

**Sign Language Interpreter & Transliterator State Registration Act
Stakeholder Meeting: April 27th 2018**

Location: 1521 N 6th Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102; OVR Central Office

Time: 10:00am – 3pm

Members in Attendance:

Jessica Bentley-Sassaman (ITP); Benjamin Moonan (ODHH); Denise Brown (ODHH); Russ Goddard (OVR), Jennifer Purring (ED Interp); John Nice (PARID - CDI); Jeanne Bonnes (Agencies); Gerald Penna (PSAD); Osvaldo Aviles (AOPC), Melissa Hawkins (ODHH)

Interpreters: Cindi Brown and Nichole Wade

CART: Terri O'Connor

Visitors: John "JJ" Blasco and Grace Shirk-Emmons

Meeting Summary:

The meeting opened with the introduction of the new Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) Director Melissa Hawkins.

After that, Gerald Penna began to review PSAD's Legislative Committee's proposed amendments to update the Act. The section focusing on definition was reviewed and discussed. The definition for Agency was recommended by PSAD to include referral agencies as well as Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) agencies. Another definition that was discussed was Mental Health Settings. It was agreed that it needs to be modified to keep it as generic as possible (not limited to) because there are too many to list and shouldn't be limited to. The team agreed that the act should include definition of agency and VRI.

The next discussion that occurred was about utilizing sign language interpreters in mental health settings. There are concerns that unqualified interpreters are being utilized in mental health settings and PSAD wanted to ensure that qualified interpreters, who have mental health training background, are being utilized for those situations. Concerns about implementing requirements for interpreters to obtain mental health training was brought up because a very small number of interpreters in PA have received specialized training (Alabama Mental Health Interpreting Training) and it would really limit available interpreters for mental health settings. It was recommended to PSAD that they consult with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) to discuss ideas how to address the concerns about utilizing unqualified interpreters in mental health settings.

In regards to finding a method to hold agencies who refer interpreters accountable, the team discussed the possibility of developing a Letter of Assurance that would require agencies to voluntarily sign it committing to ensure compliance with the Act. Once they sign the Letter, the

agencies name could be inserted on ODHH's website for the public to view. ODHH will discuss this idea with Legislative Affairs of Labor and Industry and see if there would be any objections to the implementation of it instead of including it into the law.

The team suggested to find out if the previous sponsors (legislators) of the act in 2004 are still in office and would be ideal to reach out to them again to sponsor the changes. Jessica Bentley-Sassaman has information in place of legislators from the Bloomsburg, Pa area that can be utilized into sponsoring the changes. Center for Hearing and Deaf Services (HDS) in Pittsburgh has two legislators on their current board that will be asked if they would be interested in sponsoring the changes as well.

A question about proposing late fees for provisional registered interpreters was brought up. ODHH emphasizes that a late fee would not be necessary because the law requires Provisional Registration to be consecutive. The standard established for provisional registered interpreters should remain high and they should be accountable to comply with the requirements of the act to avoid not being eligible to renew. No late fee for provisional registered interpreters will be imposed into the act.

The team began reviewing items they all agreed upon and what was left to discuss –

Agreed on:

- Provisional Registration to expand from 3 years to 5 years (4 renewals instead of 2)
- Add mentorship requirement for Provisional Registered interpreters (20 hours annually)
- Add Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Advanced and Master certification to the list of approved/accepted certification for State-registration.
- Accepting RID's Alternative Pathway as an educational requirement to obtain Provisional Registration. For both hearing and deaf interpreters.
- Include the definition of "Mental Health" into Act
- Update definition of "agency"
- Add definition of "Video Remote Interpreting"
- Increase fees for State Registration and Provisional Registration
- Revolving Account for ODHH
- Fix language about emergencies – Sec. 4(b)(2) and Sec. 5.1(b)(5)(iv)

Not yet agreed:

- Exception #5: Request to use a non-registered interpreter. This will be discussed at the next meeting to determine best approach to address the concerns surrounding the exception.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 1st, 2018.