



Media Contact:
Kelsey Cruz
4600 Valley Road Suite 420
Lincoln, NE 68510-4844
(402) 471-3593
Kelsey.Cruz@nebraska.gov

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ASL Interpreters and VRI Providers in Nebraska Must be Licensed

Any community sign language interpreter employed or hired in Nebraska, must have a license. This also includes Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) providers in Nebraska. The purpose for this legislation is to ensure proficiency and competency for sign language interpreters to provide effective communication access in the community setting. This allows the Commission to carry out the vision as a proactive and reactive state agency: to strive to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation and understanding in all aspects of mainstream for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing.

In 2005, the Nebraska Legislature passed the Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter law, *Nebraska Revised Statute §20-150 through §20-159*. **These statutes require all state agencies hire only sign language interpreters licensed by the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.** The law was created to help ensure that effective communication is provided to Deaf or Hard of Hearing consumers, as protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Effective January 1, 2016, N.R.S. §20-156.01 mandates that sign language interpreters who receive compensation for their services and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Service Providers who provide services in Nebraska to hold licensure in the State of Nebraska.

The only exemptions are:

- Interpreters working in the K-12 educational setting
- Volunteers (unpaid)
- Emergency situations (interpreters working in an emergency situation is only permitted until a licensed interpreter arrives)
- Interpreting students (must be under the supervision of a licensed interpreter)
- Interpreters working in religious settings
- Interpreters working under a VRI business license (working for a VRI provider, who is licensed).

All unlicensed interpreters, VRI Providers or complaints should be referred to Pamela Duncan, Interpreter Program Coordinator, at pamela.duncan@nebraska.gov.