

Student Need for an Interpreter – a Guided IEP Team Discussion

Determining when a student who is deaf or hard of hearing needs or continues to need Interpreter Services

Based on data collected throughout Wisconsin, approximately 30% of the students identified as deaf or hard of hearing are considered to be “deaf” by the teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, more than 40% of the students use sign language to communicate in order to access classroom content and participate along with their peers. This includes students who may be considered “hard of hearing” and those with cochlear implants. From this data, approximately 10%-15% of the students identified as deaf or hard of hearing are students where the need for interpreter services is not always obvious.

The purpose of this tool is to assist IEP teams in their discussion related to communication access for the 10-15% of the students for whom it is not clear if they need educational interpreter services. Use of this tool is not required, nor is it recommended if the student clearly needs an interpreter in order to access their education. It is designed to be used as guiding discussion during IEP team meetings with input from the parents and various staff who work with the student. The teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, with her/his expertise, must be a part of this discussion. This tool is not intended as a check list to be completed by one person but by the IEP team, including the student when appropriate.

IEP teams have multiple considerations when determining if a student needs the services of an interpreter in order to have access to and benefit from their education. Each child is different and their abilities and needs *may change* over time based on his/her developmental level and in different school settings based on the acoustic environment. These worksheets are intended as a guide for IEP teams in the discussion / decision-making process. With that in mind, the **one page checklists of considerations** are designed to address needs in the age range of the student (early childhood, early elementary, upper elementary, middle school, and high school).

Along with determining *if* the student needs or continues to need an interpreter, is ‘*what type*’ of interpretation or *role* is the interpreter to play with this student. At the end of this tool is a **summary page** to further assist the IEP team in their discussion and decision. The *role* of the interpreter, while different than the discussion on the *need* of an interpreter, will also vary depending on the developmental level and needs of each student.

For each age group, this tool has a list of items for IEP team discussion. Check those items that reflect the communication needs of the student making comments that may support IEP development. Not all items under **Student Skills** need to be checked in order to document need for an interpreter. Again, these items are designed to support the IEP team in making a good decision about the student’s need for interpreter services through the discussion generated on each page.

On the next page are a few terms and concepts that are mentioned in the checklists. A brief explanation is given.

Terms and concepts:

- **ALD's** = Assistive Listening Devices. This includes personal hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM systems and other classroom listening technology.
- **Speech reading** = Speech reading means the students' ability to use her/his listening and lip-reading skills along with context clues to understand the spoken message. The IEP team needs to include the considerations of visual access in the classroom, teacher repetition of the content such as checking for understanding, lighting, acoustics, etc.
- **When might a child with a cochlear implant need an interpreter?** Children with a cochlear implant are deaf. The cochlear implant is highly sophisticated technology that supports the ability to hear through a series of electronic signals to the brain. These signals are not equivalent to normal hearing and the child needs training to develop skills in listening and decoding what he or she may hear as meaningful language. With this support many students learn to use their hearing effectively in some, but not all situations. The implant does not function in the same way that typical hearing does. The greatest challenge can be difficulty in being able to discern meaningful speech from noise in noisy situations. The ability of the child with an implant to hear with understanding and speak with intelligibility varies from child to child. Likewise, the role of the interpreter will vary depending on the school situation and the child's abilities to hear with understanding within social and in academic language / instructional settings. Some students with a cochlear implant will need an educational interpreter for some or perhaps much of their school day. The IEP team may want to look closely at how well the student is able to listen with understanding especially in high school / high content classes.
- **"Passing all their classes"** - Many students will do well in school BECAUSE OF the supports the child has in learning language. Language learning is different in social situations, academic situations, home, and school. Therefore the academic success alone of the child does not dictate the need of an interpreter.
- The question of **"How long will this child need an interpreter?"** is not a question that can be clearly answered. The IEP is an annual review of the child's present level of academic achievement and functional performance. The discussion on the "need for an interpreter" is an annual discussion.
- For a child with **additional disabilities**, regardless of the child's level of hearing loss, the discussion on the need for an interpreter should consider the language competency of the child in both social and in academic language levels. The impact of hearing loss compounds any other barrier for the child to process information. Limited expressive language does not eliminate the need but may indeed indicate limited effective exposure to language and opportunity to learn.
- The information below on language skills is adapted from educational practices used by teachers in **English Language Learning** programs. This perspective on educational language learning is also valuable when working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - **BICS** – *Basic Interactive Communication Skills* --- The use of English to communicate in social interaction is important but should not be seen as the indicator to assume that English language competency exists on the same level for more complex academic discussion.
 - **CALP** - *Cognitive Academic language Proficiency* --- Higher level English proficiency is needed for students to learn through reading of classroom text and to achieve in academic settings using sophisticated language to problem solve higher order tasks. This is the unseen language competency that has a significant impact on learning.

Child Need for an Interpreter – a Guided Discussion

Student: _____

Date: _____

The statements below are intended to guide an IEP team discussion on the child’s ability to effectively communicate through use of visual signed messages and spoken messages in all school settings with peers and adults.

	Student skills	Check all that apply.	Comments
Early Childhood / Preschool Reference: HIPREFACE language development guide	a. The child uses sign to communicate his/her needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	b. The child uses gestures to communicate her/his needs when listening and speaking alone do not clearly communicate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	c. Adults (familiar and unfamiliar) do not fully understand the child’s initial spoken message more than half of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	d. The child often misses or misunderstands spoken messages via listening alone – even with assistive listening devices (ALD’s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in quiet settings • in noisy settings • with adult voices • with child voices 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	e. The child is unable to repeat a spoken message when asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in quiet settings • in a noisy settings • with adult voices • with child voices 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	f. The child does not have successful spoken exchanges with peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	g. The child demonstrates frustration with communication attempts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	h. The child needs sign language and/or gestures to understand spoken classroom direction, redirection, change in activities, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Consider the items checked to determine service need.		

Student Need for an Interpreter – a Guided Discussion

Student: _____

Date: _____

The statements below are intended to guide an IEP team discussion on the child’s ability to effectively communicate through use of visual signed messages and spoken messages in all school settings with peers and adults.

	Student skills	Check all that apply.	Comments
Early Elementary setting	a. The child needs sign language and/or gestures to understand spoken classroom direction, redirection, change in activities, etc. to access information in the classroom regardless of the child’s ability to use speech expressively.		
	b. The child is hesitant, does not attempt to, or is not willing to approach others when communicating with speech alone.		
	c. The child often misses, misunderstands, or “seems to ignore” spoken messages via listening alone – even with ALD’s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in quiet settings • in noisy settings • with adult voices • with child voices 		
	d. The child is unable to repeat a spoken message when asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in quiet settings • in a noisy settings • with adult voices • with child voices 		
	e. The child does not have successful spoken exchanges with peers.		
	f. The child demonstrates frustration with communication attempts.		
	g. The child demonstrates inappropriate interactions or selects isolation in various settings; classroom, small group, lunch room, recess, PE, etc. This indicates an inability to communicate directly with peers in spoken language alone.		
	h. The child struggles to follow along on printed material during oral reading activities.		
	i. After directions are given, the child looks around to see what the rest of the class is doing before they begin.		
	Consider the items checked to determine service need.		

Student Need for an Interpreter – a Guided Discussion

Student: _____

Date: _____

The statements below are intended to guide an IEP team discussion on the student’s ability to effectively communicate through use of visual signed messages and spoken messages in all school settings with peers and adults.

	Student Skills	Check all that apply.	Comments:
Upper Elementary	a. The student is dependent on sign language to access information in the classroom regardless of the student’s ability to use speech expressively.		<i>Often students who have social language skills but do not have academic language competency ‘hide’ their lack of knowledge – don’t know how or don’t have the confidence to ask for clarification. They may also not know, what they don’t know. Be aware of these situations.</i>
	b. The student does not demonstrate competency with social interaction expressively and receptively through spoken language alone.		
	c. The student does not demonstrate effective academic interaction expressively and receptively through spoken language alone.		
	d. The student uses speech but is not always understood		
	e. The student does not fully understand spoken messages via listening alone – even with his/her assistive listening devices		
	f. The student is known to ask for clarification and repetition from someone (often the person close to them) on a consistent basis.		
	g. The student, without an interpreter, is unable to participate fully in all classroom instruction and activities.		
	h. The student demonstrates lack of appropriate interactions or selects isolation in various settings; classroom, small group, recess, lunch room, PE, etc. that indicate an inability to participate effectively with spoken language alone.		
	i. The student interacts appropriately in quiet settings including one-on-one social settings with spoken language alone, but not in group settings.		
	j. The student is not able to hear spoken messages that would allow him/her to ask for repetition / clarification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in one-on-one settings • in group settings 		
	k. After directions are given, the child looks around to see what the rest of the class is doing before they begin.		
	Consider the items checked to determine service need.		

Student Need for an Interpreter – a Guided Discussion

Student: _____

Date: _____

The statements below are intended to guide an IEP team discussion on the student’s ability to effectively communicate through use of visual signed messages and spoken messages in all school settings with peers and adults.

	Student Skills	Check all that apply.	Comments
Middle School	a. The student is dependent on sign language to access information in the classroom regardless of the student’s ability to use speech expressively		<i>Often students who have social language skills (BICS) but do not have academic language competency (CALP) ‘hide’ their lack of knowledge. The student may continually say he/she does not know how to complete a task or does not have the confidence to ask for clarification. The student may also not know what they don’t know or have missed. Note these possibilities here.</i>
	b. The student does not demonstrate competency with <u>social interaction</u> expressively and receptively through spoken language alone.		
	c. The student does not demonstrate effective <u>academic dialogue</u> expressively and receptively through spoken language alone.		
	d. The student does not fully understand spoken messages via listening alone – even with her/his assistive listening devices.		
	e. The student, without an interpreter, is unable to participate fully in all classroom instruction and group activities.		
	f. The student demonstrates lack of appropriate interactions or isolation in various settings that indicate an inability to participate effectively with spoken language alone.		
	g. The student interacts appropriately in quiet settings including one-on-one social settings with spoken language alone, but not in group settings.		
	h. The student is not able to hear spoken messages that would allow him/her to ask for repetition, clarification or compliance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in one-on-one settings • in group settings. 		
	i. After directions are given, the student looks around to see what the rest of the class is doing before they begin.		
	j. Classroom notes are incomplete and miss critical information shared during class lectures or discussion.		
	Consider the items checked to determine service need.		

Student Need for an Interpreter – a Guided Discussion

Student: _____

Date: _____

The statements below are intended to guide an IEP team discussion on the student’s ability to effectively communicate through use of visual signed messages and spoken messages in all school settings with peers and adults.

	Student Skills	Check all that apply.	Comments
<p>High School</p> <p>For most students of this age the district may not need to have this discussion. However, this discussion may need to happen when a student has moved into a new school, is from out-of-state, has a cognitive disability, from another cultural community, or any other time when staff, student or parent raise this question.</p>	a. The student is dependent on sign language to access information in the classroom regardless of the student’s ability to use speech expressively		<p><i>Often students who have social language skills (BICS) but do not have academic language competency (CALP) ‘hide’ their lack of knowledge. The student may continually say he/she does not know how to complete a task or does not have the confidence to ask for clarification. The student may also not know what they don’t know or have missed. Note these possibilities here.</i></p>
	b. The student does not demonstrate competency with social interaction expressively and receptively through spoken language alone.		
	c. The student does not demonstrate effective academic interaction expressively and receptively through spoken language alone.		
	d. The student uses speech but is not always understood		
	e. The student does not understand spoken messages via listening alone – even with ALD’s		
	f. With the support of an interpreter, the student is known to ask for clarification and repetition when he/she does not understand. It is unlikely that the student would be able to do so without the interpreter.		
	g. Student, without an interpreter, is unable to participate fully in all classroom lecture and discussion.		
	h. Student does not demonstrate knowledge of the content presented through spoken messages when checking for understanding.		
	i. Classroom notes are incomplete and miss critical information shared during class lectures or discussion.		
	Consider the items checked to determine service need.		

SUMMARY of the Discussion:

Part 1:

This student needs or continues to need an educational interpreter. Yes, complete the worksheet below No

Part 2:

What are the communication needs / language use and preferences of this student in order to benefit from her/his educational day? (This information should be on the present level of academic achievement and functional performance.)

The language use of the student is: (please check all that apply)

Expressive Language:	<input type="checkbox"/> Spoken English	Receptive Language:	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates comprehension of Spoken English (circle): most of the time, half of the time, some of the time
	<input type="checkbox"/> English-based signs		<input type="checkbox"/> English-based signs
	<input type="checkbox"/> American Sign Language		<input type="checkbox"/> American Sign Language
	<input type="checkbox"/> Gestures and "Home Signs"		<input type="checkbox"/> Gestures and "Home Signs"
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Part 3:

When seeking an interpreter service for this student, note the staff roles listed below along with the needs of the student to determine the language use and role of the interpreter service needed. The language need of the student is to guide the type of interpreter service provided.

- Signing Assistant:** (a person who has good sign language skills but does not function as an interpreter. Young children with minimal sign language skill need someone with a strong sign language base in order to have access to the language of their environment and build their own sign language skills.)
- Sign Supported Speech** (someone who combines oral interpreting with sign language for key concepts)
- Oral interpreter** (uses lipreading and gestures to give visual access to the spoken message.)
- English-based signs** (signs that follow English word order)
- American Sign Language (ASL)**
- C-Print** (This service provides the live spoken message transcribed for the student to read on a computer screen. In order for this to be effective, the student needs to have independent reading competency at or above peer reading levels.)

Comments: