

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER SHORTAGE IN CALIFORNIA: PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

March 17, 2011
Westcoast Association of
Visual Language Interpreters

Dissertation Report
Spring, 2010
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The Reasons for this Study:

- My experiences as a Consumer:
- Prior to the dissertation,
- The literature and this study...
- During the study,

Presentation Overview

- Dissertation Report:
 - Brief Background
 - Literature Review
 - Research Questions
 - Methodology
 - Results of Data Analysis
 - Discussion
 - Implications of Findings
 - Concluding Statement

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Brief Background

- When was the first shortage of sign language interpreters?
 - Late 1800's
- When was the shortage of qualified sign language interpreters?
 - 1960's

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Literature Review

- History of the sign language interpreters and spoken language interpreters
- American Sign Language
- History of interpreter training program
- Interpreter characteristics
- Perceptions about the shortage of sign language interpreters
- The explosive growth in technology (VRS)
- The federal and state legislation on the sign language interpreters
- Current trends in California.

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History of the sign language interpreters and spoken language interpreters

- The Latin words, interpres, interpretari, interpartes, and inter-pretium, which are suggestive of the influence of interpreting in Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.
- Interpreting as an official function in Ancient Egypt, even saying that it played an important role in society.

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Spoken language interpreter

- With such great need, the United Nations and the European Union face a crucial shortage of multilingual interpreters.
- Suggests that over the next 5 to 10 years, ...
- It is interesting to note, before the use of spoken language interpreter, diplomats, civil servants, and journalists from all over the world managed to speak four or more languages amongst themselves. They did not think of themselves as interpreters, but rather felt it was part of their jobs.

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- Since the 9/11 terror attacks, the U. S. government has had an increased demand for speakers of Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Urdu, Kurdish, Pashto, and other languages for military and intelligence activities.
- In January 2005, President George W. Bush appropriated \$114 million for the National Security Language Initiative.
- The U. S. Department of Defense allocated more than \$750 million during the 2007 to 2011 fiscal years to address the need to develop language skills within the military. The recent funding also provided the U.S. government the ability to groom skilled personnel in languages deemed critical.

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- Since only 5% of interpreters in the U. S. are native speakers of these languages, there has been a shift in the thinking of interpreter training.
- The military is now recruiting native or foreign-born speakers, and teaching them English so they can be used as interpreters for U. S. troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility of Cuba.
- It will take considerable time, money, and education to train adequate numbers of interpreters for the future.

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Sign language interpreter

- The earliest known sign language was developed in 17th century Spain.
- Around 1755, Old French Sign Language (OFSL) was developed.
- In the early 1800s, two key educators of the deaf, Laurent Clerc of France, and Reverend Thomas Gallaudet of the United States founded deaf education in America.
- Once in America, Clerc gave fundraising presentations to government officials and to the public, while Gallaudet became his interpreter. This appears to be the first reference in American history... What year? 1818

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- During this era, approximately 45% of all teachers and administrators at the schools were deaf, themselves.
- This sparked a debate between advocates of sign language and oral language instruction, a debate that ended in 1880 at the International Congress of Educators of the Deaf in Milan, Italy, which was attended by Mr. Bell.
- It was at this meeting that a resolution on oralism was passed, effectively banning sign language in education programs for the deaf worldwide
- From this point on, the number of deaf teachers and administrators serving in deaf education programs declined drastically, down to a single digit, because they were not able to teach via oral language.

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- Oralism was publicly challenged at the first International Congress of the Deaf, alternately referred to as the World's Congress of the Deaf, in Paris in 1889.
- Approximately 700 deaf delegates were present at the French Pavilion for the opening reception received a speech by an attaché of the French Government representing the Commissioner General via sign language interpreting. The first deaf President of the International Congress of the Deaf gave his remarks in sign language, which was in turn, interpreted for hearing officials.

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- In the early 1900s, translators of French, Spanish, German, and other spoken language disciplines were paid well for their work.
- At that time, sign language interpretation was not a recognized profession, so when leaders in the Deaf community needed to communicate with the hearing world, they used the services of voluntary sign language interpreters, including children of deaf adults (codas) and other relatives, teachers and friends of the deaf, and ministers.
- Sign language interpreters were aware of the disparity in compensation, as well as the fact that, unlike spoken language interpreters, they were expected to pay for any conferences they attended, even when they were working at those conferences.
- What year? 1960's

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- Looking at diversity within the sign language interpreter profession, the National Multicultural Interpreter Project (2000) collaborated with RID on a survey to determine the ethnic makeup of RID's membership.
- A total of 3,870, or 89% of respondents, self-identified as Euro-American/White.
- There is a lack of ethnic diversity in the profession of sign language interpreters. This is an area that recruiters for interpreter training programs should investigate. The lack of male and ethnic minority interpreters needs to be addressed.

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Summary

- In this scenario, the availability of well prepared sign language and spoken language interpreters has become critical.
- Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale, authors of Green Book of Language Revitalization (2001), remarked that in today's world, which consists of approximately 250 nations, "Six thousand languages are spoken...but while a few are spreading rapidly, thousands of others are disappearing, taking with them important cultural, philosophical, and environmental knowledge as well as the pure pleasure of conversation" (back cover).

- Hale was cited in the Economist (November 3 - 9, 2001) as saying, "When you lose a language, you lose a culture, intellectual wealth, a work of art. It's like dropping a bomb on a museum, the Louvre" (p. 89).
- The same can be said of sign language; Dr. Barbara Kannapell, a well-known Deaf sociolinguist, expressed passionately in ASL: "It is our language in every sense of the word. We create it, we keep it alive and it keeps us and our traditions alive. To reject ASL is to reject the deaf person"

American Sign Language

- ASL has an impact on the larger hearing population learning ASL as a second language.
- In a 2002 survey of foreign language enrollment in United States institutions of higher education that the most dramatic increase occurred in American Sign Language, up 432% compared to other languages.
- In a 2006 survey...reported ASL was the fourth largest studied language after Spanish, French, and German.

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History of interpreter training program

- Dr. Lottie Riekehof set up the first interpreter training program as college credit at the Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri in ... 1948
- To meet this requirement, the federal government created fast-track interpreter training programs, which were rapidly established in universities and colleges throughout the United States. Given the high demand, many students of the fast-track programs were able to find jobs immediately after graduation. The fast-track programs eventually evolved into 2-year programs offering either an Associate of Arts degree, or a certificate of completion. What year?.. 1970's

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- How many ITPs do we offer today?
- Clay Nettles, executive director of RID, in the same article remarked, “Just some ten years ago, there were only approximately 25 interpreter training programs...Now, there are more than 150 in the United States and that is still not nearly enough” (p. 13).
- In Canada, how many ITPs do we offer?
 - 5?

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Interpreter characteristics

- An interpreter must be physically, mentally, and emotionally able to do the task of interpreting. The role of interpreting is physically demanding.
- Do you know that interpreters can make as many as 13,000 hand and body movements per hour compared to 25,000 movements for an industrial worker during an 8-hour shift?
- It revealed that interpreting, when compared to some industrial setting jobs like assembly line work, causes more stress physically on the arms and hands resulting in injuries.

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- For this reason, some interpreters may find interpreting to be a short-term career. This negatively impacts the deaf community, and as a result, less interpreters are available to fulfill communication needs.
- Today, new graduates of sign language interpreting programs face many different standards in various interpreting settings.

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Perceptions about the shortage of sign language interpreters

- RID Views (1994) newsletter exploded a “National Interpreter Crisis Declared” and reported that all types of specialized settings continued to suffer from a lack of sign language interpreters.
- In September 2007 the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) included a final report on the Interpreting Practitioner Needs Assessment to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U. S. Department of Education.

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- The survey of the Interpreting Practitioner Needs Assessment identified current and future needs of interpreter education programs, interpreter educators, interpreters, and consumers of interpreter services. This survey was the first to conduct a current and future needs assessment.
- One category asked about planning to teach ASL or interpreting in the future. Seventy percent responded that they neither teach, nor plan to teach ASL in future, while 68% reported that they neither teach, nor plan to teach interpreting in the future. This information is critical when considering the need for interpreter educators in the future.

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- Another category addressed plans for retirement, and found that 5% plan to retire in the next 1-5 years, and 17% in the next 6-10 years, for a total of 22% (853) of working interpreters.
- Nonetheless, a review of the literature covering the last 10 years of research reveals no research or publications that have directly examined the topic of significant differences in the stakeholder's perceptions of the shortage of sign language interpreters in the United States.

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- Until now, there has been very little empirical data documenting perceptions of the shortage of sign language interpreters.
- This study sought to meet a void in the literature by exploring and documenting perceptions of stakeholders regarding the shortage of sign language interpreters.

The explosive growth in technology (VRS)

- Even greater demand has been created by the explosive growth in assistive technology, including the introduction of Video-Relay Service (VRS) in 2002.
- VRS has improved the quality of working conditions for sign language interpreters.
- In the past, the typical interpreter...
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers tend to prefer VRS over other relay services, because VRS gives them access to live interpreters at anytime, allowing them to communicate in their own language.

The federal and state legislation on the sign language interpreters

- Possibly the first time in recorded history that a deaf person addressed the United States Government in sign language was in January 1818. On this date, Laurent Clerc signed and used an interpreter to deliver his speech with hope of gaining awareness and funding for deaf schools in America.
- From 1817 to 1871, residential programs expanded to 34 schools across the United States, and 3 schools in Canada.

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- Clerc lived to see President Abraham Lincoln signing the Enabling Act in 1864.
- Over the next one hundred years, the history of deaf education was not documented, and the need arose to determine the best means of meeting the educational needs of the deaf.
- More legislation followed to ensure full accessibility for deaf people in educational and training opportunities:

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- Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-333),
- the Higher Education Act of 1968 (P.L. 93-380),
- Section 501, 503, 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112),
- Amendments to Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-516),
- Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142),
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA),
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

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Disability Services Grant Report Summary 1999/00

- Qualified Staff:
 - There continued to be a shortage of qualified interpreters for persons who are deaf or have severe hearing loss. Some institutions also had difficulty in finding trained tutors in some disciplines, student mentors to meet the criteria for Student Aiding Students, and note takers with computer training.

August, 2001
Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
Post Secondary Education Division
University Colleges and Program Planning Branch

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Current Standards

- Current standards from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) required a minimum of an Associate of Arts (AA) degree by 2009. Beginning in 2012, RID will impose more rigorous standards by requiring a minimum of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree prior to certification.
- It is anticipated that interpreters will be required to earn a Master of Arts degree in the future.
- As of March 2008, there were 170 interpreter training programs across the United States, including Certificates of Completion, AA, and BA programs, according to the RID website.

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Current Trends:

• THE INTERPRETER'S MINIMUM CHARGES:

- In USA and Canada, interpreters normally charge a minimum of two hours. This is the standard billing procedure among interpreting agencies and freelance interpreters.
- In Great Britain,
it is three hours minimum charge!
- “I used to work in Boston, right in down town. I could cover 3 assignments on average. In CA, the demographic areas [are] much larger, making it almost impossible to do more than 2 assignments a day.”

WHY?

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Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

- When was the RID established? 1964
 - Who were the founding members? codas
- The RID website reported that in October 2008 there were 6,996 certified interpreters across the United States. Overall RID membership was over 11,500.
- Update: 9924 certified interpreters
(as of February 22,2011)

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Deaf Population

- Of approximately 37 million people in the United States, approximately 2.6 million consider themselves part of the Deaf community
- As of June 2004, there were 1,078,325 hard of hearing and 90,948 deaf people living in the state of California alone.

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Current Trends in California

- RID website: 840 Certified Interpreters in California
 - Baily and Straub (1992) to estimate...
 - Should be 8333 interpreters in California
 - 1,390 Deaf/Hard of hearing to one interpreter
 - Should be 25,000 interpreters.
- (RID – current 9224 certified interpreters as of February 22, 2011)

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- 10,000 Deaf/HH students in K-12
 - 1,000 Deaf students in two residential schools (Fremont and Riverside)
- How many interpreters for 9,000 students are in mainstreaming schools?

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Current Trends in BC

- In Canada: 31,612,897 (2006 Census)
- In BC: 4,113,487
 - visible minorities: 1,008,860
 - one in every four British Columbians (24.8%)
 - Chinese : 40.4%
 - South Asians: 26%
- Uses the traditional “one in ten” formula for estimating statistics: 310,000 culturally Deaf Canadians and 2.8 million hard of hearing Canadians. (May, 2007)

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- In BC, there are approximately 205 WAVLI members including 16 DIs and 16 students.
- How many Deaf/HH in BC?
- 411,348 Deaf/HH (including 1,200 students in K-12)
- Presently 33 Deaf/Hard of hearing to one interpreter
- Should be 515 interpreters in B.C.

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Summary

- Interpreter shortages are not new in the history of America's deaf people. However, due to more recent laws and changes in legislation, there is greater demand for sign language interpreting services to provide accessibility. Moreover supply cannot meet the requested needs.
- With the explosive growth in VRS, there is a shortage of sign language interpreters for the rest of the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

- Today, Deaf professionals and consumers continue to face a shortage of interpreters in the fields of medicine, psychology, law, education, religion, and other disciplines.
- Clearly the interpreting profession is comprised of predominantly White, females. The need for more ethnic diversity within the interpreting profession should be addressed. Interpreter Training Programs need to be more proactive in their recruiting of applicants from various ethnic backgrounds as well as more male interpreters.

- Interpreting is a profession that places many demands on those individuals who decide to pursue it as a career. Many interpreters are leaving the field due to high burn out and isolated working conditions. These are areas which must be addressed by Interpreter Training Programs and Professional Interpreting Associations.

Research Questions:

- *R1: What perceptions do stakeholders have about the shortage of sign language interpreters in the state of California?*
- *R2: What solutions do agency interpreters, freelance interpreters, and interpreter education program faculty and members of the Deaf community recommend for improving the situation?*

Methodology

- The purpose of this study -
- This two-phase study – the QUAN-qual model
- 1st phase: anonymous online (Zoomerang) survey
- 2nd phase: two-hour videophone interviews:
 - 3 Agency Interpreters,
 - 3 Free-lance Interpreters,
 - 3 Faculty in Interpreter Education Programs and
 - 3 Members of the Deaf Community

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Results of Data Analysis

- First phase – 840 certified sign language interpreters--free-lance interpreters, agency interpreters, and interpreter training program faculty--with email address in California
 - 3 reminders to the subjects at the intervals of 13 weeks
 - Out of 840 subjects contacted, 110 did not have correct email addresses, reducing total subjects to 730.
 - A total of 124 subjects responded to the online survey (16.8%)
- Second phase – N=12
 - One of each group in North, Central, and Southern CA.

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Table 1
Breakdown of Respondents by Locations and Primary Employment (N=124)

California Locations	Primary Employment		Interpreter Education Program Faculty	Others	Total
	Agency Interpreter	Freelance Interpreter			
	N	N	N	N	N
Northern California	2	3	0	6	11
Northern Sacramento Valley	0	0	0	1	1
Greater Sacramento	1	1	0	1	3
Bay Area	8	21	2	9	40
Central Coast	0	3	0	2	5
San Joaquin Valley	2	4	1	3	10
Southern California	5	14	4	16	39
Southern Border	1	2	0	4	7
Subtotal	19	48	7	42	116
Unspecified					8
Total					124

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Breakdown of survey respondents (124)

- Free-lance interpreters (38.7%),
- Agency Interpreters (15.2%),
- Interpreter Education Program Faculty (5.6%), and
- others (34.7%) such as staff interpreters and interpreter coordinators in educational settings such as K-12, colleges, and universities (24.2%), VRS interpreters (5.6%), government interpreters (3.2%), and unspecified (1.7%).
- 76.6 % female, 23.4% male
- 73.4 % White Non-Hispanic, 6.5% Hispanics
- 35.5 % South California, 33.9% Bay Area
- 46 to 55 year age category (38.7%), 36 to 45 year age category (26.6%)
- Bachelors degree (38.7%), Masters degree (21.8%), AA/AAS (16.9%), Certificate program (12.9%)

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Breakdown of interview participants

- One of each group in North, Central, and Southern California only participated in one – to two-hour video-phone interview:
 - 67% female, 33% male
 - Over 20 employment years – 42%
 - 10-20 employment years – 33%
 - 1 – 10 employment years – 25%
 - highly educated with college degrees.

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To what degree, do you agree/disagree that each of these reasons (factors) of shortage of sign language interpreters is a major contributor to the shortage of sign language interpreters:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Salary/Remuneration | • Dramatic expansion of Video Relay Interpreting and Remote Video Interpreting |
| • Lack of health care benefits | • Lack of mentoring to ensure success |
| • Irregular work schedule | • Lack of professional development opportunities |
| • Working conditions | • Increasing demand due to institutions and organizations complying with ADA laws |
| • Amount of travel time | • Lack of recruitment to interpreter education programs |
| • Repetitive strain injury | • Other, please specify |
| • Psychological trauma | |
| • Demand for interpreters exceeds supply | |
| • Educational requirements | |
| • Professional requirements | |

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What perceptions do stakeholders have about the shortage of sign language interpreters in the state of California?

- More than 71% of the respondents perceived three contributing major factors:
 - Lack of Health Care Benefits (78.6%)
 - Dramatic expansion of VRS/VRI interpreting (71%)
 - Lack of mentoring (71%)

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Other contributing factors:

- Demand for interpreters exceeding supply (65%)
- Low salary remuneration (64%)
- Lack of recruitment to ITPs (64%)
- Irregular work schedule (58%)
- Travel time (56%)
- Increasing demand due to instructions and organizations complying with ADA laws (55%)

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Perceived importance of contributing factors:

- The results of the respondents' ranking showed that the demand for interpreters exceeding supply ranked first in terms of its impact on the shortage. Four other top rankings were:
 - Lack of health care benefits
 - Low salary/remuneration
 - Dramatic expansion of VRS/VRI
 - Irregular work schedule

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Health benefits

- Of great concern was a lack of health benefits offered by those who employed the interpreters. Participants emphasized that many interpreters are hired on a contractual basis and are not full time employees and therefore not eligible for health benefits. While there is an understanding of the "...complex issues about being an independent contractor as an interpreter versus the agency providing the benefits...", there is also a belief that "...agencies could provide the benefits to interpreters but they are not considered part of the agencies employees" (Free-lance interpreter). Setting up such benefits would certainly "...help pull many interpreters..." into the profession, enhancing availability of services. Also of interest was that some agencies in eastern states do provide, "...health benefit insurance to all part-time and full-time interpreters."

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VRS

- Regarding the explosive growth in VRS, two respondents stated that, “75% of Terps [interpreters] in this area have gone to the Relay” and “Many interpreters are leaving community work to work in VRS due to the rate, guaranteed hours, benefits, no travel, no parking issues, etc. It has really hurt the [Deaf] community.”
- The growth of Video Relay Service (VRS) was also stated as a reason for limiting the availability of community interpreters. This seemed to have the greatest impact in large metropolitan centers where more than one VRS company was established. Two agency interpreters commented, “... 3 VRS agencies decided to open up centers within a few miles from each other”... One member of a Deaf community noted, “There are 3 – 4 VRS companies in a large urban city in Northern California. We should have one VRS in one city not have 3 – 4 VRS.”

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Importance of contributing factors: comparison of perceptions by groups

Free-lance Interpreter	Agency Interpreter	Interpreter Education Program Faculty
Low salary/remuneration	Demand for interpreter Exceeding supply	Lack of health care
Lack of health care	Dramatic expansion of VRS/VRI	Demand for interpreter Exceeding supply
Irregular work schedule	Lack of health care	Lack of recruitment to IEPs
Dramatic expansion of VRS/VRI	Travel time	Dramatic expansion of VRS/VRI

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Do agency interpreters, free-lance interpreters, and interpreter education program faculty perceive the shortage of sign language interpreters differently? **Yes**

- More than 2/3 of free-lance interpreters and interpreter education program faculty compared to 50% of agency interpreters indicated that lack of health care benefits was an important factor to the shortage of sign language interpreters.
- 64% of free-lance interpreters perceived low salary as the main cause of the shortages
- 100% of interpreter education program faculty perceived dramatic expansion of VRS/VRI as the main cause of the shortages
- Despite differences in primary cause for the shortage of sign language interpreters, all groups agreed lack of mentoring, demand for interpreters exceeding supply, and lack of recruitment to IEPs also had an impact on the shortage.

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What solutions do agency interpreters, free-lance interpreters, and interpreter education program faculty and members of the Deaf community recommend for improving the situation?

- A state-wide taskforce,
- More effective paid mentoring programs,
- Better pay,
- More security with guaranteed hours,
- Better recruiting strategies,

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- RID certification,
- Respondents recommended RID explore affordable health benefit packages for free-lance interpreters,
- VRS companies provide scholarships to ITP students,
- Respondents recommended ITPs:
 - employ recruitment strategies to attract more male and culturally diverse students for ITPs
 - improve advertising to increase awareness of ITPs
 - increase focus on linguistic and cultural competence with the curriculum
 - increase professional “track” preparation as well as internships/mentorships.

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- The respondents generally supported the hiring of more Deaf people, believing ITPs should include “more involvement of Deaf faculty, CDIs, and the Deaf community.”
- Agencies should follow State and Federal law regarding the hiring of independent contractors and should hire Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs).
- Several respondents also expressed a need for more ITPs in Northern California, which currently consist of 4 ITP’s in comparison to 9 in Southern California.

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Discussion

- California is a large and very diverse state with an equally large and diverse deaf community. As a result access services for deaf people are required in a variety of settings demanding interpreters with skills in a variety of fields.
- The ethnicity distribution of respondents showed 73.4% as White Non-Hispanic, suggesting low representation of ethnic minorities in the interpreting community.

Agency Interpreters

- The lack of qualified sign language interpreters continues to present a problem for sign language interpreter services providers in California.
- For the agency interpreters, the ability to predict interpreting needs was key to ensuring attainment of services. Just how many sign language interpreters would be enough to meet the demands of the Deaf community? Without a baseline idea it is difficult to study alternative ratios in order to plan for increased accessibility to interpreting services.

West vs. East

- It is worth noting that 41.3% of respondents reported that freelance interpreting was their “Primary Employment,” double that reported in the RID Fall 2008 membership survey.
- As evidenced by the survey and interview respondents, differences between the east and west may well be the explanation. Agencies in the east tend to hire more full and part-time employees, while California tends to contract free-lance interpreters.

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VRS

- Although analysis of all qualitative data pointed to the growth of VRS as a contributing factor, perceptions about its long-term impact on the shortage varied among those interviewed.
- While benefits packages and better working conditions are a strong attraction to VRS companies, the novelty of the work itself is short-lived, “It’s a new thing people go to work for VRS and many people realize really it’s not my “cup of tea” and prefer not to do that kind of work....yes there is a shortage, but 6 months later, everything is fine...” (Free-lance interpreter).

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VRS

- Within this area, the respondents reported that if they had their preference, would or would they not opt to work in their current settings in the future. VRS/VRI workers responded most negatively, with a drop in numbers of more than 20%.
- After 6 months typically, there is a pattern for sign language interpreters of returning to the community from VRS. A respondent pointed out, “I know many interpreters who have done VRS and return to the community. I think VRS has had an effect but I also think there are many people not doing VRS.” Other respondent expressed that: “Good and bad. Way too many thoughts pro and con (truth be told I’ve worked for various VRS companies for the last 5 years) to put here.” While VRS was identified as contributing to the shortage problem, it was not perceived as ‘the’ problem but simply “...a new service area [that] must have interpreters.”

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IEPs

- Interpreter education programs are a key element in resolving the shortage of sign language interpreters but currently, they are not able to fill the demand.
- There has been a growing perception that new graduated interpreters from the interpreter education programs may not be qualified for entry-level jobs within secondary, post-secondary, and specialized settings.

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IEPs

- ITPs - Cognitive Linguistic Academic Proficiency (CALP)
- ASL programs - Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)
- BICS/CALP (Cummins, 1980)...
- Applicants to ITPs...
- Graduates of a 2-year ITP...

Requirement

- Because 38.7% of interpreters in California already have a Bachelor's degree (BA), they will not face much of an impact as a result of the RID certification requirement that interpreters attain a BA by 2012.

Next 3 – 5 years

- Of respondents who indicated their plans for the next 3 – 5 years, ...
- Faculty members in IEPs...
- Almost 48% of all the survey respondents indicated they would retire within the next 10 – 15 years.

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Four Main Findings Contributing to the Shortage of Sign Language Interpreters:

- Sign language interpreters' current working conditions and qualifications
- The emergence of VRSs
- Interpreter education programs' recruitment and curriculum practices
- Challenges in retention of qualified sign language interpreters

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Theme reflected survey data:

Eleven emerging categories - analyzed by noting patterns in similarities and differences:

- Poor working conditions
- Lack of security or regularity in working conditions
- Lack of control results in poor quality of work
- Irregularity of work
- Difficult interpersonal interactions
- Challenging interpersonal relations
- Emergence of VRS
- Inadequate feeder stream
- Failure of ITPs to produce “ready to work” grads
- Lack of funding
- Things that keep interpreters in the field



Major themes resulting from categories:

- Sign language interpreters' current working conditions and qualifications
- Emergence of VRS
- Interpreter education programs' recruitment and curriculum
- Retention of qualified sign language interpreters

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Recommendations

- policy makers,
- researchers,
- administrators and faculty of interpreter education programs,
- Video Relay Service providers,
- agency administrators,
- associations, and
- Deaf community interested in learning how to improve the shortage situation in California.

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Implications of Findings

- Historically, the shortage of qualified sign language interpreters...
- As a result, the rights of Deaf people...
- California is a large and very diverse state..
- The ethnicity distribution of respondents showed ...
- The demand for qualified interpreters is not a new problem,

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Concluding Statement

- As society struggles with a shortage, the need for an increased number of sign language interpreters is consequentially necessary and significant.
- The shortage of qualified sign language interpreters has greatly impacted the rights of Deaf people.
- If the contributing factors are not addressed, the shortage will continue to grow. The time for action is now.

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Concluding Statement:

- It is time for fostering partnerships among the stakeholders. Change requires an open learning environment which builds on principles of mutual trust, respect, and commitment.
- As Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and spiritual leader said “We must become the change we want to see in the world.”

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Concluding Statement:

- Now it is time to think about a new approach, which implies that change is a dynamic and proactive process.
- Without collaboration between members of the Deaf community and the interpreting community, this change will not happen.

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Questions & Discussion



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