

Guidelines for  
**The Ministry of Interpreting**  
for the  
**Deaf Community**  
of the  
**Diocese of Toledo**





*Christ has no body now, but yours...*  
*...yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world*  
St. Theresa of Avila

## **Interpreting as a Ministry**

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The office of Equal Access Ministry welcomes anyone who may be discerning a call to minister to the Deaf in the Diocese of Toledo. You come with varying degrees of proficiency in sign language and/or interpreting and different experiences in your Catholic faith formation. The ministry of interpreting brings both the responsibility and the privilege of proclaiming the Word of God. Interpreters in this ministry are encouraged to become one with the Deaf Catholic Community. All of your actions should be focused on respecting this responsibility and privilege. Along with recognizing your gift of faith and signing skills, it is important to remember that the Deaf community is made up of individuals with great self-worth and dignity who are on their own spiritual journey. Their interpreting needs may require ASL, SEE, transliteration, or tactile signing. Remember that God has called you to this ministry and you give Him glory with your response.

These guidelines have been developed to support your response to your calling. The goal of these guidelines is to provide you with information and suggestions that will allow you to interpret confidently within this ministry.

## Code of Professional Conduct

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As an interpreter for the Catholic Deaf, you should be aware of your responsibilities as a Christian professional. Listed below are some adapted tenets of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Code of Professional Conduct as it relates to this ministry:

- Interpreters are expected to respect the various levels of confidentiality and to exercise judgment for each interpreting situation, whether formal or informal. For example, interpreting during a pastoral counseling session requires (strict) adherence to confidentiality; while interpreting for community events, such as a Sunday Mass, wedding, or parish social event may not.
- Use discretion in accepting assignments. Know your strengths and weaknesses in ASL, SEE, transliteration, voicing, and song interpretation. If the assignment does not match your skill level, area of knowledge or fit in your comfort zone, please decline the assignment without regret.
- Conduct yourself in a manner appropriate to each setting. You may at times be intimately involved, but must always remain professional. Do all you can to make each situation a positive experience for people who may be inexperienced with using an interpreter. In other words, strive to be a good ambassador for the Deaf Community and the Diocese of Toledo.
- Treat the Deaf as equals and be open to their input.
- Demonstrate respect for and work cooperatively with community members, colleagues and all students of the profession who may be drawn to this ministry.
- Always act ethically when completing stipend/expense report forms.

- Solicit feedback from the Deaf and other interpreters as a way to promote continuous improvement. Videotaping may be a useful self-evaluation tool.
- Stay current with developments in the field of interpreting in general and in the religious setting specifically. Take advantage of skill enrichment opportunities, such as interpreter workshops, and faith formation classes offered through the Office of Equal Access Ministry and outside sources. Be willing to share new techniques, information and knowledge with your colleagues and the Deaf community.

### Assignment Guidelines

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Interpreting assignments for the Diocese of Toledo may include masses, weddings, funerals, religious education classes, retreats, small group events, pastoral council meetings, and diocesan functions. You may be interpreting these events alone or as part of a team. Be prepared to do your best in any setting whether it is liturgical or social, formal or informal. Obtain the information you need to function well with the flexibility required for any given assignment. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Prepare as much as possible ahead of time by obtaining Mass readings, songs, prayers, etc. The coordinator of interpreters will be very supportive, but at times this may become your responsibility.
- Please arrive at the assignment early enough to get settled and collaborate with all parties involved. It is suggested that you arrive 15 minutes before the event, but more time may be needed depending on the circumstances.

- Clergy or other leaders may not be accustomed to working with an interpreter, therefore, speak with them before beginning the assignment regarding your role, and other accommodations needed for optimal communication between the Deaf and Hearing communities.
- Please dress with respect for the function. The dress protocol for professional interpreters is also appropriate in religious settings, i.e., wear solid colors that contrast your skin color (no red or white); jewelry should be minimal; and nail polish should be subdued as to not distract from your interpreting.
- While interpreting in a religious or diocesan setting, do not accept any other role during the assignment. For example, at Mass, the interpreter(s) should not serve as a Minister of Holy Communion; at a parish meeting the interpreter(s) should not share personal comments. This will allow you to stay focused on facilitating communication between Deaf and Hearing participants which is the primary function of your ministry.
- Be conscious of your visual presence while interpreting in front of the entire faith community (Hearing and Deaf). Be sensitive to any actions or behaviors that might distract from their worship experience. For example, it is not acceptable to engage in unrelated conversation with the Deaf while interpreting at Mass. Remember you are a vessel of God's word, so you must reflect a reverence in both body and soul.
- Do everything you can to honor your commitment to provide interpreting services for the assignments you have accepted. Should a schedule conflict arise, contact another interpreter, or the coordinator of interpreters as soon as possible to secure a substitute.

## Additional Support and Information

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Both the coordinator of interpreters and the Deaf are resources for additional support and information. Please ask for help with any concern you have. These general suggestions promote a successful interpreting assignment:

- Upon arrival determine the most appropriate location for interpreting. Consider lighting, acoustics and seating.
- Collect and prepare all supporting materials needed for the assignment. You may request a music stand on which to place print materials, a chair or assistive listening equipment if necessary.
- Inquire if the Deaf need additional interpreting, e.g., reverse interpreting for Lectors or cuing for Offertory or Eucharistic Ministers.
- Be sure to interpret all information that is communicated to the parish community before, during and after Mass.
- Provide cues that will enable the Deaf community to fully participate in the Mass, e.g. when to stand, kneel, or take up offertory gifts.
- At Mass or other liturgies, continue to interpret through the end of the liturgy, including all of the closing song.
- While team interpreting, keep in mind the following:
  - » Establish the teaming positions and protocol you will use in advance.
  - » Be considerate of your team member's needs and requests.
  - » After the assignment is finished, take time to discuss what improvements could be made. Ask the Deaf for feedback.



If you are new to interpreting, ask for support in your ministry. You may want to begin by observing or sharing interpreting assignments, or by working with a mentoring interpreter. It is part of the community's responsibility to help interpreters grow and learn.

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## What to expect

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While each interpreting assignment will be unique, there are several prayers and traditions that interpreters should be prepared to interpret. It will serve you well to become comfortable with the following:

- Parts of the Mass
  - † Church songs
  - † Lord Have Mercy
  - † Gloria
  - † Readings
  - † Gospel Acclamation
  - † Creed
  - † Prayers of the Faithful
  - † Eucharistic Prayer and Holy, Holy
  - † Lord's Prayer
  - † Lamb of God
- Other traditional prayers, such as the Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Act of Contrition.



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## Professional Development

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Catholic interpreters are encouraged to be life-long learners of the Catholic faith. Interpreters are invited to participate in faith enrichment opportunities

such as adult education classes, Bible study groups, retreats, parish missions, etc. There are also Deaf ministry materials available through the office of Equal Access Ministry and the National Catholic Office for the Deaf (NCOD). The diocese offers funding for interpreter development related to the ministry.

Promoting the full and active participation of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Catholics in the mission of Jesus Christ is the focus of NCOD. Interpreters are encouraged to become members. For NCOD membership information, please visit [www.ncod.org](http://www.ncod.org).



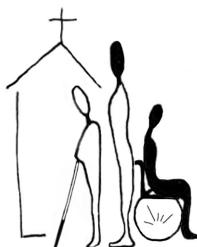
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## A Final Note

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Interpreting in the Catholic Church is a ministry as well as a profession. Personal and/or professional conflicts should be handled in a loving Christian manner.

In addition to your service in the ministry of interpreting for the Deaf, interpreters are encouraged to participate as much as possible in the meetings and functions of the Office of Equal Access Ministry. Interpreters will have many opportunities for fellowship within this community. Your involvement and dedication will be blessed and is greatly appreciated.



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