

You may be well on your way in your practice to becoming a Deaf Interpreter. You may be at a place where you are stuck in wondering how to start your professional career as an interpreter. Maybe you are still figuring out your community and how to get jobs. It is important that you start networking in your local community.

Either this may be a slow process or this may be a fast process but it is crucial that you invest time in networking. Ask for help, ask for ideas, ask individuals to work with you. Try to find opportunities to gain experience. The community of interpreters are usually very willing to help and support new interpreters. You might find you have options.

Maybe you have an experienced CDI. Meet with them and ask them if they wouldn't mind being observed. Ask them for tips on where to gain experience. Many times, you can find volunteer opportunities to gain experience. Look into your state agency to see if they have meetings such as a Deaf Club or Deaf organization meetings. You can volunteer to practice AI, Audience Interpreting. Volunteer for such activities. Maybe there are individuals who are Deaf/blind or low vision. Volunteer to interpret for such situations. Look into your area for volunteer opportunities such as a local church. If you can find an experienced interpreter, that would be even better.

Other ideas might include going to interpreter training events, or organizational meetings. Go to those and become familiar with what your area has to offer for interpreters. There you will meet people who will start to get to know you. When you are called upon to team together the process will be smoother because you have already had an opportunity to practice together.

Oftentimes there will be training opportunities offered where you can go and practice with hearing interpreters on specific skills. There, you can meet many hearing interpreters and get a feel for who you might be a good fit with. It is also a great learning opportunity because you will meet hearing interpreters who aren't used to working with Deaf interpreters and you can learn and grow together. You will also meet seasoned interpreters who have a lot of experience working with Deaf interpreters and they can support you in your new career. You can find many individuals who can serve as mentors to you. Those who have many years of experience and those who are new. Maybe you can find a partner with whom you can study for the NIC exam. Just get out there and network.

I encourage you to reach out to your local interpreting agency and ask to meet with the coordinator. Ask them questions such as, "what does work look like for Deaf Interpreters?" Ask if there are observational opportunities, see what is available. See if there is anyone willing to accept a volunteer interpreter. Ask if there are any interpreters who would be willing to have a Deaf team come and practice with them.

Maybe you can host a practice session. Faculty at Interpreter Training Programs can be overwhelmed. Offer to visit their classes to host a hearing and Deaf teaming workshop. That would be a great opportunity to increase your skills and grow your networking pool. People will get to know you and your network base will grow. People will remember your willingness to get involved. It is critical to network in your local areas and surrounding areas. Maybe your area doesn't have many interpreting opportunities, but the surrounding areas do. Reach out to those areas and be willing to travel a little bit to host trainings. Just showing your investment and your involvement will grow your work opportunities. Investing your time will be worth it.