




COLORADO'S SEVERE SHORTAGE OF CERTIFIED SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS INSPIRES THE NEED FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE!

Colorado has been experiencing a severe shortage of certified Sign Language Interpreters in the past couple of years, in part, because our Consumer Protection Act recognizes only Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) certifications. RID, as the national certifying organization, has been unable to provide certification tests in a manner that meets Colorado's needs. There are a number of potential interpreters around our state who could be certified and legally working, if not for the lack of a certification process.

Because of this shortage, many healthcare facilities, colleges and universities, and other entities (legal firms, banks, and nonprofits to name a few) must use non-certified interpreters. This could cause harm to the health and welfare of our Deaf community. If an interpreter is not familiar with the vocabulary used in healthcare, a misdiagnosis can be easily communicated. Not understanding legal proceedings, due to the lack of a certified interpreter, can have a catastrophic impact on individuals and families.



To adequately address this concern, we recommend expanding the state's communication infrastructure of interpreters, by increasing the types of certifications that are considered legitimate, and promote additional specialized training in areas such as law and the courts, healthcare, and emergency preparedness.

Colorado mandates that only certified interpreters be used when communicating with Deaf individuals, particularly in courts, government

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offices, healthcare, and other critical instances. Generally, Deaf people prefer interpreters who have been trained, mentored, and then certified through a comprehensive testing process. They are better assured of having someone who can truly meet their communication needs.

Colorado's Consumer Protection Act (6-1-707) (1) declares it consumer fraud when individuals or practitioners claim to be a Sign Language interpreter, but are not certified. Many entities struggle to find certified interpreters.

To remedy this problem, we propose that the Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind (CCDHOHDB) be authorized to identify and implement additional certification processes that could be used to expand the number of certified Sign Language interpreters. Interpreters play a critical role in providing communication access infrastructure and assisting people who are Deaf with participation in legal, healthcare, training, and employment related activities, to ensure equal access.

For more information, and to stay up-to-date with the legislation's progress, please visit <https://www.theindependencecenter.org/asl-interpreter-certification-initiative/>



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.

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