

Columbus Police Division Directive	EFFECTIVE	NUMBER
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Sign/Foreign Language Interpreters		



I. Introduction

- A. Division personnel will occasionally encounter non-English speaking or Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) individuals who require police services. The inability to effectively communicate due to a language barrier can be frustrating for both parties. During these encounters, Division personnel should remain calm, patient, and courteous. When needed, the Communications Bureau maintains a list of interpreters that can be contacted to assist.
- B. Division personnel should be aware that sometimes D/HH individuals may make hand gestures and/or sounds when trying to communicate that sometimes can be misconstrued as acts of aggression. Division personnel should respond to each interaction based on training and the given situation.***

II. Definitions

A. American Sign Language (ASL)

A common visual language of standardized signs used by D/HH individuals that is specific to the United States.

B. Ohio Relay Service 711

A free relay service that can be contacted by dialing 711 on any telephone. If a D/HH individual has a TTY or TDY device, the service will relay communications between D/HH individual and hearing individuals.

C. Qualified Interpreter

A qualified interpreter is an individual who is able to effectively communicate with a D/HH individual or non-English speaking individual, and with Division personnel.

D. Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are any adjustments made by Division personnel to communicate with a D/HH individual in order to provide the same police services as any other person would receive. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for D/HH individuals, which can include any of the following: providing a pen and paper; using a personal computer; contacting the Ohio Relay Service; or providing a qualified Sign Language interpreter.

III. Policy Statements

- A. Sworn personnel encountering D/HH or non-English speaking individuals shall make all reasonable attempts to provide appropriate police services as needed.**
- B. Sworn personnel encountering D/HH individuals shall provide reasonable accommodations to communicate.**
- C. Sworn personnel conducting a criminal or critical witness interview of a D/HH or non-English speaking individual shall use either a Division qualified interpreter or qualified interpreter from an outside agency. Sworn personnel shall not use any individual as an interpreter who has a conflict of interest with the investigation.**
- D. Sworn personnel using a Sign Language interpreter for a criminal or critical witness interview should ask the interpreter if the interpreter's sign-skill ability is appropriate for the situation needed, and only use an interpreter whose abilities are appropriate for the given situation.**
- E. Division personnel should use an on-duty Division qualified interpreter before calling in an off-duty Division qualified interpreter or a qualified interpreter from an outside agency.**
- F. D/HH interpreters are required by a code of ethics to communicate to the D/HH individual any overheard conversation. Therefore, whenever a Sign Language interpreter is used for a criminal or witness interview, sworn personnel should not allow the D/HH interpreter to overhear any conversation between sworn personnel that should not be interpreted to the D/HH individual.**

IV. Procedures

A. Sworn Personnel

- 1. Attempt to establish communications, and determine the need to contact a qualified interpreter.**
- 2. When there is a need for an interpreter:**
 - a. Attempt to determine what language interpreter is needed. Use the Columbus Division of Police Interpreter Guide as appropriate.**
 - b. Contact Communications Bureau personnel and request an on-duty Division qualified interpreter.**
 - c. When an on-duty Division qualified interpreter is not available, contact a sworn supervisor and request approval to call in an interpreter.**
 - d. Upon approval, contact Communications Bureau personnel and request the interpreter.**

3. When an interpreter from an outside agency is used, complete a Sign/Foreign Language Interpreter Use Report, form A-31.104, and forward it to the Fiscal Operations Unit.

4. For criminal investigations:

a. List interpreters as witnesses.

b. Collect written communications as evidence, as appropriate.

B. Sworn Supervisor

1. When contacted, determine the need to call in an interpreter.

2. Approve or disapprove the request.

3. Ensure a Sign/Foreign Language Interpreter Use Report is completed, as appropriate.