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School Interpreters

If your child needs an interpreter, ask your child's IEP team for one. Help them plan for the kind of interpreter your child needs.

What an interpreter does

A school interpreter helps deaf students communicate with other people. This kind of interpreter is also called an **educational interpreter (ed-joo-KAY-shun-al in-TERP-pret-er)**.

An educational interpreter may sign to your child what her teachers and other students say to them. The interpreter can also "voice" for your child. This means that the interpreter will say out loud what your child signs to the teacher and her classmates.

Make sure your child gets the interpreter that's right for her

There are many different kinds of interpreters. For one thing, not all interpreters sign the same way. Here are just a few of the different ways of signing:

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Signed English
- Signing Exact English (SEE)
- Seeing Essential English
- Pidgin Signed English (PSE)

And signing interpreters aren't the only ones out there. Some interpreters work with children who only speak:

- Oral interpreters. These interpreters will silently mouth what is being said. The student reads the interpreter's lips.
- Cued speech transliterators. These interpreters will mouth what is being said while cueing. Cueing is using hand shapes in different places around the mouth to show what sounds the speaker makes while speaking. See our section on cued speech for more about this.

Interpreters don't just work in the classroom

Your child can have a school interpreter even when she's not in class.

Like during lunch. Or after school at sports or clubs. Or for graduation and other special events.

But you have to ask your IEP team for this help to get it. Ask them to include extra interpreting hours in your child's IEP.

Some interpreters are better than others.

Standards for interpreters are different in different places. So how can you tell if someone is qualified to teach your child? Here's what standards are out there:

The whole country

There is no one standard for the whole country yet. Interpreters just have to meet the standards of the state they work in.

Your state

Each state has its own rules about how good interpreters have to be. But many don't have standards for interpreters who work in schools. Check out the National Association of the Deaf's [table of state laws](http://www.nad.org/infocenter/infotogo/asl/InterpStateLaws.html) (<http://www.nad.org/infocenter/infotogo/asl/InterpStateLaws.html>) and regulations on requirements of interpreters to find out what your state's standards are.

Your school district

Your school district may have rules about who can and can't work as an educational interpreter. But all interpreters should at least meet state standards.

Others

There are two main groups that test and rate interpreters. These groups are:

- [The National Association of the Deaf \(NAD\)](http://www.nad.org/) (<http://www.nad.org/>)
- [The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf \(RID\)](http://www.rid.org/) (<http://www.rid.org/>)
Read about the [different certificates the RID](http://www.rid.org/expl.html) (<http://www.rid.org/expl.html>) gives out.

Some states say that their interpreters have to be tested by the NAD or RID to work in their state. But others don't. The NAD and RID are starting to combine their two test systems.

A test just for interpreters who work in schools

Sounds pretty confusing, right? But there is a test just for interpreters who work in schools. The test is called the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA).

The EIPA looks at how well an interpreter can interpret for a child of a certain age. Read [Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment: A Tool to Evaluate Skills](http://stripe.colorado.edu/~schick/EIPA/EIPA.html) (<http://stripe.colorado.edu/~schick/EIPA/EIPA.html>) to learn more about the test.

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/help/interpreters/>