

Using sign language interpreters

The right to the services of a sign language interpreter is expressed in several laws in Sweden, including in the Administrative Procedure Act § 8 and in the Health and Medical Services Act § 2. Sweden has also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In article 9, on accessibility, the Convention deals with the right to the services of a sign language interpreter.

In Sweden, everyday interpreting services are funded by the county council. Authorities, education providers and higher education institutions have special payment responsibilities. Employers also have some degree of responsibility for payment, but the county council is responsible for basic interpreting in the workplace.

Brief facts about sign language interpreting

- Training for sign language interpreters is available at Stockholm University and at Fellingsbro Folk High School, Södertörn Folk High School and Västervik Folk High School.
- The Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency is responsible for authorising sign language interpreters. A sign language interpreter needs to pass the qualified professional exams of the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency in order to become an authorised interpreter.
- In addition to sign language interpreting, there is also speech-to-text interpreting and sign-supported speech. Speech-to-text interpreting is interpreting from speech to text and sign-supported speech is signing as a support to speech, in other words, the interpreter signs some of the words in a spoken conversation. Both of these interpreting methods are usually intended for people who are hard of hearing who need support interpreting for what is being said in the spoken language.

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We offer special educational support to pre-schools and schools across the country, answer questions, and offer courses and conferences. We also run a number of special schools, distribute state funding and develop teaching materials.

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What you need to know about sign language interpreting



National Agency for Special Needs
Education and Schools



What do sign language interpreters do?

The task of a sign language interpreter is to enable communication between Swedish Sign Language and spoken Swedish. Interpreting is simultaneous, which is possible because the languages do not interfere with one another, as happens when interpreting between two spoken languages.

Sign language interpreting can be used in all possible contexts, such as doctor's appointments, workplace meetings, lectures, studies, leisure activities, parent-teacher meetings, field trips and religious gatherings. Most sign language interpreters today also have expertise in deafblind interpreting. Deafblind interpreting can take a variety of forms, depending on how the person with deafblindness communicates. It can be visual frame signing, tactile sign language or clear speech. It also includes assistance, sight interpreting and the use of social haptic signals.

Sign language interpreting can also take place remotely via www.bildtelefoni.net.

How does it work?

All sign language interpreters have a duty of confidentiality and follow ethical guidelines for interpreters.

Sign language interpreters often work in pairs when they are on assignments that last longer than one hour. The interpreters relieve each other approximately every 10-30 minutes, depending on how demanding the interpreting is.

Look at the person you are communicating with and use your natural conversational speed. The interpreter will tell you if anything is unclear or needs to be repeated. It is the interpreter's job to convey your conversation with the right intonation and feeling.

Do not ask for the interpreter's opinion, because the interpreter is impartial and is not involved in the conversation.

Since Swedish Sign Language is a visual language, the person using spoken Swedish and the sign language interpreter should preferably be near one another. This allows the person who is reading the sign language interpretation to see clearly who is speaking and what emotion that person is expressing.

What to remember before and during sign language interpreting

Anyone can order the services of an interpreter. It is important to put the order in as early as possible, and to cancel if it is no longer required.

The more the interpreter can prepare for the assignment, the better the quality will be. Before a meeting or conference, it is especially helpful to send as much material and information as possible to the interpreter, for example, lecturers' presentations.

Sign language interpreting at special schools

In our bilingual special schools, sign language interpreters are used, for example, on field trips, theatrical performances, cinema visits, joint activities with other classes or schools, lectures and, in some cases, in teaching.

In the special schools' curriculum (Lspec11) the syllabus for Swedish Sign Language states that the students must have the opportunity to develop skills in sign language interpreting, for example, regarding how interpreting is used, what the task of the interpreter is and the duty of confidentiality. In the higher grades they should also discuss the impact of the interpretation situation on the conversation.

Most of our bilingual special schools have sign language interpreters employed.

Read more on the web

www.spsm.se

At www.mfd.se you can find more information about interpreting, everyday interpreting and different methods of interpreting.

At www.horsellinjen.se you can find information on different methods of interpreting, payment responsibility for interpreting services, and several examples of situations where you might use an interpreter.

