



## **Statement on the Role of Sign Language Interpreters**

**June 2014**

The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) is frequently asked about the role that sign language interpreters play in the Deaf community.

Many countries are at different stages of development as it relates to interpreter training, providing interpreter services, creating national interpreter associations and offering professional development to sign language interpreters. However, regardless of the stage of development, interpreters are working to support the human rights of Deaf people. What is important that interpreters consider the following in understanding their role:

1. The role of the interpreter is to interpret between people who use a signed language and a spoken language and provide complete and accurate information both to Deaf and hearing people. In order to work effectively as an interpreter it is important that the interpreter focus on impartially performing their interpreting work. Interpreters provide interpretation including all of the content, contextual information in order to realize the communication goals of the persons involved in the interaction and improve conditions for productive communication to both sides.
2. It is also important that the interpreter be aware of how to make ethical decisions, and this includes:
  - ensuring their skills are suitable for the assignment
  - engaging in on-going professional development to better their skills and understanding of interpreting
  - doing the preparation work required to do a good job of interpreting
  - turning down work for which they are not qualified
  - turning down work when they know that they can not take an impartial stance to the interaction.
3. Deaf people have the right to represent themselves and direct their own lives. They expect interpreters to understand and be engaged in proactive activities aimed at achieving equality of Deaf people. For example, Deaf people need to represent themselves in all aspects of Board positions. Deaf people must take on these leadership roles. It would not be appropriate for an interpreter who is hearing to be the President or a leading board member of a Deaf club or association.

For further information on guidelines for ethical codes of conduct, see [www.wasli.org](http://www.wasli.org)