

The first time I ever knew that the concept of a Deaf interpreter existed was about 12 years ago when I was working a homicide case that was a fairly notorious case in the area where I had a pre-lingually Deaf person charged with the murder of another Deaf acquaintance. And we had the able assistance of two very good ASL interpreters we worked with long before this, and I think we all realized, and it was brought to our attention by our ASL interpreters, that there was a gap in communications.

Either our client was reluctant to answer or unable to express herself in answering, and they brought up the concept of a Certified Deaf Interpreter. We went to the judge, because we were court appointed and needed approval for funding for outside experts in any area, and asked for the help of a CDI during our preparation and during the trial.

The judge kind of split the baby and said that we could have access to a CDI for a limited period of time in trial preparation, but could not have one in the courtroom of the trial.

I think we all agreed, I'm talking the interpreters and the defense team, that it was beneficial. I think there were lines of communication that were open that were not previously there, and I think we got some factual information that we had not been able to elicit from the use of traditional ASL interpreters.

If I were to glean a message from all of this, albeit lawyers or other ASL interpreters, it would be, "Don't be bound by the way you've always done things, and don't think that asking for another resource to help you is in any way indicative that you are not doing your job well."

I could sit there and figure that I was a bad lawyer and that was why I couldn't get the information in the first place, or if we had been working with less experienced ASL interpreters that would be fearful that somehow their saying that we should use a CDI was indicative that they weren't doing their job appropriately. (Without the CDI), we never would have gotten this additional information that we had.

When you are dealing with serious situations like this you need to know that this is a resource that should be looked into, and it is not a reflection of anybody not doing their job.

It is a reflection of professionalism to realize when they can use the service of another professional to aid them further.