



Washington State  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration

*Transforming Lives*

## ODHH-DES Master Sign Language Interpreter Contract Updates

**January 6, 2021**

### Historical Overview

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) has managed the Sign Language Interpreter Services Contract under the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) since 2005. Additional state agencies began utilizing this contract, which led to a statewide master contract with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES).

As of June 2020, ODHH, in partnership with DES, released the current master contract for [Sign Language Interpreter Referral Services](#) and [Independent Contractors](#).

The DSHS Sign Language Interpreter Contract and the DSHS Sign Language Interpreter Request form 17-123a has expired in June 2020. ODHH continues to post the list of [Agencies and Independent Contractors](#), the Master Sign Language [Interpreter Request Form](#), the contract itself, contact information, agency fees and a list of approved [Interpreter's and their rates](#).

A new online form option is now available. Click this link to fill out the request form electronically. <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/odhhapps/Interpreters/Request.aspx>

### What does this mean?

- The Sign Language Interpreter Contracts are now Master Contracts posted in [DES](#).
- The Master Contract allows Virtual Interpreting using state-approved platforms such as ZOOM, GoToMeeting, etc.
- The contract does **not** cover VRI services.
- The request form is now available for any master contract user. The format of the form has changed to improve accessibility.
- DSHS form 17-123a was discontinued.

- ODHH continues to provide guidance and consultation on how to use this contract to promote effective communication. For more information, contact the Sign Language Interpreter Contracts & Resources Program Manager.

## **What has changed?**

- The traditional \$30.00 agency fee per Interpreter now varies by agency.
- Travel time is built into the appointment time if the commute is more than one hour. The contractors will let you know how much time is required for each assignment.
- Effective communication may require a team of Interpreters called a Deaf-Hearing Team. If the agency recommends a Deaf Interpreter, it means that they have assessed the situation and are promoting effective communication by including additional interpreters. Using a Deaf Interpreter is required when recommended. If you have questions or concerns, please contact ODHH.

## **Virtual Interpreters VS Video Remote Interpreters (VRI)**

- Virtual Interpreters (VI) are ODHH approved sign language interpreters who have traditionally attended appointments with employees and clients in person. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have implemented a way for these interpreters to continue to work using state approved platforms under the Master Contract. The process for requesting interpreters and submitting bills remains the same.
- Appropriate internet bandwidth is required to keep interpreters and users connected throughout the appointment.

## **Personal Protection Equipment**

- Interpreters will attend in person appointments if requested. There will be DeafBlind clients who require tactile access and other Deaf clients with unique communications needs will not be able to meet via the virtual platform. The Interpreters will decide which assignments to accept in person.
- While interpreters may have their own PPE, the requester is required to provide the interpreter with appropriate PPE for onsite services.

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