



LEGISLATIVE SPONSORS:

Representative Jackson
 Senator Danielson

COMMUNITY SPONSORS:

The Independence Center (The IC), Colorado Springs
 Disabled Resource Services (DRS), Fort Collins

Purpose:

The Interpreter Certification bill proposes to increase the number of certification processes for ensuring that Sign Language Interpreters in Colorado are truly qualified for the interpreting they provide. Currently, there is only one process acceptable in the statute. Title 6, Article 1, Colorado Consumer Protection Act, requires that all individuals working as Sign Language Interpreters in Colorado must be certified. Over the past several years, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) has not been able to provide certification in a timely or effective manner. The IC and DRS, both Centers for Independent Living, are proposing to allow the Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind (CCDHHDB) to identify other certifications from other entities who certify Sign Language Interpreters.

How many certified Sign Language Interpreters are there in Colorado currently?

According to RID, there are only 263 RID certified interpreters residing in Colorado, of that number, 167 are listed as available freelance interpreters. There are 46 associate members, who are not yet certified.

How many interpreting jobs are there across the state?

Most interpreters work freelance, as many businesses and organizations don't individually have enough work to hire a full-time interpreter. While some interpreters are lucky enough to find full time employment through large hospitals, educational institutions, etc., most work as free-lance interpreters. Interpreting services are an on-demand, 24-hour type of work. Since the need is so great and technology has created video-based interpreting services, there is a real shortage of interpreters to meet the need for on-demand and video-based interpreting. Below are examples of interpreting assignments taken from the Rural Interpreting Services Pilot survey CCDHHDB conducts:

Community

- Commercial (store or business)
- City Council
- Community Provider
- Employer or Employee
- Entertainment (plays, festivals, etc.)
- Libraries

Educational

- Schools: pre/K-12
- Post-secondary (trade schools, community colleges, colleges)
- Other school-related interpreting (e.g., parent meetings, school events, conferences)



Financial

- Banking
- Credit Unions
- Lenders
- Investments

Governmental Offices

- Division of Motor Vehicles
- Housing
- Human Services
- Labor and Employment
- Other Governmental Offices

Legal

- Administrative Offices
- Court
- Detention Facilities or Jails
- Emergency Call Centers
- Lawyers, Law Firms, Legal Services
- Police, Sheriff, State Patrol

Medical

- Clinics
- Dentists
- Doctors (private offices)
- Emergency Services or Urgent Care
- Hospitals
- Therapists/Counselors/Other Mental Health Services
- Other Medical Services

Work/Employment

- Job Site Meetings
- Interviews
- Job Training

How many Sign Language Interpreter training programs are there in Colorado and where are they located?

1. The Interpreter Preparation Program at Pikes Peak Community College, Colorado Springs offers in person training and prepares students for entry level, pre-certified interpreter employment. (This is contrary to Colorado state law, which requires a bachelor's degree according to RID). They offer language training, while teaching interpreting skills at the same time. This is a two- year, Associate of Arts degree.
2. The Interpreter Preparation Program at Front Range Community College, Denver, offers in person training. One must pass a sign language proficiency test before entering the actual interpreter training program. This is a five semester Associate of Arts degree.
3. The Department of American Sign Language and Interpreter Studies at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, offers both online and in-person training. To get into the program, students must have passed a certain level of proficiency in American Sign Language. UNC's program results in a four-year Bachelor of Arts Degree.

How many people graduate in a year from Colorado training programs?

A query into the Colorado Registry for the Deaf (CRID), shows that for the years 1985 to 2016, graduating classes ranged from 9 to 16 per year. This number includes both two-year and four-year degreed individuals. The CRID survey also noted that not all graduates are currently working.



What is the pay rate for Sign Language Interpreters in Colorado?

Community facilitators, which are also known as not certified interpreters, usually make \$25-\$35 an hour. Certified interpreters can make \$35-\$50 per hour and usually have a one or two hour minimum. As independent contractors, interpreters are responsible for all taxes and health care type benefits.

Describe the training process. How long does it take?

Ideally, the individual learns the language first, then undertakes training to be an interpreter; that is how it works with other languages. While one Colorado training program teaches both together, it may take much longer to graduate. After one has acquired the language, a training program can take from two to four years, and involves classes about interpreting, self-analysis through practice, by the filming of yourself signing and voicing Sign Language vignettes, and in some cases, an internship. A student is not certified by virtue of going through postsecondary training alone.

It takes time and practice to learn the language and become an interpreter. It takes even more time to get additional training for healthcare or legal interpreting, and there is work being done on certification for emergency preparedness interpreting.

Describe the certification process. How long does it take?

Before testing, it is highly recommended that students get “real world” experience by shadowing with working interpreters or working under a mentorship. We are unaware of any formal apprenticeships or mentoring processes for new interpreters in Colorado.

Once the student feels he/she is proficient enough, he/she can apply for certification through RID at any time. The written test must be taken and passed before continuing to the Interview and Performance portions of the exam. The entire process can take 6-9 months before the results are returned to the applicant. If the applicant passes, he/she will receive a certification card from RID.

RID charges \$865 for their certification exams when offered. The Texas based Board of Evaluation for Interpreters (BEI) certification costs are based on the type of certification. Their exam costs range from basic proficiency to master’s level, and onto various specialty certifications. The range is from \$95 to \$195 for the basic and master’s level. For the various certificates, the cost ranges from \$50 to \$95 per test. Interpreter candidates are usually responsible for paying for the certification processes.

What is the problem with certification in Colorado currently?

The RID certification process has been stalled for a number of years. Prospective interpreters have been waiting to take the Certified Interpreter exam through RID, but that and the legal certification testing is on indefinite hold. Colorado is falling behind in certifying interpreters, who may give up or move to another state using a different certification process.

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What will change if this bill is passed?

Currently, many deaf people, businesses, and other entities are forced to use communication facilitators who are not certified interpreters, which can lead to disastrous consequences. With additional sources of qualified certification processes, there will be more interpreters available at a faster rate. Colorado could attract interpreters from out of state to come here and get certified faster, also increasing our pool of interpreters.

Deaf individuals will have more access to interpreters, and a way to determine if that interpreter is credible, by asking for their certification card. This bill will raise awareness among interpreters and those hiring interpreters, that the certification requirement is in place and there are more interpreters available who are certified.

How will the Commission determine what certification processes will be acceptable in Colorado?

Authority for rule-making to determine what certifications from entities are valid, will be assigned to CCDHHDB. Any certification(s) by an entity that is recognized by CCDHHDB will be required of interpreters to carry all the time. Before rules can be promulgated during the rule-making process, CCDHHDB will assess validity of certifications and entities, and hold public forums to discuss the findings, as well as to receive public input regarding proposed rules.



The Independence Center is one of nine Centers for Independent Living in Colorado, and is located in Colorado Springs. The IC serves over 800 people with disabilities in El Paso, Teller, Park, Lincoln, Cheyenne, and Kit Carson counties. In addition to providing Independent Living Services in the community, The IC also operates a Home Health program, funded by Medicaid, that pays for medical and personal care services in the home to prevent institutionalization. We employ 350 people, 280 who are Home Health caregivers.

People with disabilities
building community
THE INDEPENDENCE CENTER