

Know Your Rights: Interpreting Services Under the ADA

This tip sheet helps Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) individuals explain their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when asking for interpreting services from government offices or businesses.

Title II: Government Services

- Covers public schools, courts, hospitals, and other government services.
- You have the right to communication that is just as effective as for hearing people.
- They must provide qualified interpreters or other aids when needed.
- They must consider your preferred way to communicate (like ASL).
- They cannot charge you for the interpreter.
- They can only say no if it causes serious difficulty or cost (called 'undue hardship').

Title III: Businesses and Nonprofits

- Covers places like restaurants, hotels, stores, and doctor's offices.
- They must provide effective communication too.
- They should consider your preference, but don't have to follow it exactly.
- They cannot use unqualified people (like family) as interpreters.
- They cannot charge you for interpreter services.

What You Can Say

- "I need a qualified interpreter to understand important information."
- "Under the ADA, you must provide effective communication."
- "I prefer ASL and need a qualified interpreter, not written notes."
- "You cannot charge me for this service."

What If They Say It's Too Hard or Expensive?

- They must prove it's a serious difficulty or cost.
- They must try other options that still work for you.
- They must explain their decision in writing.
- You can ask them to contact a disability rights office or ADA coordinator.

Tip: Stay calm, be clear, and know your rights. You can also bring this sheet with you or share it by email.

