Findings of a National Survey of Deaf Interpreters
Conducted Spring 2007

NCIEC Deaf Interpreter Work Team

National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers

Executive Summary

This report contains the findings a national survey of Deaf Interpreters administered by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) Deaf Interpreter (DI) Work Team during Spring 2007. The study was undertaken as one means among many to gather evidence about the current practice of Deaf Interpreters in the United States. The survey sought to gather demographic data and information about the Deaf Interpreter's work settings and language demands, consumers, and professional development needs and aspirations. To the extent that the survey has captured key characteristics of practitioners nationwide, we offer a profile of the Deaf Interpreter. Finally, recommendations for further study and action are put forward.

Acknowledgements

Like all of the projects of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers, this study reflects the collaborative work of many:

INTRODUCTION

One of the many initiatives undertaken by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) from 2005-2010 has been devoted to investigating effective practices in interpreting performed by Deaf Interpreters (DIs). Several studies were planned including focus groups of Deaf Interpreters and of Deaf Interpreter Educators, and the national survey reported on here. The goal is to be able to describe the nature of the work and the competencies required to perform as a Deaf Interpreter. These outcomes will enable the field to build curricula and programming for the preparation and professional development of interpreters going forward.

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION, QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS

Conducted using Zoomerang online survey software, the National Survey of Deaf Interpreters was distributed through several channels including the Deaf Interpreter listserv at Deaf_Interpreter@yahoogroups.com, and the DI email lists of Regional Interpreter Education Centers. During the online survey administration, an explanatory video introduction was presented in American Sign Language to ensure clarity. To ensure wide distribution, respondents were encouraged to send the survey on to other DI that they knew.

The survey sought to answer the following questions:
- Who are Deaf Interpreters (family, education, credentials, experience, etc.)?
- What settings do they work in?
- Who are the consumers they serve?
- What are their professional development needs and aspirations?

Arroyo Research Services (ARS) compiled and analyzed the survey results that are presented in this report. This report captures the results of 196 completed surveys. This final number of 196 differs from the Zoomerang reported totals because it excludes incomplete surveys and those that did not indicate that respondent was Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

In addition, ARS conducted cross-tab analyses, which permitted us to learn more about those Deaf Interpreters who are certified through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and, conversely, those who are not. A discussion of those analyses is included where appropriate.

Because this was an online survey, results are likely generalizable to Deaf Interpreters with computer access, but may not be indicative of Deaf Interpreters as a whole. At the same time, the number of RID-certified respondents represented 66% of the total number of certificate holders on RID's roster at the time of the survey, a large response rate by any standard.

WHO ARE DEAF INTERPRETERS?

In this section, we look at geographic representation of respondents, demographics, and certification relative to educational attainment, interpreting education, family background, school experiences, and years of interpreting experience.

Geographic Representation of Respondents

Given the reach of the survey distribution, DI respondents represented all NCIEC regions as shown in Table 1, with a close distribution across the regions of the Gallaudet University Regional Interpreter Education Center (GURIEC), the Regional Interpreter Education Center at Northeastern University (NURIEC), and Western Regional Interpreter Education Center (WRIEC).

Table 1: Where DI survey respondents reside (by NCIEC region) [1]

NCIEC region	n	% of total respondents
CATIE	26	13%
GURIEC	55	28%
MARIE	22	11%
NURIEC	50	26%
WRIEC	42	21%
Canada	1	1%
Total	196	100%

We note a higher rate of response from the regions represented by GURIEC, NURIEC, and WRIEC, comprising essentially the eastern seaboard and west coast, as compared to the southern and mid-west regions represented by the CATIE Center at St. Catherine University and the Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center (MARIE). Assuming equal access to the survey across the U.S., it is likely that these numbers are indicative of Deaf Interpreters utilization from region to region. The prevalence of Deaf Interpreters in the eastern and western regions may be attributable in part to geographic distribution of Deaf and Deaf-Blind populations across the U.S. and to more complex social, educational and political forces that might promote wider use of Deaf Interpreters to achieve communication access.

Demographics

The survey included several demographic items, such as gender, ethnicity, and highest degree completed. Table 2 highlights the demographic profile of DI survey respondents.

Table 2: DI respondent demographics

Identity	n	%
Deaf	174	89%
Hard of hearing	22	11%
Gender	**n**	**%**
Female	122	62%
Male	74	38%
Ethnicity	**n**	**%**
Caucasian/White	172	88%
Asian/Black/Other	8	4%

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[1] For a listing of states represented by the NCIEC Regional Interpreter Education Centers, please visit <nciec.org>.

Hispanic	8	4%
Unknown	8	4%
Education	**n**	**%**
High School	36	19%
Associate	23	12%
Bachelors	37	19%
Masters	66	34%
Doctorate	2	1%
AA In progress	4	2%
BA In progress	8	4%
MA In progress	9	5%
PhD In progress	9	5%

Table 2 shows that Deaf Interpreters who responded to this survey were predominantly white, female, and college-educated. As many as 39% had earned, or are in progress to earn, a Master's degree. Also of great interest is that 67% have an associates degree or higher; 54% have a bachelors degree or higher.

Certification

Table 3 indicates the numbers and percentages of all respondents who were RID-certified – Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) and/or Reverse Skills Certificate (RSC) – and those holding American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA) certification.

Table 3: Interpreting certification and other credentials held

	n	%
Total respondents	196	
RID-certified		
CDI only	42	21%
RSC only	11	6%
RSC and CDI	5	3%
Total RID	58	30%
ASLTA	30	15%

Forty-two (21%) of DI respondents held the CDI only while eleven (6%) held the older certification, RSC, only. In other words, 72% of RID-certified respondents held CDI. There were only five (3%) respondents who held both the CDI and RSC certifications. Survey respondents also held credentials through ASLTA, to a lesser extent, representing 15% of all respondents.

A number of respondents mentioned that they had either held a CDI-Provisional (3) or were working towards their CDI (14) in the upcoming months. Two respondents noted that they had previously failed the written test, with one of them reportedly failing 5 times. However, the survey did not query respondents as to whether they had taken the English or ASL versions of the test, nor did it ask about incidence of repeat testing prior to passing. These questions would be worth following up on in a future survey.

In our analyses, we posed several questions to learn more about the survey respondents with certification. We examined these aspects:
- Educational attainment
- Completion of an interpreting education program
- Deaf family members
- School experiences
- Years of interpreting experience

Our analyses sought to determine whether there is any relationship between each of these variables and attainment of the CDI.

Certification and Educational Attainment
Table 4 shows the education levels of those respondents who were RID-certified.

Table 4: Education levels of RID-certified Deaf Interpreters

Education	Total n	Total %	CDI n	CDI %	RSC n	RSC %	CDI&RSC n	CDI&RSC %
High School	36	18%	9	21%	2	18%	1	20%
Associate	20	10%	0	0	2	18%	0	0
Bachelors	37	19%	6	14%	2	18%	0	0
Masters	66	34%	19	45%	4	36%	2	40%
Doctorate	2	1%	0	0	1	9%	1	20%
AA in progress	4	2%	0	0	0	0	0	0
BA in progress	8	4%	0	0	0	0	0	0
MA in progress	9	5%	2	5%	0	0	0	0
Doctorate in progress	9	5%	3	7%	0	0	1	20%
No response	5	3%	3	7%	0	0	0	0
	196	101%[2]	42	99%	11	99%	5	100%

According to the figures in Table 4, those respondents who were RID-certified held Master's degrees at a higher rate than those who are not. For example, forty-five percent of Certified Deaf Interpreters held Masters degrees, as compared to 34% of all respondents. Likewise, 36% of RSC holders and 40% of those with both certifications also hold a Master's degree. At the time of the

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[2] Rounding of percentage figures here and elsewhere may result in totals of 101% and 99%.

survey, no CDIs were working towards Associates or Bachelors degrees. Five CDI holders were working on their Masters or Doctorate degrees. RSC holders had double the number of Master's degree holders than Associate or Bachelors degrees. There is only one respondent each with a doctorate degree among the RSC holders and those with both CDI and RSC. The Master's degree was most represented among those respondents with both a CDI and RSC.

Certification and Interpreting Education
The second analysis looked at the relationship between attainment of certification and completion of an interpreting education program. Table 5 summarizes the rates at which RID-certified respondents completed interpreting education programs.

Table 5: Certification and completion of interpreting education programs (IEP)

IEP	Total n	Total %	CDI n	CDI %	RSC n	RSC %	CDI & RSC n	CDI & RSC %
Yes	31	16%	13	31%	2	18%	0	0
No	163	83%	29	69%	9	82%	5	100%
No response	2	1%	0	0	0	0	0	0
	196	99%	42	100%	11	100%	5	100%

Only 16% of all DI survey respondents had completed an interpreting education program. CDI holders completed interpreting education programs at a higher rate than RSC holders and the overall group of respondents. This is not surprising due to the dearth of DI interpreting education opportunities available during the years that the RSC was offered. As a follow-up to this question, the survey also asked those who responded, "Yes" to indicate the program name, date, and degree/certificate attained. When we reviewed the comments to this item, there was a range of responses for those who indicated, "Yes." For example, one respondent indicated "Yes" for completing a program but indicated "N/A" for degree/certificate attained. The seemingly contradictory responses may be indicative of the variety of non-academic training formats considered "programs" by Deaf Interpreter respondents (i.e. weeklong trainings, several-month workshop series, etc.) as opposed to academic degree or certificate-granting programs envisaged by the survey question.

Certification and Deaf Family Members
The third analysis compared the prevalence of Deaf family members among DIs with and without certification. Table 6 highlights the results for all survey respondents then isolates the results to show the Deaf family members of those with certification.

Table 6: Certification and Deaf family members

	Total n	Total %	CDI n	CDI %	RSC n	RSC %	CDI&RSC n	CDI&RSC %
Parents	45	23%	9	21%	3	27%	2	40%
Siblings	63	32%	12	29%	7	64%	1	20%
Extended Family	66	34%	14	33%	4	36%	1	20%
None	85	43%	18	43%	3	27%	3	60%

The majority of DI respondents had some family relationships within the Deaf community, especially extended family and siblings. Less than half (43%) had no Deaf family members. This comparison in Table 6 indicates only small differences between those with certification and the general population of Deaf Interpreters with regard to their Deaf family members, except for the higher rate of siblings among RSC holders. In addition to this analysis, we also ran a chi-square test to determine if there was any statistical relationship between attainment of the CDI and having Deaf family members. We found no statistical relationship and this is confirmed by close percentages between DI survey respondents and those who hold certification.

Certification and Schooling
The fourth analysis examined the schooling experiences of CDIs. Table 7 summarizes the schooling experiences for all DI survey respondents and highlights results for RID-certified respondents.

Table 7: Certification and school experiences of DI respondents

	Total n	Total %	CDI n	CDI %	RSC n	RSC %	CDI&RSC n	CDI&RSC %
Residential	118	60%	31	74%	7	64%	1	20%
Mainstream w/ interpreters	56	29%	13	31%	1	9%	2	40%
Mainstream w/o interpreters	74	38%	18	43%	5	45%	3	60%
Oral	46	23%	12	29%	5	45%	3	60%
Other	16	8%	3	7%	0	0	0	0

The schooling experience of DI survey respondents overall varied, with the majority of DIs having attended residential schools.[3] Fewer DI survey respondents attended mainstream settings and oral schools. Among Certified Deaf Interpreters, an even higher percentage of them attended residential schools. There were fewer CDI holders who attended mainstream and oral schools. However, RID-certified interpreters attended mainstream and oral schools with more frequency than DI survey respondents overall. In the category of "Other" settings respondents indicated Deaf day schools and self-contained programs within public schools.

Statistical tests of the relationship between residential schooling and certification/credential showed a strong relationship exists. Running the same statistical test for both mainstream experiences and oral schools indicated a weaker relationship, especially for mainstream with interpreters.

Certification and Years of Experience
Another demographic question on the survey inquired about years of interpreting experience. In Chart 1, we display the years of interpreting experience for all survey respondents.

[3] These numbers in the table differ from the Zoomerang report because we reviewed the "Other" category and matched responses to the selections where appropriate. For example, one respondent had indicated in "Other" that his schooling experience was "public school with no services." We therefore selected "Mainstream without interpreters" for this response and omitted from the "Other" category. When respondents indicated "Louisiana," "Arkansas," "St. Rita," or "American," we coded those as "residential" experiences.

Chart 1: Years of Interpreting Experience

The years of interpreting experience for DI survey respondents were almost equally spread for years three to fifteen. Those with the least experience (0-2 years) and those with the most experience (more than 15 years) each represent over 20% of the total. Overall, the years of interpreting experience were closely split between those with <8 years and those with >9 years. In fact, when we compare the ages of DI survey respondents, there was a close split between those who were 18-45 years of age and the remainder who were 46 years and older.

Years of interpreting experience and certification were found to be related. Table 8 compares the years of interpreting experience for all DI survey respondents to RID-certified respondents.

Table 8: Certification and years of interpreting experience

	Total n	Total %	CDI n	CDI %	RSC n	RSC %	CDI&RSC n	CDI&RSC %
0 – 2 years	45	23%	7	17%	0	0	0	0
3 - 5 years	22	11%	4	10%	0	0	0	0
6 - 8 years	21	11%	4	10%	1	9%	0	0
9 - 11 years	25	13%	9	21%	1	9%	0	0
12 - 15 years	23	12%	8	19%	1	9%	0	0
More than 15 years	48	24%	10	24%	8	73%	5	100%

| Not indicated | 12 | 6% | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 196 | 100% | 42 | 101% | 11 | 100% | 5 | 100% |

Thirty-seven percent of the CDIs reported having eight or fewer years of experience, compared to 45% of all Deaf Interpreters. Respondents with an RSC or both CDI and RSC tend to be more experienced than CDI-only holders and overall respondents, in general. This is likely due to CDI being a more recent certification. Looking more closely at the numbers of Deaf Interpreters with nine to more than fifteen years experience, it is apparent that the number of uncertified practitioners (i.e. Total n minus combined n for CDI, RSC, and CDI & RSC) still exceeds the number of all certified Deaf Interpreters by 28 percent.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORK CONTENT

Employment Status
Based on responses to survey items regarding employment status, DI survey respondents typically work on a part-time basis in freelance situations, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Employment status of DI respondents

	Total n	Total %
Full time	30	18%
Part-time	138	82%
Staff	34	20%
Freelance	135	80%

The majority of respondents who worked on a full-time basis were in staff roles. Consequently, the part-timers were primarily freelancing.

Work Settings
DI respondents were asked to check all of the settings in which they worked at the time of the survey. Table 10 lists those varied contexts.

Table 10: Work situations for DI respondents

	Total n	Total %
Social services	95	48%
Medical appointments	94	48%
Business meetings	81	41%
VR/Workplace	75	38%
Legal proceedings	73	37%

Mental health, community	72	37%
Mental health, in patient	61	31%
Multicultural consumers	62	32%
Prof conferences	45	23%
K-12 education	43	22%
Substance abuse meetings	44	22%
Postsecondary education	39	20%
Performing Arts	35	18%
Religious services	29	15%
Other	43	22%

Social services and medical appointments were the two most common work situations for all DI respondents. The "Other" category selected by 22% of DI respondents included Deafblind camps/events and video relay services.

The survey asked respondents to complete this sentence "The majority of my work involves…" and could choose one of the four categories listed. Even when respondents selected the "majority" of their work content, there was still quite a bit of variation, as indicated in Table 11.

Table 11: Majority of work content for DI respondents

	Total n	Total %
Legal	30	15%
Mental health	29	15%
Medical	23	12%
Other	80	41%
No response	34	17%

Specific categories selected were legal (15%), mental health (15%) medical (12%) and education (within "Other") (16%). One respondent emphasized that "they [content categories] all break down to be about even," which may be due to the high percentage of freelance workers among these DI respondents.

Working in a Team or Alone
One question sought to determine what percentage of Deaf Interpreters work alone as opposed to in tandem with a hearing ASL-English interpreter. Asked to indicate if they "work most often…a) alone, b) with a team, or c) other," 61% of respondents selected "with a team" and 29% selected "alone." In the "other" category for this item, respondents frequently specified that they worked both alone and with a team depending on the work setting. For example, DIs reported that they

worked alone for job training or text translations but worked as a team for medical settings. On the other hand, one respondent who selected "other" stated "I work alone (as CDI) with hearing team terps [sic]," while another respondent stated "Alone with hearing interpreters." In such cases, we recoded the responses as "with a team interpreter" for consistency. Nevertheless, it is clear that there were different understandings of what the survey intended by "alone," and the relatively high percentage of those who said they work alone warrants further investigation to learn about the situational factors that might drive decisions to work alone, such as settings, characteristics of Deaf consumers and other stakeholders, source language, and the interpreter's own communication abilities. Moreover, it would also be worth exploring the incidence and rationale for various team constellations such as Deaf-Hearing teams and teams of Deaf interpreters.

Referral of DIs

With regard to the consumers served, the survey asked DI respondents "Who most often decides that your interpreting services are needed?" DI respondents provided relative percentages for locating opportunities through Interpreter Referral Services, hiring agencies, Deaf consumers, or hearing interpreters. Table 12 summarizes those results.

Table 12: Decision-makers for DI services

	Avg % of Time
Interpreter Referral Services	51%
Deaf consumers	42%
Hiring agency	40%
Hearing Interpreters	32%

The decision to bring in a DI was made by various sources. On average 51% of the time, referrals for a DI to interpret came from Interpreter Referral Services. DIs received referrals from hearing interpreters only 32% of the time. However, what is not discernable from the data is how frequently hearing interpreters initiate the referral by calling in to Interpreter Referral Services to request a Deaf Interpreter.

Job Related Injury

Two additional items on the survey asked respondents about their experiences with physical injury and emotional trauma. Few DIs had experienced physical (9%) or emotional trauma (13%) as a result of their interpreting work. Again, there was no statistically significant difference in the reported experience of trauma between certified and non-certified deaf interpreters.

Languages and Communication Forms Used by Deaf Interpreters

DI respondents were asked to indicate, from a list, all the forms of communication they used in their work. DI respondents reported using several different communication forms in their interpreting work. Table 13 displays all communication forms used by DI respondents.

Table 13: Communication forms that DIs use

	Total n	Total %
Visual-gestural communication	132	67%
Low/close vision sign language	121	62%
Tactile sign language	109	56%
Translation from print material	97	49%
Trilingual interpreting	58	30%
International sign language	36	18%
Foreign sign language	35	18%
Oral transliteration	15	8%
Cued speech	4	2%

Three of the communication forms are used by more than half of DI respondents – visual-gestural communication (67%), close or low vision signing (62%), and tactile sign language (56%). Visual-gestural communication refers to the use of non-standard signs and gestures as a method of communicating with deaf individuals who are semi-lingual or a-lingual. Close or low vision and tactile forms of sign language are typically used with individuals who are Deafblind. Trilingual interpreting refers to the use of three languages in the setting. In trilingual settings, respondents indicated the third languages as Spanish, French, or Japanese. It is not clear, however, from the survey responses whether the DI respondents were using three languages themselves or were part of a team in which three languages were used. When respondents were asked to indicate which communication form they were required to use the most in their work, ASL and a combination of ASL and visual-gestural communication were most frequently selected.

DEAF CONSUMERS OF DEAF INTERPRETER SERVICES

Working with Consumers who are Deaf-Sighted and Deafblind
Asked about the consumers they served, respondents indicated that the majority of their consumers are "American born" (79%) versus "Foreign-born" (21%) and 91% of these consumers are over age 16. The general demographic profile of DI respondents' consumers was adults aged 22-65 (58%) with educational levels of K-12 (64%). Respondents also described that most frequently/regularly their consumers are Caucasian/White (73%). This is not surprising given the fact that 88% of respondents were also Caucasian/White.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents indicated that the majority of their consumers were "Deafblind," while the remaining 73% stated that the majority of their consumers were "Deaf-sighted." In Table 13 above, 62% of DI respondents reported they work in low/close vision signing and 56% reported they worked in tactile signing, both common approaches to Deafblind interpreting. For this item, respondents could only check one. Given that such high percentages of DI respondents used communication forms common to Deafblind interpreting, but only a smaller

proportion indicated that they worked with these consumers, it is likely that those who indicated that the majority of their consumers were Deaf-sighted still interpreted for some consumers who were Deafblind.

Table 14 shows the regional distribution of all DI respondents, including a regional breakout of those who worked with Deafblind consumers and of those who worked with Deaf-sighted consumers.

Table 14: Regional distribution of consumers

	% of Total Respondents	% of All Respondents Serving Deafblind Consumers	% of All Respondents Serving Deaf-Sighted Consumers
CATIE	13%	13%	14%
GURIEC	28%	28%	27%
MARIE	11%	24%	7%
NURIEC	26%	15%	29%
WRIEC	21%	20%	23%

According to Table 14, twenty-eight percent of all DI respondents who worked with Deafblind consumers and twenty-seven percent of those who worked with Deaf-sighted consumers were located in the GURIEC region. Like the percentages for the CATIE and WRIEC regions, the GURIEC figures indicate a fairly equal distribution of work between Deafblind and Deaf-sighted consumers. Compare these figures to MARIE's, where we find twenty-four percent of all those with Deafblind consumers although the relative proportion of all DI respondents was only eleven percent. On the other hand in the NURIEC region, there was less work with Deafblind consumers relative to the region's higher share of DI respondents overall.

Other Characteristics of Consumers

Another item on the survey asked respondents, "How often are you called to interpret?" for certain consumers. Table 15 summarizes the frequency for types of consumers that DIs interpreted for.

Table 15: Consumer types that DIs serve

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Frequently
Consumer uses a foreign sign language	35%	31%	22%	7%	6%
Consumer has little or no language	14%	23%	36%	15%	12%
Consumer is a monolingual ASL user (i.e. has limited English)	6%	11%	31%	30%	22%
Consumer has mental retardation	35%	29%	25%	8%	4%
Consumer has mental illness	26%	22%	29%	16%	6%
Consumer has dementia or Alzheimer's	71%	20%	6%	2%	1%
Consumer is Deafblind	16%	26%	23%	16%	18%

Table 15 shows that the most frequent/regular occurrence for DIs respondents to interpret was on behalf of consumers who are monolingual ASL users (52%) or Deafblind (34%). The majority of DI respondents (71%) "never" interpreted for consumers with dementia or Alzheimer's. Only about 13% of DI respondents worked with consumers who were over 65 years of age, which may explain the small frequency of consumers with dementia or Alzheimer's (which is most often associated with seniors).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Willingness to Relocate or Study Online

The survey asked about the willingness of DIs to relocate for or participate online in professional development experiences. Survey respondents were overwhelmingly willing to participate in online training, with 82% indicating that they would do so. They were far more interested in online training than in relocating for training. Only 41% of respondents were willing to relocate for interpreter training.

Desired Length of Training

More specific questions about professional development needs asked respondents to indicate the length of training they are most interested in. Table 16 highlights the desired lengths of training sessions.

Table 16: Desired length of training

Preferred Length of Training		
	Total %	% RID certified
1-2 day workshops	55%	33%
Individual courses	28%	15%
In-depth program (1-2 years)	17%	50%

The fact that so few DI respondents preferred an "in-depth program" is consistent with the limited interest expressed in relocating for interpreter training. It is also consistent with the fact that respondents knew that an in-depth program was not an employment requirement. It is surprising to see that only 28% of respondents preferred "individual courses" because those are the types of courses that would be most conducive to online training, in which 82% expressed an interest. However, it is possible that this question was misunderstood: "Individual courses" might have been understood to mean "individualized course", i.e. "a course for me alone."

When we cross-referenced the educational level for those indicating certain preferences for the length of training, we found that those who were most interested in "in-depth program" had already completed a Masters degree. Likewise, half of those interested in an in-depth program were already RID-certified.

Professional Development Needs

Respondents were asked about the training area of highest interest to them. Table 17 displays their responses.

Table 17: Training area of most interest

Interpreter Training area of interest		
	Total %	% RID certified
Specialty training	58%	33%
General interpreter education	27%	31%
Interpreter teacher training	15%	22%

Most respondents were interested in specialty training (58%). Table 18 summarizes respondents' desired specialty training areas and highlights (shades) the top areas of need.

Table 18: Further training needed to support DIs

	1 No Need	2	3	4	5 High Need
Conference	20%	18%	23%	18%	21%
Consumer language assessment	14%	16%	27%	21%	22%
Deafblind interpreting	18%	19%	27%	16%	19%
Education, K-12	35%	18%	19%	12%	16%
Education, college/university	35%	22%	17%	11%	15%
Ethical decision-making	16%	18%	22%	19%	25%
International sign language	18%	14%	23%	21%	24%
Interpreting process	11%	14%	24%	24%	28%
Legal	12%	9%	20%	21%	38%
Medical	8%	7%	22%	28%	34%
Mental health	10%	9%	21%	31%	29%
Mentorship	12%	12%	24%	22%	30%
Interpreting with multicultural consumers	11%	11%	23%	25%	31%
Performing arts events	30%	18%	21%	13%	17%
Professional or business meetings, conferences, trainings	22%	15%	25%	20%	18%
Religious services	50%	17%	15%	9%	9%
Social services	19%	14%	23%	21%	23%
Substance abuse meetings, treatment	14%	14%	28%	19%	24%
Visual-gestural communication	14%	13%	23%	27%	23%
VR/work place/job training	21%	16%	28%	20%	16%

When we combine responses of columns 4 and 5 to highlight the top areas of need, medical (62%), mental health (60%), and legal (59%) are the highest need areas. Half of respondents indicated "no need" for training in religious services. This expression is consistent with only 15% of DI respondents working in religious settings (see Table 10).

Deaf Interpreters as Educators
Respondents were asked if they provided training for Deaf Interpreters and 40% of all respondents responded "Yes." Table 19 shows the forms of training provided by survey respondents.

Table 19: Settings for training provided for DIs by respondents

	Total n	Total %	CDI n	CDI %	RSC n	RSC %	CDI&RSC n	CDI&RSC %
Short Term Workshops	54	72%	13	31%	4	36%	2	40%
Interpreting Education Program	11	15%	0	0	2	18%	0	0
Other	10	13%	2	5%	1	9%	0	0

For those respondents who indicated that they already provided training for Deaf Interpreters, approximately 72% were doing so in short-term workshop settings. Of these 54 respondents who were providing short-term workshops, nineteen (35%) of them were RID-certified. "Other" alternate settings where DI respondents were providing training included weeklong summer courses and one-on-one sessions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To the extent that this study has captured key characteristics of Deaf Interpreters and their work, we can offer the following profile:

- Deaf Interpreters are most commonly Deaf (as opposed to Hard of Hearing), female, and Caucasian/White. Deaf Interpreters tend to have some Deaf family member(s) and/or residential school experience. This would account at least in part for the linguistic and cultural knowledge and abilities present in Deaf Interpreters.

- The majority of Deaf Interpreters are college educated: Over half hold a Bachelors degree or higher; nearly 35% hold Masters degrees.

- The majority of working Deaf Interpreters – including most who have greater than nine years interpreting experience – are not certified by the RID. Those who do hold certification hold master's degrees at a rate higher than those who are not.

- Deaf Interpreters work in all regions of the United States, but use of Deaf Interpreters is most prevalent along the eastern seaboard and in the western region. The majority works part-time,

on a freelance basis, receiving assignments most often from interpreter referral services. The vast majority of Deaf Interpreter services are provided as a member of a team, working in tandem with a hearing interpreter.

- While Deaf Interpreters work across the gamut of interpreting settings, they are seen most frequently in social services, medical appointments, business meetings, VR/workplace settings, legal proceedings, and community mental health settings.

- The most common language/communication forms used by Deaf Interpreters are ASL, visual-gestural communication, and close or low vision and tactual signing used with individuals who are Deafblind. Sight translation from printed text is also a common task for many Deaf Interpreters.

- The general demographic profile of the consumer of DI services is that of a Caucasian/White, American-born adult aged 22-65 with educational levels of K-12. The majority of consumers are monolingual ASL users with limited English proficiency. If the Deaf Interpreter lives in the states served by the Mid-America Regional Interpreter Education Center, s/he is more likely to work primarily with individuals who are Deafblind than if s/he lives in the region served by the Northeastern University Regional Interpreter Education Center. Deaf Interpreters in other regions of the U.S. tend to see fairly balanced distributions of Deafblind and Deaf-sighted consumers.

- Deaf Interpreters tend not to have had formal interpreting education. Among Deaf Interpreters who have computer access, a large percentage would be willing to participate in interpreting education activities via the Internet. Short-term training is preferred over individual courses and longer-term (1-2 years) training. There is also interest in mentorship. Priority areas of training in order of preference are: Legal, medical, mental health, and interpreting with multicultural consumers.

- There is a large number of Deaf Interpreters providing training for others without the benefit of certification or educator training.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SURVEY/DATA COLLECTION

Just as this survey provided a good deal of descriptive information on the Deaf Interpreter, it also raised a number of questions worthy of further consideration:

- We noted that this online survey drew respondents who had computer access. The NCIEC Deaf Interpreter Work Team is planning face-to-face focus groups to gather additional perspectives.

- Responses to our question about working as a team vs. working alone were puzzling. It was unclear whether respondents were envisioning Deaf-Hearing interpreter teams or teaming among two or more Deaf Interpreters. How "team" was envisioned influenced whether respondents saw themselves working alone or not. This question should be revisited in a future study and information should be gathered about the personal and situational factors involved in working solo, as a member of a Deaf-Hearing team, and as part of a team of Deaf interpreters.

- Several questions brought out issues surrounding certification testing for Deaf Interpreters. For example, the majority of interpreter respondents were uncertified despite many years of

interpreting experience. Those that held the CDI were more likely to hold a Masters degree than respondents overall. Some respondents reported having failed the CDI test more than once. To the extent that these are commonplace among CDI test candidates, the test content and structure should be revisited to ensure that the test reflects the knowledge and experiences of Deaf Interpreters working successfully in the field.

- The NCIEC is currently involved in conducting a number of needs assessments of interpreter practitioners, interpreting education programs, vocational rehabilitation service providers, and Deaf consumers. A comprehensive comparative study of results of all of the needs assessments, including data from this current study, should be undertaken.

APPENDIX

NATIONAL SURVEY OF DEAF INTERPRETERS QUESTIONNAIRE

National Survey of Deaf Interpreters

Thank you for taking this survey. It consists of three sections, and should take you about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Section I: About You

1 Gender:

[▲▼]

2 I am:

[▲▼]

3 Age:

[▲▼]

4 Ethnicity:

- ● Caucasian/White
- ● African American/Black (non-Hispanic)
- ● American Indian/Native American/Alaskan Native
- ● Hispanic/Latino
- ● Asian
- ● Prefer not to state
- ● Other, please specify

[   ]

5 Where do you currently live? (state)

[▲▼]

6 Native Language(s)?

[   ]

7 Deaf family members? (check all that apply)

- ○ Parents
- ○ Siblings
- ○ Extended Family
- ○ None

8 School Experiences:

- ○ Residential School
- ○ Mainstream with interpreters
- ○ Mainstream without interpreters
- ○ Oral School
- ○ Other, please specify

[   ]

9 Level of education (check highest degree earned or in progress):

- ● High School completed
- ● Associates Degree completed
- ● Bachelors Degree completed
- ● Masters Degree completed
- ● Doctoral Degree completed
- ● High School in progress
- ● Associates Degree in progress
- ● Bachelors Degree in progress
- ● Masters Degree in progress
- ● Doctoral Degree in progress

10 What is your Major or educational discipline?

[   ]

11 Have you completed an interpreter training program?

[YES] [NO]

12 If yes,

Which one? [   ]

Completion date: [   ]

Degree/Certificate Attained: [   ]

13 Professional certifications/credentials you hold:

○ CDI

○ RSC

○ ASLTA

○ Other, please specify

[   ]

14 Number of years interpreting experience:

[▲▼]

Please click Submit to continue on to Section II...

SUBMIT

National Survey of Deaf Interpreters

Section II: About Your Work

15 Current interpreting work is (check one):

● Full-time

● Part-time

16 Current interpreting work is (check one):

● Staff

- ○ Freelance

---

17 Check all of the situations in which you work:

- ○ Professional conference
- ○ Education, K-12 settings
- ○ Education, college/university
- ○ Legal proceedings
- ○ Medical appointments, procedures
- ○ Mental health in-patient
- ○ Mental health, community
- ○ Multicultural consumers
- ○ Performing arts events
- ○ Professional or business meetings, conferences, trainings
- ○ Religious services
- ○ Social services
- ○ Substance abuse meetings, treatment
- ○ VR/Work place/job training
- ○ Other, please specify

[   ]

---

18 **Content:**
The majority of my work involves (please choose one):

- ○ Legal
- ○ Mental health
- ○ Medical
- ○ Other, please specify

[   ]

---

19 **Language Forms:**
Check **all of the language forms you use** in your interpreting work (check all that apply):

- ○ Cued speech
- ○ Tactile sign language
- ○ Low-vision/close-vision sign language

- ○ Visual-gestural communication
- ○ Foreign sign language (e.g. LSQ, LSM)
- ○ International sign language
- ○ Oral transliteration
- ○ Trilingual: ASL/English/ _____
- ○ Translation from print material

---

20 **Language Forms:**
The **majority** of my work requires me to use:

- ● ASL
- ● Visual-gestural (VG) communication
- ● A mix of VG and ASL
- ● Other, please specify

[_____]

---

21 I work most often:

- ● Alone
- ● With a team interpreter
- ● Other, please specify

[_____]

---

22 Have you ever experienced a physical injury as a result of interpreting?

[YES] [NO]

Additional Comment

[_____]

---

23 Have you ever experienced emotional trauma from interpreting?

[YES] [NO]

Additional Comment

[_____]

Please click Submit to continue on to Section III...

SUBMIT

National Survey of Deaf Interpreters

Section III: About Your Consumers:

24 The majority of my consumers are (check one):

- ● Deaf-blind
- ● Deaf-sighted

25 The majority of my consumers are (check one):

- ● American-born
- ● Foreign-born immigrants

26 The majority of my consumers are (check one):

- ● Below age 16
- ● Above age 16

27 How often are you called in to interpret for the following:

1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Occasionally	4 Regularly	5 Frequently

Consumer uses a foreign sign language.

1	2	3	4	5

Consumer has little or no language.

1	2	3	4	5

Consumer is a monolingual ASL user (i.e. has limited English).

1	2	3	4	5

Consumer has mental retardation (MR).

1	2	3	4	5

Consumer has mental illness.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Consumer has dementia or Alzheimers.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Consumer is Deafblind.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

For questions 28 through 33, we would like you to estimate the percentage of your time spent with each group. For each question, please make sure that your percentages add up to 100%.

28 Who **most often** decides that your interpreting services are needed?Please estimate percentages:

(your total should equal 100%)

Interpreter referral service

Hiring agency

Deaf consumer

Hearing interpreter

29 Ages of consumers: Who are your consumers? Please estimate percentages:

(your total should equal 100%)

Deaf Children (under 12)

Deaf Adolescents (12-18)

Young Adult Deaf (18-21)

Deaf Adults (22-65)

Deaf Seniors (65+)

30 Consumer education level: Who are your consumers?
Please estimate percentages:

(your total should equal 100%)

K-Grade 3	
Grade 4 – 6	
Grade 7 – 9	
Grade 9 – 12	
2-year college students	
4 year college students	
College graduate	

31 How often do you work with the following groups?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Frequently

Cued speech

1 2 3 4 5

Tactile sign language

1 2 3 4 5

Low-vision/close-vision sign language

1 2 3 4 5

Visual-gestural communication

1 2 3 4 5

Foreign sign language (e.g. LSQ, LSM)

1 2 3 4 5

International sign language

1 2 3 4 5

Oral transliteration

1 2 3 4 5

Trilingual: ASL/English/ _____
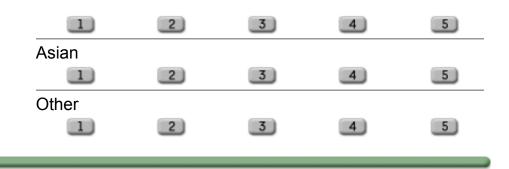
1 2 3 4 5

Translation from print material

1 2 3 4 5

32 If you selected ASL/English/_____ above, what third language do you use?

[   ]

33 Consumer special needs: How often do you work with the following consumers?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Frequently

Deaf (no special needs)

1	2	3	4	5

Deaf with mental retardation (MR)

1	2	3	4	5

Deaf with mental illness

1	2	3	4	5

Deaf with substance abuse

1	2	3	4	5

Other

1	2	3	4	5

34 If you selected *other* above, please specify.

[   ]

35 Consumer's ethnic background: How often do you work with the following groups?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Frequently

Caucasian/White

1	2	3	4	5

African American/Black (non-Hispanic)

1	2	3	4	5

American Indian/Native

1	2	3	4	5

American/Alaskan Native

1	2	3	4	5

Hispanic/Latino

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Asian

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Other

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please click Submit to continue on to Section IV...

SUBMIT

National Survey of Deaf Interpreters

Section IV: Your Professional Development

36 Would you be willing to relocate to another area for interpreter training?

YES   **NO**

37 Would you be willing to participate in online training?

YES   **NO**

38 What length training are you most interested in (check one)?

- ● 1-2 – day workshops
- ● Individual courses
- ● In-depth program (1-2 years)

39 Which training area are you most interested in (check one)?

- ● General interpreter education
- ● Specialty training (e.g. medical, mental health, legal, etc.)
- ● Interpreting teacher training

40 Rate your need for further training to support your work as an interpreter in each area:

1=No Need, 5=High Need

1 No Need	2	3	4	5 High Need

Conference

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Consumer language assessment

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Deafblind interpreting

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Education, K-12

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Education, college/university

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Ethical decision-making

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

International sign language

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Interpreting process

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Legal

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Medical

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Mental health

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Mentorship

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Interpreting with multicultural consumers

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Performing arts events

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Professional or business meetings, conferences, trainings

[1]   [2]   [3]   [4]   [5]

Religious services

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Social services

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Substance abuse meetings, treatment

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Visual-gestural communication

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

VR/Work place/job training

[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

41 Do you **provide training** for Deaf interpreters? If yes, in what settings:

○ Short-term workshops

○ In an interpreting education program

○ Other, please specify

[   ]

Thank you for your time! Please click Submit to finish...

SUBMIT ▶