National Interpreter Education Center
Vocational Rehabilitation Engagement Project

Defining the Internship Experience

Internship Implementation Guide

Developed by Trudy Schafer and Rubin Latz for the National Interpreter Education Center
The mission of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) is to expand and improve the effectiveness of interpreters through education and professional development services and resources offered regionally and nationally. For more information, see: http://www.interpretereducation.org/about/.

The National Interpreter Education Center (NIEC) serves to coordinate collaborative activities among the five Regional Interpreter Education Centers (RIECs) by: disseminating, communicating, and sharing knowledge of best practices and issues; evaluating the effectiveness of Centers’ educational programs; and providing educational opportunities, resources, and technical assistance to enhance teaching practices across the U.S. For more information, see: http://www.northeastern.edu/niec/about-niec/.

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Defining the Internship Experience
Implementation Guide

The following narrative is intended to guide interpreter education program (IEP) administrators and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) personnel to develop internship host sites at Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and related agencies within their local community. Interpreter education programs and State VR agencies—both VR-General, and VR-Blind—are mutually invested in serving persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind, and who communicate in American Sign Language.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is the division of the U.S. Department of Education charged with providing leadership, technical assistance, funding and resources to agencies supporting employment, independent living, and community involvement of individuals with disabilities. There are 80 state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies funded by RSA.

RSA also administers numerous grant programs including the Training of Interpreters for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Individuals who are Deaf-Blind which funds the centers that constitute the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers. The current cycle of (RSA) grant funding includes the requirement to serve consumers of Vocational Rehabilitation services. This VR Engagement—Internship manual is one of several concurrent, similarly aimed activities.

This manual is an outgrowth of the National Interpreter Education Center (NIEC) Outcomes Circle pilot program and is made available to all Interpreter Education Programs and VR agencies across the country. The Outcomes Circle served from 2010-2015 to foster
innovation in interpreter education through close collaboration with fifteen interpreter education programs (IEP) across the United States. A list of Outcomes Circle programs is available in Appendix A.

In addition, the NIEC developed and made available two curriculum modules that focus on interpreting in VR settings that are offered to interpreter education programs to address VR as a System and Faces of Deaf VR consumers. These modules are available at no cost at: interpretereducation.org/online. We strongly urge programs to use these modules to prepare students for the VR internship experience.

The roughly 130 Interpreter Education Programs in the United States are graduating approximately 1,000 student interpreters annually. It is not known how many of these students engage in VR-related internships or go on to work in VR settings. (Peterson, 2012 retrieved September 2012 from http://www.streetleverage.com/2012/08/new-lamps-for-old-apprenticeship-in-sign-language-interpreting/.)

Outcomes & Deaf Consumers

Though 68.1% of people without disabilities participate in the workforce, only 20.3% of people with disabilities do so. (Office of Disability Employment Policy-retrieved 2/5/15 http://www.dol.gov/odep). Meanwhile there are no reliable estimates of the number of persons who are Deaf, and Deaf-Blind currently working in America. The 80 Federally funded state VR agencies reported that 178,290 persons with disabilities had their cases closed in employment status—meaning they had gained or maintained employment with the help of Vocational Rehabilitation services, as part of an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2011. A review of the Rehabilitation Services Administration’s Federal Fiscal Year 2010 data showing “Employment Outcomes by Disability” identified a national average of 14.15% for the category of “Communicative Disorders” (which includes persons who are Deaf; persons who are Deaf-Blind may be reported separately). Individual 2010 state reports may be found at: http://rsa.ed.gov/view.cfm?rsaform=ARR&fy=2010.

In most communities, the demand for qualified interpreters available to work in Deaf communities continues to outstrip supply, as Deaf individuals participate in a wider variety of occupations than ever before, and as the proliferation of video-based relay and
The term “low functioning deaf” is common in VR literature, but is no longer the preferred term. Alternates include: “Deaf plus,” “traditionally underserved,” “minimal language skills,” or “deaf at risk.”

Interpreter Education

Toward fulfilling their responsibility to assure graduates are prepared for “life beyond the classroom,” interpreter education programs are challenged with the need to secure internships that allow those students to build on core academic skills with experiences via in-the-community internship placements where technical skills can be further refined in practical, real life applications.

Each program has unique requirements before a student may advance into a practicum or internship experience. However, at minimum, there is value in having students complete the following courses before placement in the field: Ethical Decision-making, Translation, Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpreting courses with demonstrated proficiency working from and into ASL and English, and Business Practices. The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) requires accredited programs to ensure that practicum students are supervised by qualified personnel, specifically certified interpreters, and those interpreters’ résumés must be on file with the program. This best practice should be followed by all interpreter education programs, particularly those who are contemplating implementing a VR internship initiative.
One way for interpreter education programs to keep pace, and to fulfill their mission, is to assure that they themselves are not missing collaborative partnership opportunities. State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, Community Rehabilitation Programs, specialized employment programs and Centers for Independent Living are natural sources for such collaborative efforts, as they simultaneously rehabilitate and employ persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and who benefit from sign language interpreter services.

**Practical Framework**

State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), and other, related specialized employment programs can provide Interpreter Education Program (IEP) student interns a rich array of learning opportunities, while also providing significant challenges to a successful internship experience.

VR settings offer a range of learning experiences and a range of communication styles—in the ideal, providing opportunities for observing, interacting with, and supporting a variety of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind individuals who are consumers of Vocational Rehabilitation services and work with service providers at various points in the rehabilitation process.

Supervision of student interns must be direct, and be provided by an onsite supervisor, with regularly planned review assessment feedback. Onsite supervisor(s) should be certified interpreters who may be VR employees or contractors and will work closely with IEP faculty to support the student intern’s progress. Internship options may be “hands-up” (actively-interpreting) or “observation-only,” both of which offer a very rich experience. The student intern’s developmental readiness will be carefully considered, and the type of internship assigned will be determined in consultation with IEP faculty and the host site. IEP faculty should make at least one scheduled visit to assess progress. The wide range of staff and consumer interactions, compounded daily, makes for a truly rich internship experience.
At the outset, the student intern should establish broadly stated outcome goals and detailed interim goals. An activity log sample provided by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock is included in the appendices and can be completed by the student intern with review provided by the onsite interpreting supervisor or the IEP faculty supervisor, or both. Student interns in “observation-only” placements may use or adapt this sample to bolster their observational skills, and may also find completed notations useful anticipating their own future, “hands-up” internship opportunities. Further, in “observation-only” internships, the student intern should have regular opportunities for guided review of observable workplace events, including interactions among the consumers, peers, customers and supervisors.

Though onsite supervision must be available, in a “hands-up” internship, the student intern must also demonstrate self-monitoring skills sufficient to recognize and respond appropriately to the need for clarification, repetition, support or suspension of interpreting tasks—including when to, and how to, secure help—so that interpreting is effective. An important means for fostering this awareness among interns is the use of journals or other tools for self-reflection that can be shared with faculty and supervisors on an ongoing basis.

There are several stakeholders whose views and needs should be kept in mind as students develop goals for their internships. In addition to the student, consideration should be given to the following: the Deaf consumer, hearing consumers interacting with the Deaf consumer, and the host VR agency.

Within the state VR agencies, there may be local Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) who can facilitate dialogue with the agency. Most, but not all, VR agencies have a Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf (SCD) who may also be helpful with maneuvering within the agency.
Because VR agencies differ from one state to another in their organizational structure, IEP faculty will be best served to err on the side of allowing extra time for the internship to be reviewed and approved. A Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix C, provided by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock)—if needed—very likely will require multiple authorizations. It is recommended to allow 60-90 days for review, revision and approvals.

State VR agencies in Texas, Minnesota, Arizona and Maryland have demonstrated success with a Vocational Communication Specialist (VCS) or Occupational Communication Specialist (OCS) service model of job coaching. This type of placement—providing job coaching—is not appropriate for the student intern, and is not recommended.

Many state VR agencies provide interpreter services via contract with local and regional providers such as CSD, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services agencies, and other for-profit interpreter referral agencies. VR agencies housed in Workforce Centers may offer expedited referrals and consumer-directed services via city, county, state and regional partner programs onsite. Some contracts will be exclusive, while others will not. In a 2007 survey of SCDs conducted by the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Bureau of Field Services, only 15 of the 34 responding state VR agencies employed interpreters in staff positions. Other agencies employ interpreters on a contractual or freelance basis.

There is another set of relationships and responsibilities for IEP faculty to consider. Under federal statute (the Rehabilitation Act) and under the VR State Plan (filed with RSA-OSERS, available at state VR agency websites), contractors in both the Community Rehabilitation Program and Limited Use Vendor categories (such as educational or training programs) are obligated to make their own programs and services accessible. For consumers who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and who require sign language interpreter services for effective communication, this means those vendors receiving VR funds are themselves responsible to provide the reasonable accommodation (i.e., “auxiliary aids and services for effective communication”) upon request. Here again, student intern assignments should be carefully monitored so they are neither duplicating nor supplanting the provider’s legal obligations. Whenever possible, the VR staff supervisor should verify the provider is not abusive of the student intern’s availability.
Settings & Clientele

The IEP student intern may be assigned to a variety of settings including:

- A VR office, particularly one wherein staff members or VR counselors themselves are Deaf and can provide a great many opportunities for interpreting daily staff interactions based on the student’s skillset, from water cooler conversations to active, difficult case conferencing; individual or group interviews for such things as intake and orientation to VR; individual vocational exploration and vocational counseling; meetings with an active consumer’s rehabilitation team; professional development opportunities, such as workshops or conferences or local union meetings.

- A Community Rehabilitation Program, or Independent Living Center program where a consumer may be referred for vocational evaluation (or may be employed); for developmental training in areas such as reading, writing, arithmetic, budgeting, apartment living, practice using public transit; Job Seeking Skills, including résumé writing, interviewing, understanding hearing culture. Some of the individuals referred to these programs will be more challenging to work with, particularly if they have not been successful in regular and special education, have had chronic health issues, lived in challenging family environments, have encountered remedial behavior placements and/or criminal justice systems. While disagreement persists about respectful, person-friendly language use, people with these life experiences may be variously called “traditionally underserved,”“minimal language skills,” or “deaf-at-risk.”

- Vocational or Educational Training, where a consumer may be active in learning a trade and/or pursuing an academic degree: here, “hands-up” may also include “hands-on,” interpreting lectures, labs, field trips or seminars.

- Workplace internship placement may include working with a single individual, or several; in the single example of a retail clothing store, interpreting may be within a team of peers working together to unload semi-truckloads of merchandise; sorting/organizing merchandise into a receiving area; inventorying and ticketing individual items, and then stocking those unloaded goods onto a sales floor; assisting shoppers in finding sizes; cashiering; straightening clothes on display.
racks and shelves; returning “put-backs” to stock; assisting store security with anti-theft efforts. There are also placements that may occur in other settings such as conferences, seminars, union meetings, or federal agencies where the participation of Deaf individuals may vary including leadership roles.

Cautions

Internship placement in mental health, chemical dependency, and/or correctional facilities should not be made available.

Internship performance is to be monitored toward minimizing chances of unintended consequences. Student intern learning opportunities should take place in low-risk assignments, which may yet be high-reward opportunities.

Internship placement in Video Relay Services or Video Remote Interpreting should not be made available. Live interaction and supervision is key to a successful internship experience.

Assignment of responsibility must also include authority for either IEP staff or VR host site to suspend activity, pending review with onsite consumer and workplace supervisor(s) as needed.

Evaluation

Evaluating the internship experience should be a shared experience, with each party (student intern, Deaf consumer, VR host site supervisor, IEP staff supervisor) participating in the conversation.

End Note

The student intern who secures both “hands-up” and “observation-only” internship opportunities in a state Vocational Rehabilitation agency, a Community Rehabilitation Program, an Independent Living Center, or a specialized employment program will find herself/himself enriched by exposure to a range of individual language models in a variety of communication environments. While establishing a student internship with a new community partner may prove a labor-intensive effort, interpreter education programs may well be contributing to future, sustainable growth in that locale.
The National Interpreter Education Center would like to thank Mr. Rubin Latz for his expertise in the development of this Guide. We also are grateful for his guidance in fostering engagement between interpreter education programs and VR agencies.

Several Outcomes Circle programs participated in a pilot NIEC VR internship initiative in 2013. Faculty and students from the interpreter education programs at Hinds Community College, San Antonio College and the University of Cincinnati invested time and effort that is greatly appreciated. State VR agencies in Mississippi, Texas and Ohio also participated. Linda Stauffer of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock graciously shared documentation as well as her expertise. We are grateful to all who assisted us with this effort.

APPENDICES

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NIEC Outcomes Circle Participating Institutions

Central Piedmont Community College
Hinds Community College
John A. Logan College
Mt. San Antonio College
Northeastern University
Ohlone College
Oklahoma State University
Phoenix College
San Antonio College
Suffolk County Community College
Union County College
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
University of Cincinnati
University of North Florida
University of Southern Maine
Memorandum of Understanding
Between
NAME (school or agency)
and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock

This agreement details the expectation of the NAME and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). The NAME agrees to provide Internship field experience and supervision for the Interpreter Education Program (IEP) at UALR.

Placement Site Selection
IEP personnel will approve all sites to ensure that they provide IEP students with the best opportunity for professional development. The sites will provide IEP students with experiences related to culturally diverse and exceptional populations. Mutual agreement between the NAME and UALR will be reached about site choice and placement of each Internship student.

Screening of Cooperating / Supervisory Personnel (Administrators or Interpreters)
Choice of the cooperating/supervisory personnel is a joint responsibility of the Internship placement site and the university. Criteria for screening cooperating/supervisory personnel are as follows:

Cooperating/Supervisory Personnel should:
   a. be fully credentialed in their content area(s);
   b. have a minimum of three years’ experience in their content area/professional roles;
   c. have outstanding supervisory and management competencies;
   d. provide opportunities for IEP Interns to observe, plan and practice interpreting in a variety of professional roles;
   e. agree to permit the IEP Intern an opportunity to develop the skills needed to assume full responsibility for interpreting;
   f. exhibit positive diagnostic and problem-solving approaches to most solutions;
   g. model the behaviors and attitudes recommended to IEP Interns; and
   h. cooperate in professional relationships and participate willingly in the UALR educational program.

Preparation of Cooperating/Supervisory Personnel
UALR will contact all cooperating/supervisory personnel each semester to initiate placement of students and to explain the goals and objectives of the UALR interpreter education program. The meeting will also serve to establish communication with and support for cooperating/supervisory personnel and
provide a platform for them to have input and voice in the ongoing growth of the field experiences and placements process.

**Internship Site Responsibilities**
Internship sites will ensure that cooperating/supervisor personnel follow proper supervisory procedures, including adequate evaluation and feedback both to the IEP student and to the university supervisor. On-site supervisors will align their observation/feedback with state and/or university curriculum standards and the interpreting profession.

IEP Internship students and supervisors are expected to follow all rules and regulations established by the placement site. The cooperating/supervisory personnel shall provide each IEP student and university supervisor with a copy of the most recent handbook or specific guidelines regarding rules and regulations for the site.

**University IEP Responsibilities**
UALR will provide technical support through a university supervisor who will aid in in-service, activities, supervisory activities, or other events for cooperating personnel (as determined to be useful to the site and beneficial to the education program).

UALR will ensure students placed with minors in educational or treatment centers have a current state police background check.

**Intern Responsibilities**
- UALR IEP Internship students Interns will complete 300 clock hours of supervised interpreting.
- Interns will adhere to all state and federal laws as well as follow all the policies and procedures at the internship site.
- Interns are expected to follow the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct.
- Interns are expected to conduct themselves in all matters in a professional manner.
- Interns will complete time logs and journaling requirements as outlined in the Course Outline.

**Compensation for Internship Students**
Students may use employment positions to satisfy Internship experience. If the student is hired directly by the agency, then the IEP student will be compensated as an employee. All site rules and regulations applicable to an employee will be binding on the IEP student.

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**NAME**

**SITE SUPERVISOR**

**NAME**

**SITE SUPERVISOR**
Interpreter Education Program
INTR 4970 Internship

LOG OF HOURS

Name: ________________________________

Internship Site: ______________________________

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<th>SETTING</th>
<th>TIME BEGIN and END</th>
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Total hours: __________________________
Internship Roles and Responsibilities

VR Engagement - Internship Roles and Responsibilities

**IEP**

- Designates IEP liaison for VR Internship.
- IEP curriculum includes NIEC VR modules.
- Prospective student interns are recommended and screened for appropriate matching with host site.
- Student intern receives onsite supervision and has ready access to IEP staff as arranged in advance by the IEP and VR host.
- IEP supervision visits will be scheduled in advance.
- Ensures Panic button / call for help protocol is agreed upon by all parties.

**VR**

- Designates VR staff person as liaison for VR-IEP Internship.
- VR consumers’ consent is informed, freely given, signed & witnessed, can be revoked at will and without cause (via video as needed).
- Qualified VR staff interpreters or freelance Interpreters providing on-site supervision are certified.
- VR administrative approvals secured.
- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) approval is secured, as needed.
- DHH advisory board or committee approval is secured, as needed.
- Community Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Center, or other specialized employment program (e.g., MN Employment Center, Employment Endeavors, LLC) collaborates as needed.
Resources

Blogs
Peterson, R., 08/23/12 “New Lamps for Old: Apprenticeship in Sign Language Interpreting”
Street Leverage:

Organizations and websites
Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
http://www.rehabnetwork.org
Disability Works
http://www.disabilityworks.org
Job Accommodations Network (JAN)
National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC)
Mentoring Toolkit Videos—Robyn Dean Presentations
http://www.interpretereducation.org/aspiring-interpreter/mentorship/
mentoring-toolkit/mentoring-toolkit-videos/
National Council on Disability (NCD)
http://www.ncd.gov
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
http://www.ncil.org
Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID)
http://www.rid.org
U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Helen Keller National Center:
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/helenkeller/index.html
U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Independent Living State Grants Program
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsailstate/index.html
U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsarsp/index.html
U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Supported Employment State Grants
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsasupemp/index.html

U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Training of Interpreters for Deaf Individuals
http://www2.ed.gov/students/college/aid/rehab/appintro.html

U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants
http://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsabvrs/index.html

U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)
http://www.dol.gov/odep

Your state VR agency’s website (e.g., www.positivelyminnesota.com)

  From there, you can navigate to links for local programs & information on:
  • State Rehabilitation Council
  • VR State Rule
  • Community Rehabilitation Programs and Limited Use Vendors
  • State Independent Living Centers
  • State Commissions serving persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened

Print materials


The following Institute on Rehabilitation Issues links provide access to reports on a variety of Vocational Rehabilitation topics. Generally, these papers have been funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the federal Department of Education and coordinated by the George Washington University Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program in conjunction with the University of Arkansas Center for the Utilization of Rehabilitation Resources for Education, Networking, Training and Service.

  25th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, Serving Individuals Who Are Low Functioning Deaf
http://www.iriforum.org/download/25IRI.pdf
27th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, *Providing VR in a Workforce Environment*

30th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, *A New Paradigm for Vocational Evaluation: Empowering the VR Consumer through Vocational Information*

31st Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, *Leading and Managing Change in Public Vocational Rehabilitation*
http://www.iriforum.org/download/31st%20IRI.pdf

36th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues, *The State Rehabilitation Council–Vocational Rehabilitation Partnership: Working Together Works*
http://www.iriforum.org/download/36IRIfinal.pdf


### Webinars

The National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM) has many excellent webinars and documents. At the time of this writing (February 2015), they are performing an in-depth restructuring of their site, and it is currently offline. We will update this publication when their work is finished.

It Takes a Village…Taking a Closer Look at Interpreter Education and Community Capacity; archived broadcast hosted by the CATIE Center; Paula Gajewski Mickelson moderator, with panel members Linda Stauffer, Laurence Hayes, Stacey Storme & Lauri Metcalf (8/23/12 broadcast, viewed 8/29/12 and 9/04/12). NCRTM web address pending, February 2015.