

## How to Ask for an Interpreter: A Step-by-Step Guide



### 2 Weeks Ahead

- Call the person in charge.
- Tell them you are deaf.
- Ask for a sign language interpreter.

### What if they say “no”?

- Explain your rights.
- Tell them that English is not your first language.
- Ask for an interpreter.



### Still say “no”?

- Tell the person you will send a letter.
- Send the letter right away! (Sample letter on page 3.)
- Keep a copy of what you send for yourself.



### 1 Week Ahead

- Call the person in charge.
- Ask if an interpreter has been hired for your appointment.

### If the answer is still “no”

- Tell the person that you will make a complaint against them.
- Ask an advocate for help.



## How to Ask for an Interpreter: Communication Points

Hi, I am a person who is deaf. I will need a sign language interpreter during our upcoming meeting or appointment. Will you provide an interpreter?

### What can you say if the person says “no”?

- My first language is American Sign Language.
- Do you know that ASL is a different language from English?
- I can read and write English, but not very well.
- A sign language interpreter allows both of us to talk to each other in our first language.



### If the person still says “no,” you can say:

- I have the right to be able to communicate effectively with you.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act says your office or business must accommodate people with disabilities.
- If your business pays taxes, you might be able to write off some of the cost of the interpreter.



### Once the person says “yes”:

- The Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has a list of interpreters who are legally allowed to interpret in North Carolina.
- The list can be found at [www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/directories.htm](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/directories.htm).
- Say “Thank you!”

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Disability Rights North Carolina is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Raleigh. It is a federally mandated protection and advocacy system with funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Social Security Administration.

Its team of attorneys, advocates, paralegals and support staff provide advocacy and legal services at no charge for people with disabilities across North Carolina to protect them from discrimination on the basis of their disability. All people with disabilities living in North Carolina are eligible to receive assistance from Disability Rights NC.

Contact us for assistance or to request this information in an alternate format.

#### **Disability Rights North Carolina**

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# Letter Requesting a Sign Language Interpreter

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a person who is deaf. I will need a sign language interpreter during our upcoming meeting or appointment, and I am asking you to provide an interpreter.

You may not know this but my first language is American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is a different language from English. There is not a sign for every English word, and there is not an English word for every sign. It would be like you speaking English to me, but I speak Spanish.

I can read and write English, but not very well. If we write notes back and forth I may not understand what you are trying to say, and you may not understand what I am writing. Also, deaf people often write the same way we sign – this means that we sometimes put our words in a different order than is used in English.

It is my right to be able to communicate effectively with you. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires your office or business to accommodate people with disabilities. This includes providing interpreters if needed to communicate. If you are a private business and pay taxes, your business may be able to deduct a portion of the cost of the interpreter or other accommodations you provide to people with disabilities from your taxes. Talk to your accountant or tax professional if you want more information.

If this is the first time you have provided a sign language interpreter, the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing maintains a list of all sign language interpreters who are licensed and legally allowed to interpret in the State of North Carolina. You can find this information on the Division's website at this address:  
<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/directorries.htm>.

If you have questions about your obligation to provide sign language interpreters or communicate effectively with people who are deaf, contact the SE ADA Center Technical Assistance Hotline at 1-800-949-4232.

Please let me know in the next five (5) business days whether you will provide an interpreter.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ [your name]

\_\_\_\_\_ [your contact information]