**Findings of Deaf Interpreter Educator Focus Groups
Conducted December 2007**

NCIEC Deaf Interpreter Work Team

March 2009

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of a research project undertaken by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) in December 2007. The scope of the project was to invite a group of Deaf Interpreter Educators to respond to an on-line survey and to participate in a focus group about some of the issues related to Deaf Interpreting. In total, twelve Deaf interpreting educators participated in the process. The research is but one of the many activities undertaken by the Deaf Interpreting Initiative of the NCIEC to engage processes that would provide current evidence about the practices of the Deaf interpreter in the United States.

An independent researcher, Debra Russell, was hired to analyze the data and report the findings. The data analysis included the following:

Survey Data. Twelve participants provided demographic data in addition to responding to several questions about the nature of their teaching, resources used to support their teaching, and their opinions about the top five knowledge and proficiency domains required for effective Deaf Interpreting.

Focus Groups Data. Two focus groups were held, with six participants in each. One focus group was held in Los Angeles and another at Washington, DC. The groups were conducted in American Sign Language and video recorded.

Outcomes and Findings of the Research. Participants examined Deaf interpreting practices, with a view of defining Deaf interpreting. In the end, however, there was no common definition that emerged across the discussions. Participants identified that Deaf interpreters are providing exceptional services that are linguistically and culturally not possible for non-deaf interpreters to offer. They also explored the types and duration of learning events that are meaningful for Deaf interpreters and the top five knowledge and proficiency domains required for effective practice.

The participants also identified several aspects that need to be addressed if the field of Deaf interpreting is to continue to grow:

• There is a need to educate the public about the need to use Deaf-hearing teams of interpreters.

- There is a need to define the role of the Deaf interpreter and work towards a common understanding of the role.

- There are opportunities to identify the domains and competencies that effective Deaf interpreters possess and then to build a national curriculum to provide a standard approach to the teaching of Deaf interpreters.

- There is a need for on-going research to inform teaching practice.

- There is a need for teaching materials that are designed specifically for teaching Deaf interpreter.

- There is a need to examine the CDI test with a view to examine barriers to success.

Based on the data analyzed for this report, next steps were explored that could be taken by the NCIEC. The next steps included working towards a common definition of the role of a Deaf interpreter, and to begin identifying the competencies needed for effective practice. As well, it was suggested that NCIEC explore a national approach to training Deaf interpreters in order to address the core competencies and provide a common curricula and set of training materials that could be delivered at several regional centers. In addition, there was support for the NCIEC's work with RID to address some of the challenges that appear to be barriers for Deaf Interpreters in achieving credentials. Finally, the participants identified the need for on-going research and suggestions have been made for potential research projects.

Introduction

The following report has been prepared for the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC). This report describes the findings of focus groups that were conducted in December 2007 with Deaf Interpreter Educators. Two focus groups were held with invited participants from the United States and Canada. One focus group was held at Washington DC, and the other at Los Angeles, California.

A total of six males and six females participated in a brief on-line survey and the focus group meetings. Seven participants identified themselves as Deaf, four participants identified themselves as hearing, and one participant identified as Deafblind.

The reported educational backgrounds of the participants were: 3 participants possessed PhDs, 6 participants had a Masters degree and 3 participants had a Bachelor's degree. The participants reside in Arizona, California, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, and British Columbia, Canada. Eight of the participants possessed RID certification and three participants possessed ASLTA certification. One other participant did not possess any certification.

The following table reports the years of experience, as reported by 10 out of 12 of the participants.

Table One: Years of Interpreting Experience

Years of Interpreting Experience	Number of Participants	Percentage
Less than 3 years	1	10%
6-10 years	1	10%
11-15 years	3	30%
16+ years	5	50%
Total	10	100%

Table Two reports the number of years teaching Deaf Interpreting.

Table Two: Years of Teaching Deaf Interpreting

Years of Interpreting Experience	Number of Participants	Percentage
Less than 3 years	1	9%
3-5 years	5	45%
6-10 years	3	27%
11-15 years	1	9%
16+ years	1	9%
Total	11	100%

The following table reports the age range of the participants.

Table Three: Age Range

Age Range	Number of Participants	Percentage
30-39 years	3	25%
40-49 years	7	58%
50-59 years	2	17%
Totals	12	100%

The focus groups explored several areas of effective practices, including defining Deaf Interpreting, what models and approaches have worked well in educating Deaf interpreters, what models and approaches have not worked well, and what educators envision for the future.

Deaf facilitators conducted the focus groups through the use of American Sign Language. The interactions were video recorded and transcribed in written English during the sessions. Following the sessions, ASL-English translators compared the notes to the video recording to verify the accuracy and completeness of the transcriptions. The transcriptions were then supplied to an independent researcher for analysis. The data analyzed for this report included:

- Video-taped proceedings of both meetings

- English transcriptions of both meetings

The report is organized in the following manner:

- Section 1 addresses the West Coast Focus Group;

- Section 2 addresses the East Coast Focus Group;

- Section 3 provides a discussion of the themes that emerged across both focus groups;

- Section 4 addresses the summary and conclusions.

The report identifies the key findings, followed by subsequent themes related to the broad key area. As a report convention, when participants are being quoted directly, their message appears in italics and is indented. Finally, the participants often referred to Deaf Interpreters as "DIs," and as such that text convention is also used in this report.

SECTION ONE: West Coast Focus Group

A total of six educators participated in this meeting, including four Deaf interpreters educators and two non-deaf interpreter educators. For the purposes of this report, the findings and emerging themes have been structured into the following broad categories. The key findings below are not ranked in order.

1.0   Definitions of Deaf Interpreting

    1.1 Multiple Definitions of a Deaf Interpreter Roles and Skills

    1.2 Labels

    1.3 Ethical Standards

    1.4 Day to Day Realities

2.0   Effective Educational Practices

    2.1 Funding for DI Training Events

    2.2 Recruiting Participants

    2.3 About the Participants

    2.4 Expectations of Participants Taking Training

    2.5 Expertise of Deaf Interpreting Educators

    2.6 Teaching Goals

    2.7 Many Paths to becoming a DI/DI Educator

    2.8 The Wish List

The following are the key findings for the West Coast Focus Group.

1.0   Definitions of Interpreting Role and Skills

Participants were asked to identify their definitions of Deaf Interpreting including the role and skills that Deaf interpreters bring to the work. The responses can be categorized into the following themes.

Theme 1.1: Multiple Definitions of a Deaf Interpreter

There are multiple definitions of the role of the Deaf interpreter, ranging from:

- Working as a member of a team to provide effective interpretation to meet the client's needs;

- Working as an advocate within the interpreting context;

- Addressing the linguistic, cultural, and power dynamics of the situation;

- Acting as an educator in the situation.

Deaf Interpreters share the Deaf world experience with their consumers in ways that hearing interpreters will never be able to do and as such should be viewed as specialists.

Theme 1.2: Labels

Effective Deaf Interpreters must be bilingual in ASL and English. Most participants want to be identified as ASL-English interpreters rather than as Deaf interpreters or Deafblind interpreter, similar to how spoken language interpreter's deal with definitions based on language use. In the words of one participant:

> *"If we do that, it is a way we avoid the whole Deaf interpreter, Deaf-Blind Interpreter, etc. We are all interpreters and those are the languages we deal with, regardless of whether we are Deaf or non-deaf."*

Several participants likened Deaf Interpreting to the concept of being a member of a relay team. They compared their experience to what they see with Spanish-English relay teams while working with consumers from Spanish speaking countries, where there is a need for more than just a Spanish-English interpreter to bridge the cultural differences.

One participant noted:

> *"This model means the Deaf interpreter is lead interpreter and the hearing interpreter is the relay interpreter providing interpretation for the lead interpreter."*

Theme 1.3: Ethical Standards

Several participants questioned the RID Code of Professional Conduct[1] (CPC) and how it applies to Deaf Interpreters.   Throughout the discussion, the Deaf interpreter educators commented how Deaf interpreters are very focused on achieving meaning based work, in whatever form that takes, for the Deaf consumers they work with. They perceived this as something that non-Deaf interpreters do not know how to do, or are uncomfortable doing.

In the words of one participant:

> *"Are we really 'code breakers?'   I think most of us find ways to meet the clients needs and that may not be within the RID CPC guidelines, but it is what is required."*

Theme 1.4: Day-to-Day Realities

Participants expressed frustration that hearing people who hire teams do not understand the function of the Deaf interpreter and why they have to pay for two people to do a job that they had previous thought possible to be done by one hearing interpreter.

> *"How to describe the use of Deaf-Hearing teams is challenging – we need to have a better way for non-deaf/non-initiated consumers to understand what we are doing."*

Some participants suggested that Deaf interpreters are specialists, and as such, they should be paid more than the hearing interpreters and be respected for their specialized skills.

Finally, some participants explored the challenges among some Deaf interpreters in maintaining boundaries that are appropriate for interpreter, and yet demonstrate the sensitivity towards the Deaf consumer in the interpreted interaction. One of the boundary challenges cited in the focus group conversation was that of helping Deaf interpreters to separate the role of an advocate from that of an interpreter.

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[1] All participants referred to this as the RID Code of Ethics but it is understood to mean the current Code of Professional Conduct.

2.0 Effective Educational Practices

Participants were asked to explore aspects of providing educational training opportunities for Deaf interpreters. The responses can be categorized into the following themes.

Theme 2.1: Funding for DI Training Events

There are multiple ways that training has been supported, including government grants (both State and Federal), grants through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), cost recovery planning, and sponsorship from video relay service providers.

Theme 2.2: Recruiting Participants

One process that appeared to be in common among all participants: Deaf Interpreters are often recruited by other Deaf Interpreters, based on the demonstration of potential. Other recruitment strategies included advertising in the Deaf community and through local RID chapters.

Theme 2.3: About the Participants

Participants indicated there is no "typical participant" in their trainings. Some programs offer screening of participants prior to being recommended for advanced training, and other participants begin with basic workshops. One challenge with the basic workshops is that some participants do not want to seriously pursue becoming a DI, but are simply interested in learning more about what Deaf Interpreters do. Participants identified the need to have separate information sessions for that level of community awareness.

Trends: participants indicated that they are seeing growing numbers of women, and adults moving towards retirement, often based on previous employment history as teachers or teaching assistants. The adults are looking for additional part-time income from interpreting.

Participants also indicate an absence of diversity in several of the training events, citing that there are few Deaf interpreters from visible minorities, despite large numbers of Deaf community members from the Black, Asian-Pacific, and Hispanic communities.

Finally, participants identified that working as a Deaf Interpreter in some communities means also requiring the skills to work with Deaf-Blind communities, and this must be included in training.

Theme 2.4: Expectations of Participants Taking Training

Focus group participants indicated that many people take the training with the goal of becoming a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), and that often this is an unrealistic goal based on the participants growing up in mainstream education settings, and learning ASL and Deaf community norms later in life. Other participants said that workshop attendees often want to learn about the interpreting process, and want to provide services that can address the problem of unqualified and/or unskilled ASL-English interpreters working in communities.

> *"Sometimes people change their mind after taking the training and don't pursue Deaf Interpreting work as they realize it is a long and challenging process."*

Theme 2.5 Expertise of Deaf Interpreting Educators

Participants were asked to identify their areas of expertise and what they hope to impart through their teaching.

Ethics and Role Clarity

Several participants felt that their strength as educators related to their ethical foundations and their abilities to help workshop attendees to recognize the role differences between being an interpreter versus that of an advocate.

Visual-Gestural Communication Systems

Some participants suggested that their strength is based on knowing how to communicate with others who rely on gestures as opposed to standard forms of sign language.

Effective Teaching Strategies

All participants agreed that their strengths included being able to draw on their history and experiences to bring forward examples, and being patient and supportive of student growth. Knowing how to sequence activities, manage time, working in a co-teaching arrangement, and being able to assess the quality of the work were other strengths mentioned by participants. All participants emphasized that the most effective model of teaching is face-to-face for Deaf interpreters.

"I chase the meanings – I make sure students understand and go at their pace."

As well, all participants stressed that teaching must be a blend of theory and practice, with opportunities to explore the learning and reflect on their progress.

There was strong agreement that workshops that are 3 or 4 days in length, and offer full day trainings provide the most significant learning environment for change and growth.

Interpreting Process Models

Some participants suggested that their expertise focused on knowing how to teach the cognitive approaches to understanding how to deal with the thinking and translation processes required to produce an effective interpretation.

Theme 2.6 Teaching Goals

All participants agreed that being able to give workshop participants a clear understanding of what it means to be a DI and how to effectively interpret is essential. They want to impart the message that the interpreting field is dynamic and ever changing. They also identified that it is important to help people separate themselves as Deaf Interpreters from their own experience as consumers of interpreting services.

"I like to give them a balance of fear and hope. I want them to continue to grow and experience more from having a balance of respect and hope."

Theme 2.7: Many Paths to Becoming a DI and DI Educator

Participants reflected on how it was that they became a DI and a DI educator. What is clear in the stories is that there have been multiple paths to becoming a Deaf Interpreter and subsequent educator. Some of the paths have included:

"I was asked to interpret at a state conference and was told I was good and clear. Then I started volunteering, and from there became an established DI in my home community."

"I worked as a Deaf-Blind interpreter while attending Gallaudet. I then started to interpret in courts, and from there was asked to co-teach…its been great."

"As a teacher I taught workshops for hearing people and we had a few Deaf people join in …after going through the workshops I realized the need for them to be specialized DI training. My co-teacher and I have been teaching ever since."

"I grew up using two signed languages and began doing legal interpreting from time to time. Now I am at CSUN and saw the need for training for Deaf Interpreters so we began teaching that content."

"I was on the swimming team from Canada and we went to West Germany. I was asked to interpret between the head coach and the assistant coach. Later I began to teach ASL, and people told me I should be a DI, and that started me on the path."

Theme 2.8: The Wish List

Participants reflected on the additional training and resources needed to support their development as educators:

- Research and evidence to build training upon.

- Models of practice – video/live models in workshops.

- Emphasis on translation process, handouts on cognitive processes.

- Deaf Interpreter education embedded in a 2 or 4-year program.

- Some countries use 10-week programs (twenty hours per week) that are intense and offer a solid foundation of training – this model seems useful and culturally appropriate.

- The RID CDI process with the minimum requirement of 16 hours of training is insufficient and should be restructured. Suggestions for restructuring the process included creating a program with a focus on translation studies, ethical behaviors and decision-making, and practicum or internship opportunities.

- Materials produced in ASL and not written English.

- How to work with Deaf consumers who are struggling with ESL issues.

- Market the role of DI effectively to realize the additional setting where they could work, example – school settings where they could assess interpreters and support their language development or work as full-time translators – print to ASL on websites, media production, etc.

- There are varying views of whether Deaf interpreters need to be fluent in written English, or whether they need to have demonstrated abilities in both signed languages and gestural systems and their English fluency is less important.

- Training for DI's about the linguistics of ASL – if Deaf interpreters know more about their language they will be more effective interpreters.

Theme 2.9: Resources Used Most Often

Participants discussed what resources helpful:

- American Translation Association materials.

- National Clearinghouse for of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM).

- Gallaudet University's Deaf Mosaic programs.

- Commercially available products, for example materials produced by Sign Media Inc and Sign Enhancers.

- Written materials for sight translation work – ex: applications for passports, health care, insurance, etc.

- Deaf Way video material that shows people from diverse cultures.

- Conferences like CIT and American Translators Association events.

Theme 2.10: Measuring Student/Participant Success

Participants explored how they, as educators, measure success among the participants or students they teach. While there was a common feeling that measuring success is very challenging within the workshop format, in longer training it is possible to see success through practical exercises, written tests, and case study discussions. It was also suggested that diagnostic videotaped assessments could be another strategy to assess student performance. Finally, it was mentioned that mastery/non-mastery is far better for adults than percentages and marks. Feedback on performance is critical, and teaching interpreters to self-assess is also crucial.

Theme 2.11: Barriers to Effective Programming

Participants examined the barriers that prevent programming from being effective. These included:

- Limited practice and work opportunities.

- Attitudes of hearing interpreters who do not want to work with Deaf interpreters, or those who work with them but demonstrate a superior attitude about their own knowledge and discount the knowledge of Deaf interpreters.

- Attitudes of Deaf interpreters who do not want to work with hearing interpreters based on their experiences as Deaf consumers.

- Deaf interpreters with insufficient understanding about the linguistics of ASL.

- A common understanding among Deaf interpreters about the boundaries needed by interpreters.

- Lack of materials to support effective teaching.

Theme 2.12: Future Education – Creating the Ideal

Participants brainstormed the ideal spectrum of education and experience required to prepare Deaf interpreters to work effectively:

- Summer Institutes and regular workshops offered during the year so that the training is regular and sustained; choose a center such as CSUN to facilitate the training; formalize the training processes so that there is a national standard.

- More research on the benefits of Deaf interpreting (ex: Centre on Emergency Plan Internet has some research that suggested Deaf participants scored 25% better on tests because the information was transmitted through Deaf interpreters).

- Create work opportunities by adjusting laws and policies. For example, assignments with children must be performed with Deaf interpreters, Emergency 911 services offered with DI's on videophone, Video Relay Services also could be using Deaf interpreters

This concludes the reporting of the key findings and themes for the West Coast Focus Group. The next section addresses the East Coast Focus Group.

SECTION TWO: East Coast Focus Group

A total of six educators participated in this meeting, including three Deaf interpreter educators, two non-deaf interpreter educators and one Deafblind interpreter educator. For the purposes of this report, the findings and emerging themes have been structured into the following broad categories. The key findings below are not ranked in order.

1. Definitions of Deaf Interpreting

The following are the key findings for the East Coast Focus Group.

1.0   Definitions of Interpreting Role and Skills

Participants were asked to identify their definitions of Deaf Interpreting. The responses can be categorized into the following themes.

Theme 1.1: Multiple Definitions of a Deaf Interpreter

There are multiple definitions of the role of the Deaf interpreter, ranging from:

- A Deaf person who facilitates communication between two languages, or even two forms of language. For example, working between a visual representation and a tactile one, or a gestural form of communication and a formal language.

- A Deaf person who brings training, experience and formal ethics to the work setting, addressing the linguistic and cultural needs of the clients.

- A Deaf person that ensures equal communication occurs, making sure that meaning is conveyed that is particular to the communication event.

- Deaf interpreters work into their native language, ASL, just as a spoken language interpreter works primarily into their native language.

2.0   Effective Educational Practices

Participants were asked to explore aspects of providing educational training opportunities for Deaf interpreters. The responses can be categorized into the following themes.

Theme 2.1: About the Participants

Participants indicated that the participants are predominately Caucasian and there is a real need for the participants in the training to reflect the diversity within the Deaf community. In some large urban centers like Washington, DC, there is diversity among the participants (i.e., community members who are representative of the Black, American Indian, Gay and Lesbian communities). Some focus group participants also noted a trend that 80% of workshop participants also possess college education.

There was agreement among the focus group participants that often participants have had deaf-blind interpreting experience, and that often there is a lack of understanding about the linguistics of ASL. As well, there was agreement that often it is the Deaf person with limited formal education who makes the better Deaf interpreter.

Participants noted changing trends: It used to be that Deaf interpreters came from residential school programs, and now there appear to be more deaf participants from mainstreamed educational environments. This can mean that their ASL is not strong, however some can be successful and develop the intuition needed and others cannot. It was also noted that most of the participants taking training already have interpreting experience.

Similar to the West Coast Focus Group, there was mention that several Deaf people approach becoming a Deaf interpreter as a second career, as something that can take them in a new direction.

Theme 2.2: Funding for Deaf Interpreter Training Events

There are multiple ways that education and short-term training has been supported, including government grants (both State and Federal), grants through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and its chapters, cost recovery planning, and sponsorship from video relay service providers. There has been some support from the Canadian government and the judicial system to support training.

As well, educational institutions like Gallaudet University offer both a bachelor and master's degree in interpreting. Three Deaf students will graduate in May 2009. There are other centers offering specialized training in working in interpreting for Deafblind people, and legal training. The University of Southern Maine has courses available as well.

Theme 2.3: Current Program Offerings

The participants deliver the training in a number of different formats, ranging from semester long courses, summer programs, weekend workshops, and weeklong intensive programs. As well, educators spoke of informal mentorship that takes place on an on-going basis.

Theme 2.4: Expertise of Deaf Interpreting Educators

Participants were asked to identify their areas of expertise and what they hope to impart through their teaching.

Fluency in English and ASL and Interpreting Skills

Some participants felt that their strength in ASL and English was an important foundation, and coupled with that, the ability to effectively interpret.

Highly Organized

Some participants suggested that their strength centers on knowing how to develop and coordinate creative educational opportunities so that DI's can grow and learn, and how to assess student learning.

Knowledge of Limitations

Some participants suggested that one of the important strengths needed by all educators is to know one's limitation as a teacher.

Medical Terminology in ASL and English

One participant suggested that his expertise focused on training that specializes in medical classifiers and translation work based on medical processes and procedures.

Theme 2.5: Many Paths to Becoming a DI and DI Educator

Participants reflected on how it was that they became a DI and a DI educator. What is clear in the stories is that are multiple paths to becoming a Deaf Interpreter and subsequent educator. Some of the paths have included:

> *"I did not set a goal of becoming a teacher. Working and training as a CDI led me in their direction where I learned to teach while learning more about being a DI."*

> *"I was mentored by another CDI, so became a DI first."*

> *"I was teaching ASL at a university and was encouraged by colleagues to become a Deaf Interpreter, and then to combine that with my teaching."*

> *"I started in 1983 by taking training for Deaf-hearing teams...it wasn't officially CDI training. Training was limited in those days, however the process and benefit of working with Deaf and hearing teams was becoming clear in legal settings and that led to more training."*

> *"I began as a Deafblind interpreter although I never saw myself becoming a professional interpreter. However, my interest in the field grew and I expanded my experience to include other settings such as platform and legal interpreting. Later, I realized not everyone is suited to becoming a CDI just as I have come to realize that platform and legal interpreting doesn't align with my interest..."*

"I came to the work by working with Deaf interpreters and have benefited tremendously from that experience. With that I have witnessed the variety of skills and experience levels among Deaf interpreters."

Theme 2.6: Surprises within the Teaching Work

Participants commented that the following aspects have taken them by surprise when teaching:

- Lack of motivation among some participants – appear less committed than hearing interpreters.

- Despite encouragement, some participants will withdraw indicating the process of interpreting is "too difficult" or they are not cut out for the job.

- Having the Code of Professional Conduct make sense to Deaf interpreters and having them apply it consistently to case study examples.

- Inappropriate attitudes of some of the participants.

    In the words of one participant:

    "A nice surprise is when a Deaf student finally gets it and applies his or her understanding in future situations."

Theme 2.7: The Wish List

Participants reflected on the additional training and resources needed to support their development as educators:

- Research and evidence to build training upon.

- Models of practice – video/live models in workshops; videos with captioning and scripts similar to the interpreting models for hearing interpreters.

- Emphasis on translation process and mapping skills as applied to Deaf Interpreting.

- Deaf Interpreter education where Deaf and hearing interpreters take their training together in order to learn how to effectively team interpret.

- Some countries use ten-week programs (twenty hours per week) that are intense and offer a solid foundation of training – this model seems useful and culturally appropriate.

- Concise and clear materials to describe the RID testing process for CDI's.

- Materials produced in ASL and not in written English.

- Specialized training for medical, conference, one-to-one interpreting, etc.

- Consistency among the teaching practices of Deaf Interpreting educators.

- Training for Deaf Interpreters about the linguistics of ASL – if Deaf interpreters know more about their language they will be more effective interpreters.

Theme 2.8: Resources Used Most Often

Participants discussed what resources that are helpful:

- RID course packages with information on the testing processes.

- Comedy materials designed to help interpreting students perform text analysis embedded with cultural references.

- Humphreys, Linda (2004). *The Sign Language Interpreter's Handbook*. S Brentwood, CA. Sign Language Interpreting Media.

- Field trips to medical facilities.

- Commercially made videos from Sign Media, Inc and Sign Enhancers.

- Mindess, Anna (1999). *Reading Between the Signs*. Yarmouth, MB: Intercultural Press.

- Videotaping translation projects for self-analysis and review.

Theme 2.9: Measuring Student/Participant Success

Participants explored how they as educators measure success among the participants or students they teach. Educators who teach courses lasting several weeks identified using rubrics and individual feedback sessions with students in order to determine progress. Others suggested that passing the RID written exam is a measure of success. Other suggestions included weekly logs and reflective journals, giving personal feedback on assignments.

Theme 2.10: Barriers to Effective Programming

Participants examined the barriers that prevent programming from being effective. These included:

- Disparity in the educational experiences between Deaf and hearing interpreters presents challenges when planning educational events.

- Attitudes of Hearing interpreters who do not want to work with Deaf interpreters or do not see the need for a DI, and/or demonstrate a superior attitude about their own knowledge and discount the knowledge of Deaf interpreters.

- Attitudes of some hearing interpreters and educators that perpetuate societal oppression towards Deaf interpreters.

- The Deaf community as a whole does not understand the need for and benefits of working with a CDI.

- Lack of funding.

- Interpreter Education Programs need to be designed for inclusion of both Deaf and hearing learners so that they can take their education together, and to create a rich learning experience.

- Some computer labs that require an advanced level of knowledge of computer technology can result in frustration and wasted time for students.

- Lack of materials to support effective teaching.

- Some college and university educators do not have proper university credentials and other skilled educators are not able to meet the criteria for employment.

- The degree requirement for educators working in two year and four-year institutions varies.

Theme 2.11: Future Education – Creating the Ideal

Participants brainstormed the ideal spectrum of education and experience required to prepare Deaf interpreters to work effectively:

- Face-to-Face education is critical. If some programs are to be delivered on-line it must be through use of video conferencing so that ASL is used as the language of instruction and it is still face-to-face, but in an on-line setting.

- Sequence of workshops that build upon each other, and are tracked accordingly.

- Specialized training on Legal Interpreting and Deafblind Interpreting.

- Seek input from DI's who have been unsuccessful on the RID exam and design training to address those needs. Ask RID to release information regarding prominent areas of need that they see based on test-taker performance.

- Specialized training for those wanting to be educators.

- Greater collaboration at the national level where Deaf interpreter training programs are "feeds" into hearing interpreter programs.

- Create 10 centers nationwide that share a standardized approach; obtain federal funding so that the opportunities are endless.

  "My hope is that our future sees Deaf people seeking Deaf Interpreting as a career choice rather than just falling into the field."

SECTION THREE: Themes Across Both Focus Groups

While both groups were presented with the same questions, the tenor and responses of the groups varied.

In Common:

- What is clear across the data of both focus groups is that there are multiple definitions of what the work and the role of the Deaf Interpreter is, and while there are similar ideas being expressed in both focus groups, there is no standard definition of Deaf interpreting that emerged in this research process.

- When discussing effective educational processes, both groups were able to highlight the need for greater diversity among the participants taking training to become DI's.

- Both groups are seeing trends of people viewing DI work as a second career or a career after retirement from working in educational settings.

- The funding that has supported learning events was common across the two groups.

- Both groups highlighted the fact that there is a need for public education about the need for and the benefits of using Deaf interpreters.

- While there are multiple pathways to becoming a DI and to becoming an educator, there was a common thread of Deaf Interpreters being recruited to the work by other Deaf Interpreters based on their linguistic and cultural knowledge. Another common route for becoming a Deaf interpreter seems to have been the opportunity to work with Deafblind consumers.

- The wish list created by both focus groups centered on needing more research to inform teaching, greater variety in Deaf-friendly materials that are in ASL, the need for samples of effective models of practice in a variety of settings with a variety of consumers, and to standardize the teaching approach and curriculum for training DI's across the country.

- Both focus groups emphasized the need for education for DI's to be offered in face-to-face formats, stressing that on-line learning has not been suitably developed to make the instruction through ASL effective.

- Some of the barriers to effective programming were very similar across the two focus groups, including the lack of work opportunities, attitudes of hearing interpreters towards working with Deaf interpreters, Deaf people becoming interpreters without a solid understanding of the linguistics of their own language, the unrealistic expectations of some participants who may not have the language skills to become an effective DI, and funding to support training.

- Both focus groups identified the need for opportunities to have Deaf interpreters take full interpreter programs at either the AA or BA level.

- Both focus groups identified the need for core competencies, followed by specialized training for particular settings.

- When envisioning the future, there was a common desire for a standardized approach to training Deaf Interpreters that could be offered at centers throughout the United States.

- Within the on-line survey, participants identified the top five knowledge domains they believed were crucial for Deaf interpreters. These were: Interpreter Role and Responsibilities; Professional Ethics; Theories of Interpretation and Translation;

Dynamics of Cross Cultural Interaction; and Subject Matter Knowledge (e.g. medical, mental health, and legal).

- Participants were also asked to rate the top five proficiencies that are most important for Deaf Interpreters to be effective. The five identified were: making ethical decisions; demonstrate a range of language and communication skills in order to meet the diverse language needs of clients; demonstrate the appropriate interpreting methodology for the situation (i.e. consecutive and/or simultaneous interpreting and sight translation); self care and establishing boundaries; and engage in professional development and continuing education.

***What Differed*:**

- The West Coast group had much more dialogue about the nature of the Deaf Interpreter's role, and expressed varying opinions about the role including or not including advocacy work.

- The areas of teaching expertise varied among the educators and across the groups.

- There were varying views about whether DI's need to be bilingual in both written English and ASL in order to provide effective interpretation. Some participants felt the requirement of written English proficiency was less important than having ASL and visual-gestural communication systems as a DI's main strength.

- The resources used to teach DI's varied among participants and between the focus groups.

- There was greater emphasis on the qualifications of educators working with Deaf interpreters in the West Coast focus group.

- The East Coast focus group stressed the need to teach to the RID exam, where the West Coast focus group questioned the testing processes and suggested eliminating sections of the exam.

SECTION FOUR: Discussion of Findings

Focus group participants throughout the United States and Canada share many of the same views. Many feel anxiety about the role of Deaf interpreters and the lack of clarity among some Deaf Interpreters regarding advocacy versus interpreting. Deaf Interpreters recognize there are opportunities for increased levels of employment within the Deaf and Deafblind communities, as well as within Video Relay Services. Often Deaf Interpreters are frustrated with the lack of understanding that the general public has of the need for, and the benefits of using a Deaf interpreter.

A clear theme that emerged from the consultation is the belief that Deaf interpreters provide a level of cultural and linguistic bridging that is not possible with a hearing interpreter alone. Deaf interpreters want to see their work recognized as a specialty and remunerated fairly.

Along with this, there is a strong desire to standardize the approaches to training Deaf interpreters and to have a national standard of training. There are questions about the nature of the RID testing process for Certified Deaf Interpreters and whether the test is a barrier. It is clear that the approach to training and the kinds of content offered varies widely across the country. As well there is a need for greater diversity among the participants who want to become Deaf Interpreters to reflect the diversity within the greater Deaf community.

The Deaf Educators who participated in these focus groups have a solid understanding of some of the effective approaches to educating Deaf interpreters, and expressed varying ways of measuring student success. All of the participants stressed the need for greater research focused on Deaf interpreting that can inform teaching, and the need for authentic and relevant teaching materials that can support the teaching processes.

NEXT STEPS

1. *Towards a Common Definition*: Throughout the focus groups and the on-line survey data, there are implications for the on-going development of education for Deaf interpreters. There are opportunities to explore the varying perceptions about the role of a Deaf interpreter and how it is they function in a variety of contexts. It would appear that there are varying perceptions of role, boundaries, and practices among Deaf interpreters and educators who work with Deaf interpreters. Working towards a common definition about the nature of Deaf interpreting work will be an important next step.

2. *Domains and Competencies and a National Approach to Training*: What also emerges in the dialogue is the opportunity to be creative and bold when envisioning a national approach to the training of Deaf interpreters. At the present time there are several approaches to offering education for Deaf interpreters, including workshops, intensive programs, and taking course work as part of a regular academic program.

   In addition, the training varies across the United States, with no clear common approach. The focus groups suggested that type and duration of training required by a Deaf interpreter might look different than the traditional academic programs that are currently preparing interpreters.

   In addition they suggested that a national approach that offers consistent content and quality would be the most helpful in advancing the profession, and such training could be delivered by centers of excellence throughout the United States.

   Finally, in both the on-line data and the focus groups, there is mention of the need to identify the domains and competencies needed by Deaf interpreters and to design a program that meets the unique learning needs of Deaf interpreters, while providing them with the competencies needed to perform the work well. One unanimous comment across both focus groups was that the training of Deaf interpreters requires face-to-face interaction, and there was a strong view that on-line learning would not be appropriate.

3. *Certification Issues*: The professional accreditation processes that currently exist to certify Deaf interpreters through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) were raised repeatedly throughout the focus groups, with interpreter educators commenting on elements that need to be changed. This is an area that deserves serious discussion between the professional body responsible for certifying Deaf interpreters and the community of Deaf interpreters and educators of Deaf interpreters.

4. *On-Going Research*: The participants flagged the need for on-going research to inform teaching practice. One area of research could take the form of case study analysis by taping the work of several Deaf-hearing interpreter teams working in a variety of contents in order to look at the decisions that the team makes. It would then be useful to explore how these teams approach the construction of linguistic and cultural meaning within a given scenario. These samples would offer us insight into the practices of Deaf interpreters. These same teams could then be invited to view their work and to dialogue with other Deaf interpreter teams about the nature of the work and the decisions made in those specific situations. There would also be value in examining the effective practices of the hearing interpreters who work well with Deaf interpreters, identifying those competencies and skill sets, and building them into appropriate training.

5. *Teaching Materials*: The participants identified some resources that they use however there appears to be a dearth of materials created specifically for the teaching of Deaf interpreters. Once there is a domains and competency map created, materials could be created that address these areas.

CONCLUSION

This report has summarized the data collected in an on-line survey and two focus groups with Deaf educators, conducted by the NCIEC. At total of twelve interpreter educators participated in the process, presenting diverse and interesting perspectives on this complex area of Deaf interpreting and the education needed by Deaf interpreters.