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**DSS Policy Bulletin #2021-007 (R1)**

**Date: May 3, 2023**

**DISTRIBUTION: ALL STAFF**

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**SERVICING CLIENTS IN-PERSON WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING THROUGH VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETATION**

*(This Policy Bulletin Obsoletes DSS PB #2019-003)*

**Subtopic(s):** Interpreter Services, Sign Language

**■ I. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this policy bulletin is to provide guidance to New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), Human Resources Administration (HRA), and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) staff, and providers who use the DSS/HRA/DHS contracted sign language services (see [section VII](#)) of this procedure). This policy bulletin provides information on the process of requesting any sign language interpretation, including American Sign Language (ASL), to service clients who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and communicate using sign language, as well as expediting the appointments for these clients when there is a sign language interpreter involved. This policy bulletin is also informing staff/providers of the use of Zoom for Video Remote Interpretation (VRI). VRI uses qualified sign language interpreters situated in remote locations to provide service via a video connection (either a computer or a tablet). Zoom has replaced WebEx Teams, the previous software used for VRI.

**■ II. POLICY**

Clients who are deaf or hard-of-hearing must be given assistance to enable them to communicate by their preferred method. For most clients who are deaf, this method will be sign language.

**■ III. BACKGROUND**

The most common method of communicating with a client who is deaf is sign language interpretation. The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (ORIA) manages the contract with the Agency's sign language interpretation vendor, Accurate Communication, Inc., which provides sign language interpreters for clients who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, both in-person and via VRI.

The client has the option of requesting an in-person interpreter or interpretation using VRI. In some cases, a return appointment can be offered so the client does not have to wait for an interpreter. The client should be presented with the ASL Options Card (**BRC-1015**) to select their preference of an in-person interpreter, interpretation using VRI, or a return appointment.

In order to obtain a sign language interpreter, the Sign Language Interpreting Service Request Form (**ASL-100**) must be completed. Each Responsibility Area (RA) / Responsibility Center (RC) unit must ensure that the **ASL-100** is completed and emailed to Accurate Communication, Inc., at [ASLREQUESTNYC@accuratecommunication.net](mailto:ASLREQUESTNYC@accuratecommunication.net) and ORIA at [oria@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:oria@dss.nyc.gov). For requests for remote interpretation using VRI, staff will receive an email response to the emailed request with a Zoom link to be used at the time of the appointment.

If clients indicate that they do not communicate using American Sign Language, then Accurate Communication can provide them with a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). A CDI should be requested in the body of the email sent to Accurate Communication and ORIA when submitting the **ASL-100**. For more details on how CDI communication works, please contact ORIA.

As a reminder, it is never acceptable for staff to carry out an appointment with a client through writing back-and-forth, unless a client clearly and explicitly indicates that writing is their preferred method of communication. Should a client indicate explicitly that writing is their preferred method of communication, sign language services should still be offered. If the client declines, this must be documented in the client's case record.

At the end of an appointment, staff should ensure clients are aware of ASL Direct, a video phone line for callers who use American Sign Language based at Infoline. Staff should provide clients with the ASL Direct Palm Card (**PALM-42**), which includes the video phone number and a description of the service. The ASL Direct Palm Card should be available at each open location. Staff can order additional copies of the ASL Direct Palm Card through the DSS Design + Print Ordering System. If you do not have access to this system, please speak with leadership at your location to identify someone who can order copies for you.

#### ■ IV. EXPEDITING APPOINTMENTS USING SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

It is critical that clients who are who are communicating using a sign language interpreter be seen as quickly as possible when a sign language interpreter is present, either in-person or remotely using VRI.

Clients who have scheduled an in-person or VRI appointment ahead of time should be serviced immediately at the time of their appointment if the client and their interpreter are present. Clients using a sign language interpreter should be seen as soon as the sign language interpreter is available, even though that may be ahead of other queued clients. If a client who wishes to communicate using a sign language interpreter arrives before the time of their scheduled appointment, they may be made to wait until their scheduled appointment time.

For clients who arrive at a location without a scheduled sign language interpretation appointment, staff should present the ASL Options Card (**BRC-1015**) to the client and request their preferred method of sign language interpretation immediately once any staff member is made aware that the client is deaf or hard-of-hearing.

At FIA locations, clients may indicate their need for a sign language interpreter using a self-service kiosk. Once a client does so, the kiosk will produce a ticket alerting the center's designated language liaison, who must immediately complete and email an **ASL-100** request form to Accurate Communication and ORIA.

## ■ V. VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETATION USING ZOOM

VRI is available on all Agency-issued computers and tablets via Zoom. When clients request a VRI appointment, staff must complete and email the **ASL-100** form to Accurate Communication and ORIA. ORIA will reply to this emailed request with a Zoom link for staff to use. At the time of the appointment, staff must click this Zoom link to enter the call. Staff **must** access the Zoom link using the Google Chrome browser. Internet Explorer will not support Zoom. If Zoom is not already downloaded on the computer or tablet, the device will prompt the staff member to download Zoom once they click the link for the call.

If staff have technical questions or challenges regarding the use of Zoom at the time of a VRI appointment, they must immediately contact ORIA at [oria@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:oria@dss.nyc.gov) or 212-331-4550.

Interpreters providing VRI services must ensure that they are in an appropriate and professional environment that is free of distractions, stationary, and has a background that is appropriately color-contrasting. Interpreters should also ensure that their hands are visible to the client, that they're wearing color-contrasting clothes, and that they are using a stable high-speed internet connection. If staff believe that an interpreter is providing services inappropriately or inadequately, they should contact ORIA.

## ■ VI. AFTER-HOURS SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION APPOINTMENTS

Staff who are requesting sign language interpretation outside of normal business hours, including evenings, nights, and weekends, must complete the **ASL-100** and email it to both [ASLREQUESTNYC@accuratecommunication.net](mailto:ASLREQUESTNYC@accuratecommunication.net) and ORIA at [oria@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:oria@dss.nyc.gov).

However, staff must also call Accurate Communication at 646-873-4000. Staff must then follow the prompts to request an interpreter and leave a voicemail message stating that they have emailed a request for an interpreter, along with a call-back number. It is critical that staff arranging after-hours sign language interpretation appointments complete this additional step in order for Accurate Communication to provide an interpreter. Once they have done so, staff should receive a response to their emailed request within 15 minutes that includes a link to access the VRI appointment via Zoom.

## ■ VII. PROVIDERS WHO WISH TO JOIN THE DSS/HRA/DHS SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION CONTRACT

Providers who do not currently have access to the DSS/HRA/DHS sign language interpretation contract, but who would like to request access to this service, should reach out to their Agency contact. Agency contacts should request the service, on behalf of their providers, form ORIA. DHS providers should request access from their Program Analyst/Administrator.

*Effective Immediately*

### REFERENCES:

#### [PD #17-19-OPE](#)

Revisions to Servicing Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Applicants and Participants

#### [DHS-PB-2017-006](#)

Desk Guide to Working With Clients Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

### ATTACHMENTS:

#### [ASL-100](#)

Sign Language Interpreting Service Request Form (Rev. 5/8/19)

#### [BRC-1015 \(E\)](#)

ASL Options Card: A Tool for Staff

#### [PALM-42 \(E\)](#)

ASL Direct Palm Card



(Name of person completing form)

TO: Sign Language Department

FROM:

DSS Program Area  
or Provider Name :

TEL NO.: (646) 873-4000

TEL NO.:

FAX NO.: (718) 285-3952

EMAIL: [ASLREQUESTNYC@accuratecommunication.net](mailto:ASLREQUESTNYC@accuratecommunication.net)

REQUESTER EMAIL:

DSS CONTACT: Cheryl Wertz  
Robby Joly  
212-331-4550  
[oria@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:oria@dss.nyc.gov)

### Sign Language Interpreting Service Request Form

#### Requesting Department Information

TODAY'S DATE	CONTACT PERSON	
TELEPHONE NUMBER	<input type="radio"/> Request from DSS/HRA/DHS staff PO# 20197211926	<input type="radio"/> Request from provider/vendor staff PO# 20197211926

#### Service Date, Time & Location

CLIENT/TENANT/APPLICANT'S NAME	INTERPRETATION DATE	INTERPRETATION START & END TIMES to
INTERPRETATION LOCATION	FORM OF INTERPRETATION <input type="radio"/> In-Person <input type="radio"/> Video	NATURE OF APPOINTMENT
	FOR VIDEO APPOINTMENTS ONLY: Email:	

#### FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

ASSIGNED INTERPRETER'S NAME (1)	
ASSIGNED INTERPRETER'S NAME (2)	

\*\*Depending on the nature of the assignment, 2 interpreters might be necessary\*\*

#### Billing Information

Mail to:	Send Copy of Invoice to Requesting Dept.

REQUEST SUBMITTED VIA  E-MAIL  Fax

Please provide signature and date below prior to faxing this request form to (718) 285-3952.

Signature:	Date:
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\_\_\_\_\_ Arabic \_\_\_\_\_

هل تقرأ العربية؟

\_\_\_\_\_ Bengali \_\_\_\_\_

আপনি কি বাংলা পড়েন?

\_\_\_\_\_ Simplified Chinese \_\_\_\_\_

您看得懂中文嗎？

\_\_\_\_\_ Traditional Chinese \_\_\_\_\_

您看得懂中文嗎？

\_\_\_\_\_ French \_\_\_\_\_

Est-ce que vous lisez Français?

\_\_\_\_\_ Haitian - Creole \_\_\_\_\_

Èske ou li Kreyòl Avisyen?

\_\_\_\_\_ Korean \_\_\_\_\_

한국어를 이해할 수 있습니까?

\_\_\_\_\_ Polish \_\_\_\_\_

Czy czyta Pan(i) w j. polskim?

\_\_\_\_\_ Russian \_\_\_\_\_

Нужна русскоязычная версия?

\_\_\_\_\_ Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

¿Lee español?

\_\_\_\_\_ Urdu \_\_\_\_\_

کیا آپ اردو پڑھتے ہیں؟

### Option 1: Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)



We will use a computer to connect remotely to an interpreter.

Wait Time: **30 Minutes**

Follow the procedure to initiate VRI.

### Option 2: In-Person



We can ask an interpreter to come here.

Wait Time: **2 hours**

Follow the procedure to order an in-person interpreter.

### Option 3: Scheduled



Show the person a calendar so that they can pick a future date and time to come in. Write it down for them on a piece of paper. Also, share the phone number for infoline, **718-557-1399**, should they need to reschedule this appointment.

Follow the procedure to order an in-person interpreter for the future appointment.

# ASL OPTIONS CARD: a Tool for Staff

## Instructions for Staff



Fold and present the reverse side of this card to the person, showing only the options available based on your program and location. **Allow the client to choose.**



Complete and email the **ASL-100** to request an interpreter.



If the options are not understood, show the list of languages and call **ORIA at 212-331-4550**.

**VRI**

Wait Time:  
**30 minutes**



**Live**

Wait Time:  
**2 hours**



**Later Date and Time**

Wait Time:  
**When? You pick.**





ASL Direct is a video phone line for callers  
who use American Sign Language.

**NYC** Human Resources  
Administration  
Department of  
Homeless Services  
**Department of  
Social Services**  
PALM-42 (E)

**Video Phone: (347) 474-4231**



**You can call to get information about:**

- Human Resources Administration (HRA) services like SNAP, Cash Assistance, and Medicaid, or
- shelter under the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

You can also schedule ASL interpretation services for any HRA-run or DHS-run location.

Using a video phone, you can call us Monday - Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., except for City holidays. You can also email us at **[ASL@dss.nyc.gov](mailto:ASL@dss.nyc.gov)**.

For more information, please visit: **[nyc.gov/dssasldirect](https://nyc.gov/dssasldirect)**