

CHS

A Division of
Anixtercenter

Policy & Procedure Manual for Independent Contractors

Interpreter Services and Captioning Department

I. Introduction

Established in 1916, CHS (Chicago Hearing Society) is a not-for profit organization that provides communication access, hearing and assistive technologies, and support services for persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard-of-Hearing. CHS delivers on-site and virtual interpreting and captioning services, along with other related programs.

This manual is designed to serve as a reference guide for those independent contractors who are private practice (freelance) sign language interpreters and CART writers working with CHS. This is not intended as an employment handbook for CHS/Anixter Center. Any questions or comments regarding the following policies and procedures are welcome and may be provided to the Executive Director of CHS.

CHS is located at 2017 N. Mendell Street, Suite 3ME, Chicago, IL 60614. Staff can be reached via phone at 866.251.0220, Videophone at 773.328.8788, text at 224.623.7800, or fax at 312.525.2057. Business hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Evening, weekend, and holiday staff are available using the same contact information. CHS operates 24/7/365.

Contacting CHS’s Interpreter and Captioning Services Department

Julie Markgraf, Director JMarkgraf@anixter.org	Medical clearance, direct deposit forms, W-9 updates, change of address, mentoring, licenses, issues on assignments, department feedback or questions, II access or problems
Seung Ki, Business Support Specialist SKi@anixter.org	Questions about invoices, invoice discrepancies, adding differentials
Coordinators CHSInterp@anixter.org	Assignment questions, VRI links, all job-related support, teaming questions, on-site support/questions

II. Job Offers and Obtaining Assignments

CHS offers available jobs through the scheduling platform, email, text/SMS, and phone. It is the responsibility of the Contractor to contact CHS staff if more information is needed before accepting a job offer. All Contractors are responsible for ensuring that they have the appropriate skill, clearance, and license level before accepting an offer. Contractors who wish to work in medical settings are required, at a minimum, to have a flu vaccination and TB test result not more than one year old on file.

Current Contractors with CHS are provided with a username and password for the scheduling platform. Once a job offer is accepted, the job number and pertinent information about the assignment will be available to view.

When assigned and confirmed, it is the Contractor’s responsibility to check all assignment information to resolve any issues, receive answers to any questions, or discuss any concerns about the assignment with CHS staff.

All communication with Customer is to be performed by CHS. Contractor is not to communicate with customer outside of the requested assignment time. Contractor is not to share phone numbers

or emails with Customers or Consumers.

III. On-The-Job Policies

A. Punctuality/Preparation

Contractor is expected to arrive fifteen minutes prior to assignment to locate the parties involved and/or access assignment logistics. Contractor is to remain on site for the entire contracted time unless dismissed by the requestor or on-site contact. When dismissed, Contractor must report time dismissed, the reason for dismissal, and the name and position of person dismissing. The Consumer has no authority to dismiss Contractor. When in doubt, contact CHS, regardless of day/time.

Contractor is expected to be flexible whenever possible regarding work required of them when on an assignment (ie job requested is a staff meeting, but on-site the customer asks Contractor to interpret a one-on-one meeting with the manager), especially within the scheduled time. If Contractor is unable to accommodate, CHS should be contacted immediately.

B. Communication

It is the responsibility of Contractor to inform CHS immediately if any of the following occur:

- late arrival
- assignment is missed
- Customer or Consumer contacts Contractor directly
- double booking
- conflict with any parties
- overtime
- CDI (Certified Deaf Interpreter) is needed
- issue with virtual platform/link
- job becomes a recorded/live stream event
- customer requests that Contractor be removed from assignment

Contractor is not to share their personal information with customer or consumer. If Customer requests Contractor's contact information, CHS will not provide this without prior approval from Contractor.

C. Late Arrivals

If Contractor is going to be late for an assignment, Contractor must contact CHS staff as soon as possible to report. CHS will notify the appropriate customer/requestor and team. If the report of tardiness cannot be reported to CHS prior to the assignment, contact must be made as soon as possible but not more than 24 hours after completion of the assignment. CHS staff will adjust assignments when necessary to reflect late arrivals.

A pattern of tardiness will result in lowered priority or ineligibility of assignments through CHS.

Again, it is Contractor's professional responsibility to review and confirm all assignment related details prior to the actual assignment date to avoid confusion regarding date, time, and/or location and thereby assist in arriving in a timely fashion.

D. Missing an Assignment

If Contractor is about to miss an assignment, the Contractor must report this to CHS immediately or as early as possible prior to the assignment.

If Contractor realizes that an assignment was missed, Contractor must contact CHS as soon as possible to report the error.

Contractor who knowingly fails to notify CHS of a missed assignment or who misses two (2) assignments within a six (6) month period will become ineligible for future assignments on either a temporary or even a permanent basis. Such determination will be at the discretion of the Executive Director of CHS.

E. Giving Back an Assignment

Giving back assignments with short notice is especially frustrating for CHS staff, Customers, and consumers. Repeated givebacks with short notice will result in decreased priority for future assignments.

If Contractor must give back an assignment, Contractor should not attempt to fill the assignment with a different Contractor. CHS will work to find a replacement.

F. On-Site Cancellations

When an assignment is cancelled after Contractor has arrived, Contractor must contact CHS while on site at the location. Contractor is to report the name of person, title, and contact information for the person who confirmed that the assignment was cancelled. If this is not the requestor/on-site contact, CHS must be contacted to confirm cancellation.

A Consumer cannot cancel or release Contractor. Only the requestor/customer or CHS can release a Contractor.

G. Overtime – Notification Required Within 24 Hours

Overtime on an assignment may be completed by Contractor according to Contractor's schedule but is not guaranteed. Contractor must report the name, title, and contact information of the person who authorized the overtime. If this is not the requestor/on-site contact, CHS must be contacted to approve overtime. Customers are encouraged upon booking the appointment to allow enough time for the entire assignment. If Contractor has another CHS assignment that would be affected by an overtime situation, that second assignment has priority over the first assignment.

It is generally not acceptable practice to arrive late to an assignment due to a prior assignment running overtime. Exceptions may be made in an emergency or extenuating circumstances. Contractor is to consult with CHS as soon as possible in these situations.

Assignments worked past the contracted time, referred to as ‘overtime’, will be paid in the following manner: 0-9 minutes is not payable, 10-30 minutes will be paid for 30 minutes overtime, 31-60 minutes will be paid for one hour overtime, 61-90 minutes will be paid for 1.5 hours overtime, etc. All overtime must be approved by requestor/on-site contact in order for Contractor to be paid for extra time working. Contractor must notify CHS of any overtime upon closing the job/within 24 hours of completing the assignment in order to guarantee payment.

H. Consumer Who Fails to Appear (‘No-shows’)

In the case of a Consumer who fails to appear, and it is unknown if they are on their way to the assignment, Contractor will remain on site either until dismissed by an authorized person or until the end of the assigned time. Leaving a site before being dismissed may result in Contractor forfeiting payment.

At public event platform assignments, Contractor may be required to remain onsite or provide services for the entire contracted time at the request of the authorized person or their designee. This may be requested for public relations, visibility, and/or compliance purposes. In addition, requestors do not always require that a Consumer self-disclose, hence, Contractor should continue with their work regardless of confirmation that a Consumer is in attendance.

If a Consumer fails to appear on site and a second Consumer requires communication access, Contractor will proceed to provide services assuming that the job is at the same location, same requestor, effective communication can be achieved, and entire job can be completed in the same amount of time.

I. Team Interpreting

Team interpreters are expected to work equally and professionally together. Team interpreters will rotate at a mutually agreed upon time and in a manner that is least disruptive to the assignment. If Contractor arrives to an assignment and finds that their team has not arrived by ten minutes after the assignment start time, they should contact CHS immediately for support and assistance.

All Contractors will remain professionally engaged and be immediately available to provide support. Contractors should be attentive to the message being conveyed to be able to assist when necessary and/or quickly substitute if needed. Contractors are expected to remain in the room and should refrain from leaving the room as much as possible, depending upon the assignment requirements. Personal activities (phone calls, text messages, checking emails, reading materials, etc.) should be limited to a professional nature while on an assignment.

All Contractors are being paid for the entire assignment and the paying Customers often don’t understand why two (2) Contractors are required for an assignment. It is very important that the team present themselves in a professional manner and work as a team and not merely relief.

CHS reminds Contractor to limit side conversations. All communication is to be kept professional in nature. Contact CHS if there are questions or concerns regarding this practice.

J. Attire and Appearance

Contractors are expected to dress in professional business clothing. If a job requires frequent standing or walking, appropriate shoes are acceptable. Suit coats may be required. The following are unacceptable for jobs (unless specifically approved): shorts, crop tops, miniskirts, sleeveless shirt/tank tops, jeans, holes in clothing, and/or flip flops. Nail polish, if worn, should be a neutral color. It is recommended that Contractors keep extra clothing handy in case a sweater/coat or change of shoes is needed.

Fragrance worn by Contractor should be kept to a minimum. Many locations are scent/fragrance free zones.

Contractor's grooming and appearance is expected to always be professional and neat in nature. This includes but is not limited to purses, bags, and briefcases.

Tattoos and body piercings are to be hidden or appropriately removed or covered if possible.

K. Identification

Contractor will be issued a CHS Photo ID badge and is strongly encouraged to wear it when working on CHS assignments. Many facilities require identification to be worn. If Contractor does not have a badge or needs a replacement, please contact CHS.

L. Questions from Customers

All questions directed to Contractor, by the Customer, should be directed to CHS. This includes, but is not limited to billing, invoicing, assignment information, cancellations, change in schedule, etc. Contractor is not to contact the Customer without permission from CHS.

Contractor will not accept tips from Customers or Consumers.

IV. VRI Protocols

CHS offers video remote services (VRI) for our customers. VRI assignments over one hour in length will be teamed as standard protocol. Requests where two (2) Contractors are deemed unnecessary for assignments over one hour will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Travel time is not paid for VRI requests when providing service. Contractor's name shall appear on the virtual platform as follows: "ASL Interpreter [Contractor's Name]" and while in camera-off position, name/photo must remain professional. Contractors are required to complete a VRI readiness test call with CHS Management prior to accepting VRI work.

Contractor is expected to sign on to a VRI assignment at least ten minutes before the start time. If Contractor is waiting to be let into the VRI room more than five minutes beyond the start time, Contractor will reach out to CHS for assistance.

Contractor cannot be dismissed from a VRI assignment by a Consumer. If a Consumer leaves an assignment before it concludes, Contractor should confirm before departing with the onsite contact or contact CHS for further assistance.

To perform VRI work, Contractor is required to have the following:

- **Internet:** A high-speed internet connection. The recommended speed would be at least 25mpbs/download and 2/mbps upload. Connection must also be wired in via ethernet cable and not on a Wi-Fi connection. Phones and iPads are not acceptable devices for VRI use.
- **Webcam:** While some computers have very good webcams, either an HD (720p) or FHD (1080p) webcam is recommended (for example: Logitech C920 HD Pro). This will assure that the Deaf consumer can see Contractor as clearly as possible. Consider a high-quality headset to make sure conversation and sounds can be heard as well as possible.
- **Office:** A dedicated office space with the ability to have four enclosed walls and a door that can be securely closed is required. For VRI calls to be confidential, the workspace must have the ability to be closed off to ensure that other people cannot hear or see the Contractor or the computer screen. There can be no distractions in the workspace during VRI calls such as pets or children. There can be no one disturbing the VRI Contractor during the calls.
- **Backdrop:** A backdrop of a contrasting color behind Contractor while working is required. Backdrop needs to cover the entire area behind Contractor as seen on the computer screen. There can be no corners showing the other elements of the room.
- **Appearance:** Neat appearance and professional dress are required. While it rarely happens, Contractor may need to stand up to adjust a camera or lighting. Full business professional dress is required.
- **Lighting:** A well-lit area for the Contractor and Deaf consumer is required in order to see signing, expressions, and mouth movements. Lights on either side of the computer screen ensure that the room and Contractor's face and body are well lit.

V. Payment of Contractors

A. Pay Periods

Contractor is paid on the 15th of the month and last day of the month. A pay schedule is available upon request.

At the time of closing a job, Contractor is to check that all information (start and end times) is accurate and that any incidentals (travel, mileage, recording, etc) are correct. A remittance will be sent to Contractor through CHS's scheduling platform prior to payment of jobs worked during the previous pay period. Contractor is asked to check the remittance for any errors and contact CHS staff immediately to rectify them. Any delays in notifying CHS of an error could result in delayed payment or non-payment.

Contractor will be notified as soon as possible should the payment schedule change. Any adjustments to remittances must be made within the same fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

B. Interpreter Pay Rates

Refer to CHS's Pay Schedule.

All pay occurs at the rate in which the service is performed (ex: an assignment starts at night rate but ends in day rate, pay will be split to reflect the night rate hours and the day rate hours).

Any invoice discrepancies must be resolved within the same fiscal year to guarantee payment.

C. Cancelled Assignments

Once the assignment is confirmed, if CHS cancels Contractor's assignment with less than two (2) business days (16 business hours) prior to the assignment's start time, Contractor will be paid for the entire length of the assignment.

If an assignment is cancelled more than 16 business hours *prior* to that assignment start time, CHS will not pay Contractor (assignment is not billable). CHS will make every effort to contact Contractor in case of cancellations. Contractor will be considered notified upon a message being left, email or text sent, or live contact.

In case of an emergency assignment with travel being cancelled *prior* to the Contractor going to the assignment, there will be no travel time paid, since no travel occurred.

D. Time-and-a-Half

In team interpreting situations where a second Contractor is unavailable or cancels, Contractor will be given the option of declining the assignment or accepting it for pay at a time-and-a-half. Contractor is not expected to exceed safe working standards and should decline time-and-a-half that places Contractor in danger of injury. CHS is always available to assist when on-site issues arise.

In situations where one Contractor consents to an assignment usually requiring a team, Contractor is advised to advocate for modifications such as increased frequency of breaks or length in order to protect from fatigue or injury and thereby maintain quality of service. Contractor is advised to contact CHS for advice, assistance, or advocacy in specific circumstances when interacting with Customer or Consumer.

E. Evening and Weekend/Holiday Rates

CHS's daytime business hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contractor will be paid a premium for assignments occurring between the hours of 5:00 pm and 9:00 am.

Weekend/Holiday rate applies to Saturday and Sunday, and on select holidays. Observed holidays include New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Independence

Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

F. E-Fee (Emergency Fee)

Contractor accepting jobs with less than 16-business hours' notice will be paid a one-time E-fee (emergency fee).

G. Travel Time – Notification Requirements

Contractor accepting jobs with less than 8-business hours' notice will be paid an E-fee and be eligible for travel time. Contractor must notify CHS of total travel time upon closing the job/within 24 hours of completing the assignment in order to guarantee payment.

Travel time is computed by taking the time required to travel to and from the assignment (portal to portal), adding them together into half-hour (30 minute) increments. Travel time is paid at the base Day, Night, and Weekend/Holiday Rate, determined by the start of the assignment.

Example: Fifteen (15) minutes each way would add a half-hour (30 minutes) of travel time; twenty (20) minutes each way would add one (1) hour travel time.

Example: An assignment starts at 4:00 pm and ends at 7:00 pm. Travel time to and from the assignment is paid at Contractor's Standard base rate.

For contractual and other reasons, there may be occasions when a pre-determined amount of travel time is negotiated with the Customer. In such cases, Contractor will be informed and may accept or reject the amount of travel time offered.

Maximum travel time is three (3) hours round trip unless otherwise negotiated. If Contractor expects travel time to exceed three (3) hours, Contractor must inform CHS at the time that the job is accepted. CHS will consider the circumstances and consult with Customer and inform the Contractor if travel time is approved in excess of three (3) hours. If it is not, Contractor may either accept the maximum offered or decline the assignment.

H. Additional Language Services

When Contractor provides additional language services, Contractor is paid both the hourly base rate and the premium rate.

Languages can include:

Tri-lingual Interpreting: When more than one language is required to complete the interpreting process. For example: Spanish, English, and ASL.

Tactile Interpreting. When working with a DeafBlind consumer, providing a form of hands-on interpreting such as signing in the consumer's hands or fingerspelling.

Pro-Tactile: When working with a DeafBlind consumer, providing environmental information through tactile touch.

I. Live Streaming/Recording:

Contractor is paid both the hourly base rate and premium rate when Contractor's work is projected to a large audience through live media such as television, live streaming, social media or recording of their work.

Recording Contractor is subject to Contractor's consent. If the recording or live streaming was not known to CHS or Contractor in advance, Contractor may instruct the requestor or customer to contact CHS to determine if a higher rate applies or to explain that the streaming/recording is subject to Contractor's consent and charged at a higher rate. Contractor should also notify CHS of the unexpected recording and leave a billing note when closing out the job so that a fee adjustment can be made. Please note that this does not apply to situations when streaming/recording may occur, and the Contractor may be intermittently 'caught' in the frame.

J. Personal Expenses

All business-related expenses incurred by Contractor (*parking, gas, clothing, insurance, tolls, fares, etc.*) are Contractor's personal and financial responsibility unless otherwise approved.

VI. Mentoring

Through the CHS Mary Mulcrone Mentoring Program, CHS firmly believes and supports mentoring. If Contractor would like to mentor students, or arrange for observation by a student, contact CHS before making any arrangements. For a working Contractor who seeks mentoring as they work towards national certification or seeks more experience in a specialized setting, CHS offers mentoring services. Please contact CHS for more information.

All student interpreters, mentees, and interns are required to register, along with their mentor, with CHS prior to attending an assignment. CHS will confirm approval from the customer prior to an assignment and Contractor is required to confirm this approval from CHS. At any point during the job, the Customer, Consumer, Contractor's team, and any additional participants may revoke presence of a Mentee. Mentee is expected to leave the room, and Mentor is expected to continue without interruption.

Approval of a Mentee is required for every assignment that Mentor accepts. If prior approval is not granted, Contractor may be removed from future assignments. CHS will follow all policies and procedures regarding confidentiality and HIPAA when violation occurs and expect that Contractor cooperates when doing so.

All mentoring adheres to the Supervision Performance Standards for working interpreters set forth in the Illinois' Interpreters for the Deaf Act. Mentee is responsible for all expenses incurred while being mentored including travel time, mileage, parking, transportation, meals, etc.

VII. Professionalism

A. Request Protocol

All requests must be coordinated by CHS. CHS cannot honor or pay for any assignment that is privately arranged or accepted by Contractor without CHS' prior knowledge. All requests for services must be made to CHS by the Customer. Contractor who holds that time without confirmation does so at their own risk (ex: at completion of medical appointment, Consumer schedules follow-up visit and Contractor "pencils in" the request on their calendar).

While it is understood that Contractor works as an independent contractor and not as employees of CHS, it is considered an unethical business practice to recruit contacts made from and/or during CHS assignments. Such practices will result in a written notice of warning of breach of policy to the Contractor involved, a possible complaint filed with the Licensure Board and may cause the termination of any working relationship between CHS and Contractor.

B. Professional Affiliations

Contractor is expected to keep all certifications and licensure with the State of Illinois current, when required. Failure to do so will affect their ability to work through CHS.

CHS strongly encourages Contractor to attend conventions, workshops, webinars, e-learning training programs, classes, and Deaf community events as a means of improving their skills, expanding knowledge, and providing an opportunity for peer contact and professional networking.

CHS supports and encourages membership with the Illinois Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (IRID) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Contractor is required to abide by the published RID Code of Professional Conduct.

C. Feedback and Observation

CHS seeks feedback from Customers and Consumers through online surveys and direct contact. All Contractor files and feedback are confidential and may be reviewed only by CHS approved staff. Every effort will be made to share both positive and negative feedback with Contractor in the interest of improving professionalism, skill, and ability, and to use appropriate discretion in accepting future assignments.

CHS welcomes feedback from Contractors.

D. Confidentiality and HIPAA

Contractors will maintain strict confidentiality. Contractor will not share job information with those not engaged in the CHS agreement. If job information is accessed on a device, access must be password protected.

Contractors will not take photos or videos while on an assignment and will not post any job-related information on social media.

E. Liability

Contractor is not covered by CHS's professional liability insurance. CHS does not assume legal responsibility for the actions of a Contractor for any injuries that may be suffered traveling to, from, or during assignments. Contractor shall always be responsible for all personal belongings. Contractor is encouraged to obtain professional liability insurance.

VIII. Conclusion

It is CHS's sincere hope that these Policies and Procedures will assist in facilitating an already excellent working relationship between CHS and Contractor.

Please contact CHS should you have any questions related to this Handbook.