

Sign Language Interpreter License

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need an Interpreter License?

- a. Licensure is primarily to protect the profession of interpreting and its practitioners by preventing unqualified or unethical people from representing themselves as an interpreter.
- b. Licensure is also to protect consumers of interpreting services from unqualified or unethical people claiming to be interpreters.

What is the difference between certification and licensure?

Certification measures knowledge and skill level and certifies that an individual has met that standard of skill or knowledge and is given by a national certifying organization. License is given by a state and allows interpreters to practice their profession in a particular state.

If your certification is revoked then you could potentially still work as an interpreter. If your license is revoked you cannot work as an interpreter in that state.

What are the categories of the sign language interpreter license?

There will be three (3) categories of license: Licensed, Licensed-provisional, and Licensed-temporary.

What is the difference in the license categories?

License: anyone permanently working as a sign language interpreter in the state of Tennessee.

There are exceptions for two (2) groups of people working as interpreters in Tennessee

1. Individuals who only work in religious settings
2. Individuals who only work in K-12 settings

Licensed-provisional: anyone who does not qualify for a License but who intends to complete the requirements within 3 - 5 years.

License - temporary: interpreters who permanently live outside of Tennessee but who work in Tennessee for less than 90 non-consecutive days in a calendar year.

Are there any exemptions for who is required to have a license?

- Yes.
 - Individuals working as a sign language interpreter exclusively in religious settings which are exempt under Title II of the ADA
 - Interpreters working exclusively in K-12 educational settings. License for these individuals are offered through the Department of Education.

Why are Educational K-12 interpreters exempt?

The State Board of Education recently established a license for this group of interpreters. The Department of Education licensure department maintains this licensure system and all requirements.

What is required to get a license?

You must:
<input type="checkbox"/> Be 18 years old
<input type="checkbox"/> Be eligible to work in the state of Tennessee and the United States
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete a criminal background check
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide evidence of required liability insurance
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit an affidavit of intent to comply with ethical practice requirements
AND:
You Must:
<input type="checkbox"/> Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in any subject
<input type="checkbox"/> Hold an active national certification or minimum score of 4.0 on the EIPA
OR:
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide evidence of one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Proof of active certification from a nationally recognized certifying body (excluding oral interpreting certificate);<input type="checkbox"/> Proof of 4.0 or higher on the EIPA;<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of an advanced level of a nationally recognized sign language proficiency interview

- Provide five affidavits.
 - One documenting at least five years of work experience as of the day the license becomes law (estimate July 1, 2019).
 - Two from Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing individuals for whom you have worked as a sign language interpreter. These individuals may not be related to you by blood or marriage.
 - Two from licensed sign language interpreters or one agency and one licensed interpreter who have witnessed your work as a sign language interpreter and will attest to your skills. These individuals may not be related to you by blood or marriage.

OR:

- Provide evidence of active license in a reciprocal state

Will all interpreters need to have a license?

Yes. Any interpreter who does interpreting work for a fee in the state of TN excluding those that solely work in religious settings and K-12 settings will need a license.

Are Certified Deaf Interpreters and Deaf Interpreters required to have a license?

Yes

What happens if interpreting is done without a license?

The Board may impose fines on each occurrence of a person's interpreting without a license.

Are CEU's required to keep licensure?

60 hours of CEUs must be earned over the 3 years of a license and license-provisional. The Board will determine all continuing education requirements. CEUs are not required for licensure-temporary.

Will interpreters need liability insurance?

Yes, interpreters will need to prove they have liability insurance in order to obtain a license. The purpose of the liability insurance is to ensure that the interpreter is protected in the event they are taken to court by a consumer.

What is a nationally recognized sign language proficiency interview?

These are tests that evaluate a person's fluency in the use of sign language. The Board will decide what will be accepted to meet this requirement. Presently there are two commonly recognized systems - Gallaudet American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) and the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI).

What is a reciprocal state?

A reciprocal state is a state that also has interpreter licensure requirements. The Board will establish criteria to help decide which states should be included in this agreement.

Who makes up the Board?

The Board will consist of nine members. These nine citizens of Tennessee will represent the Deaf, Deaf-blind, Hard of Hearing, and Interpreting community from across the state.

- 5 licensed interpreters (one from a higher education setting)
- 2 deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing consumers of interpreting services
- 1 hearing consumer of interpreting services
- 1 hearing member at large who is familiar with the deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing and/or interpreting communities.

The governor will appoint the Board members to serve four year terms on a staggered schedule. The governor will select the appointees from a list of recommended members that will be developed by various groups closely associated with the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, and interpreting communities.

Who will be nominating members of the Board?

- Tennessee Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
- Tennessee Association on Higher Education or a coordinator of interpreting services from a college or university
- Tennessee Association of the Deaf
- Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing

Who is excluded from nominating members of the Board?

Businesses that provide sign language interpreting services for a fee.

Are the board members paid for their work?

No.

Will there be an annual fee for a license?

Yes, there will be but that has not been determined yet. The Tennessee Board of Sign Language Interpreting will set all fees. Fees will be for the sole purpose of maintaining the licensure system, no additional money will be collected beyond what is needed to maintain the system.

Will there be application fees, renewal fees, etc?

All fees related to licensure will be determined by the board itself.