DeafLink looks to provide your business and the Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals you serve or employ with more control over the choices, opportunities and cost savings that can be experienced through the interpreting services we provide such as on-site interpreting, video remote interpreting (VRI), free consultations and free in-service presentations. Therefore, this VRI best practices document is designed with information to create informed decisions. Excerpts cited below have been taken from well-respected organizations with the vision of helping to create best practices in the field of sign language, interpreting and the Deaf community. “Federal civil rights laws require covered entities to ensure effective communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. For people who communicate primarily in American Sign Language, qualified interpreter services may be necessary.” *

“When in-person, on-site interpreting services are not immediately available, technology now provides for an interim solution in the form of off-site interpreting services, called Video Remote Interpreting (VRI). VRI uses videoconferencing technology, equipment, and a high speed Internet connection with sufficient bandwidth to provide the services of a qualified interpreter, usually located at a call center, to people at a different location. VRI is currently being used in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, physicians’ offices, mental health care settings, police stations, schools, financial institutions, and workplaces. Entities may contract for VRI services to be provided by appointment or to be available “on demand” 24 hours a day, seven days per week. As such, there are significant possibilities for the use of VRI technology and services. While there are many benefits to using VRI services, there are limits to the effectiveness of VRI in some settings including but not limited to medical, legal, and court situations. In such settings, the NAD strongly believes that VRI services should be provided only if on-site interpreter services are unavailable.” *

“The NAD continues to advocate for the development of standards and protocols for the proper and effective use of VRI.”*

“Video remote interpreting (VRI) is a fee-based interpreting service conveyed via videoconferencing where at least one person, typically the interpreter, is at a separate location. As a fee based service, VRI may be arranged through service contracts, rate plans based on per minute or per hour fees, or charges based on individual usage. VRI can be provided as an on-demand service and/or by appointment. Unlike video relay service (VRS), video remote interpreting is not regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or other telecommunications legislation. Video remote interpreting is currently used in a variety of settings including but not limited to medical, educational, legal and mental health. Each setting is discussed in depth through linked documents accessible electronically by clicking on settings above.” **

Adopted 08/26/2014
“Successful VRI sessions use qualified sign language interpreters who have linguistic competence, are experienced in settings for which they will work, and adhere to professional interpreting standards. Additionally, successful VRI sessions have shared understanding of the benefits and limitations of VRI, common elements of established meeting preparation protocols, training regarding equipment and videoconferencing protocols, effective environmental controls, and compatibility of technical set-up and connectivity.” **

“Regarding benefits and limitations, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf goes on to state the following: When used appropriately, VRI has several benefits such as “providing easier and faster access to communication, access to quality services, and effective use of fiscal resources.” VRI provides communication access for situations with an immediate need for interpreters; in addition, it meets interpreting demands when qualified onsite interpreters are not available, especially in rural areas where qualified interpreters are less accessible. VRI can reduce interpreting costs through fee structures and elimination of travel and mileage costs. While providing a viable option for interpreting services, VRI is not a comprehensive replacement for onsite interpreting. In order to assure that equal access is achieved, the decision to utilize VRI should be made with input from all participants. VRI may not be appropriate for:

- Situations involving high interactivity, such as multiple participants with less structured turn-taking protocols;
- Situations with complex dialogic exchange, such as abstract philosophical interchange or dialogue with veiled intentions or multiple meanings;
- Situations involving communications of a sensitive nature;
- Situations involving individuals with a secondary disability (e.g. low vision) that impedes their ability to utilize the technology.

In addition, Deaf interpreters ... are recommended for situations involving young children, foreign-born individuals, and those who have underdeveloped language or who use idiosyncratic language patterns.” **

Questions regarding any of the above mentioned items can be addressed by speaking to a DeafLink team member.


_This document is not intended to be a source of legal assistance or guidance. Entities that have questions regarding their obligations under federal laws should consult with an attorney._