**Transcript – Working with people with deafblindness and Auslan interpreters**

**Overview**

This video is aimed at service providers who may be working with a person with deafblindness who uses Auslan. The information covered in this video includes:

* What is Auslan
* What you can expect from an Auslan interpreter
* Finding and booking an Auslan interpreter
* Working with an Auslan interpreter
* And Payment

**Auslan**

Auslan is the first language of some Australians with deafblindness. Auslan is the sign language used by the Australian Deaf Community. There are some adaptations that are made when signing or relaying information to a person who is deafblind. These include close range signing, visual frame signing, tactile signing, deafblind fingerspelling and chuchotage. See our video on deafblind communication methods for more information about these and other communication methods used by people with deafblindness in Australia.

**What can you expect from an Auslan interpreter?**

Auslan interpreters are bilingual in Auslan and English so that they can facilitate communication between Deaf and hearing people. They also need to have a knowledge of social and cultural aspects of the Deaf community and are required to follow a professional Code of Ethics that specifies appropriate behaviour when interpreting and assists interpreters to make decisions relating to their role, obligations and rights.

The Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association Code of Ethics emphasises the importance of confidentiality, accuracy and impartiality. Qualified interpreters must remain impartial, confidential, professional and truthful. Information communicated during an appointment where a qualified interpreter is present will remain confidential.

Not all Auslan interpreters are skilled or experienced in working with people with deafblindness. It is the right of the Deafblind consumer to choose any qualified interpreter they want to attend their appointment. People with deafblindness are not obliged to have an interpreter present that they are not comfortable with and they can choose to say no to any interpreter they do not want.

**Finding and booking an Auslan interpreter**

If you are not fluent to a high level in Auslan, a qualified Auslan interpreter who is accredited with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) should always be booked for:

* Meetings, (1:1 or group)
* Workshops, forums and conferences
* 1:1 training sessions
* Any time complex or large amounts of information need to be conveyed

People with deafblindness are all different an all have different communication needs and preferences. This needs to be considered when booking an Auslan interpreter. Questions to ask the person with deafblindness:

* Do you have a preferred booking agency, and if so can you pass on the contact details
* Do you have preferred interpreters?
* Do you have non-preferred interpreters?
* What communication method should I list in the booking e.g. close range, visual frame, tactile?

Some people with deafblindness will have preferences about interpreters and others may not.

For organisations who provide Auslan interpreting services, see the Deafblind Information Australia website.

When booking an Auslan interpreter you will be asked for the person’s name, date and time of the meeting, location of meeting, information about the content of what will be discussed.

Once the interpreters are booked it is good to let the person with deafblindness know who the interpreters will be.

If you are going to be working with the person on an ongoing basis, for example for orientation and mobility training, or counselling, or other therapy or training, it is ideal to book the same interpreters where possible.

If the person requires tactile Auslan and the meeting will be for more than 20 minutes, two interpreters must be booked.

Two interpreters must also be booked for large meetings, forums, or workshops.

Deaf Relay Interpreters are often used for larger meetings or forums, when multiple interpreter bookings need to be made to meet the needs of multiple people with deafblindness. Deaf Relay Interpreters will watch the platform interpreters, those standing at the front of the room, and relay the information to the person with deafblindness who cannot see the platform interpreter. The use of Deaf Relay Interpreters varies a little from State to State.

Discuss the nature of what will be discussed and what will be happening during the session to determine whether you need one or two interpreters if you are not sure.

Allow additional time for the meeting. Due to having reduced vision, signing typically needs to be a little slower, and more communication breakdowns occur. The interpreter will also often need to provide additional visual information for example the lay out of the room, and who is sitting where, so allow 1.5 to 2 times as long as you would for someone with a single sensory impairment.

Also allow some additional time at the start of the meeting, as interpreters will typically arrive 15 to 30 minutes prior to the meeting to get more information about the meeting, and meet with the people they will be interpreting for and help make sure the room is set up for best communication.

It is important to note there are some State differences in terminology used for different communication methods, and also in the process of booking interpreters. For example in Adelaide, there is an expectation that Deaf Relay Interpreters will be used for all bookings for people with deafblindness.

**Working with an interpreter**

To assist the interpreter to work to optimal capacity, please provide prior to the appointment any relevant information such as:

* Relevant documents including meeting agendas and minutes of past meetings
* subject matter to be discussed
* names of those attending,
* copies of presentations and scripts of videos to be used (if the video is not subtitled)
* a list of terminology, acronyms, and abbreviations that will be used during the appointment.

Interpreters may stop you during the meeting to request clarification.

Aim to avoid metaphors, or English idioms for example “beat around the bush” or “dime a dozen”.

Be sure not to speak too fast, and check with the interpreter that your rate of speech is okay. Also, ensure you maintain ongoing speech and do not stop and wait at the end of each sentence.

For large meetings, forums or workshops, interpreters will swap every 20 minutes, and a communication break for five minutes should occur every hour to give people’s attention, eyes and arms a rest, both participants and interpreters.

**Payment**

People with deafblindness who require Auslan interpreters and are under the age of 65, will have funding for Auslan interpreters in their NDIS plan. Do be sure to check that the person has sufficient interpreter funding remaining to book an interpreter.

From November 2020, older Australians who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing and do not have access to interpreting services can access free sign language interpreting services for daily activities.

For further information about deafblindness see the Deafblind Information Australia website. For more information about Auslan interpreting contact the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association.

Deafblind Information Australia

[www.deafblindinforamtion.org.au](http://www.deafblindinforamtion.org.au)

Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association

[www.aslia.com.au](http://www.aslia.com.au)

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