described in the Iowa Rules of Special Education:

**281—41.321(256B, 34 CFR 300) IEP team.**

**41.321(1) General.** The public agency must ensure that the IEP team for each child with a disability includes the following:

- a. The parents of the child;
- b. At least one regular education teacher of the child if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment;
- c. At least one special education teacher of the child or, where appropriate, at least one special education provider of the child;
- d. A representative of the public agency who:
  - (1) Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;
  - (2) Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and
  - (3) Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency.
- e. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team described in 41.321(1)”b” to “f”;
- f. At the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and
- g. Whenever appropriate, the child with a disability.

The sign language interpreter should be considered a member of the IEP team. The interpreter is the one professional who sees the deaf or hard-of-hearing child throughout the school day in varied settings, has special expertise, and who can provide that knowledge during the IEP meeting as a member of the team. If, for some reason, the interpreter cannot attend, he/she can submit, prior to the meeting, written input regarding the development of the IEP.

When it is appropriate for a child to attend his/her IEP meeting, and that child uses sign language to communicate, an interpreter must be at the meeting. It is not appropriate for the interpreter to have two roles at the IEP meeting. The interpreter should either have a role as a member of the IEP team and attend as a participant, or have the role of interpreter during the meeting and provide written input prior to the meeting. It is a conflict for an interpreter to do both roles simultaneously. It may be necessary to contract with another interpreter to interpret the meeting.

The interpreter is aptly suited to convey information such as opportunities for the child to communicate directly with peers, with staff, and how the student conveys understanding of information being taught in class. "The educational interpreter serves an important role on the IEP team with regard to language and communication. Educational interpreters should participate in the development of goals and objectives related to language, communication, and interpreting services. Educational interpreters require access to information and student files regarding special instructional needs in order to effectively provide interpreting services that match the student's communication and cognitive abilities. Educational interpreters will assist in implementing goals on the IEP by focusing on communication, language, and interpreting services" (Iowa Guidelines for Educational Sign Language Interpreters/Transliterators, July 2009, Iowa Department of Education).

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### **Additional Information:**

For additional resources, see the Iowa Department of Education webpage for Audiology, Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Education at

[http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=584&Itemid=1608](http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=584&Itemid=1608)