



Illinois State Board of Education

Code of Ethics for Qualified Interpreters

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ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

**Illinois State Board of Education
Special Education and Multilingual Departments
Qualified Interpreter Code of Ethics**

1. Purpose and Applicability

- a) The purpose of this Code of Ethics (“Code”) is to set expectations and principles for Illinois Qualified Interpreters, guide their professional practice, and provide direction for ethical and professional decision-making in their day-to-day work.
- b) The Code of Ethics aims to ensure competent interpretation services at IEP meetings and other meetings and conferences in which parents/guardians participate to address the needs of students with disabilities or students suspected of having a disability.
- c) For the purpose of this Code, “Qualified Interpreters” (or “Interpreters”) refers to individuals as follows:
 - i. 23 IAC 226.75 defines a Qualified Interpreter as a school staff member or other personnel who is bilingual and demonstrably qualified and competent to interpret; trained in providing the interpretations requested and sufficiently knowledgeable in both languages of any specialized terminology needed; and trained in the ethics of interpretation.
 - ii. A Qualified Interpreter may be an individual that a Local Educational Agency (LEA) retains on staff. If a Qualified Interpreter is not available, the LEA may utilize outside vendors, who are commercially recognized as providing competent interpretation services.
- d) All interpreters for common languages, as defined in 23 IAC 226.75, and American Sign Language shall be Qualified Interpreters.

2. Personnel Requirements

- a) Qualified Interpreters must abide by the [Illinois Educator Code of Ethics](#).

- b) 23 IAC 226.800(k) directs that Qualified Interpreters must:
- i. Meet all employment eligibility requirements of a school district;
 - ii. Demonstrate they are competent to interpret into and out of the second language, which may be demonstrated by:
 - A) submitting documentation from an interpreter certification program that they are certified or qualified, or,
 - B) showing they have completed a certification or qualification program that meets or exceeds the requirements of 23 IAC 800(k)(B)(ii).
 - iii. Complete at least six hours of training on special education terminology and protocol, including successful completion of a written examination (teachers with bilingual special education licenses are exempt from this requirement); and,
 - iv. Receive training on this Code of Ethics and successfully complete a written examination.

3. Examination Requirements and Designation Maintenance

- a) Upon completion of the above training requirements, Qualified Interpreters must:
- i. Complete a written examination with a score of 80% or higher to demonstrate knowledge of special education terminology and protocol, interpretation standards and techniques, and interpretation ethics; and
 - ii. Complete an oral examination with a score of 70% or higher to demonstrate proficiency in sight translation and interpreting in and out of English via consecutive or simultaneous interpreting.
- b) To maintain the designation of “Qualified Interpreter,” an individual must participate in ongoing professional development at least once every two years; professional

development shall consist of at least six hours related to interpretation in eight categories: confidentiality, accuracy, impartiality, interpreter ethics and professionalism, cultural awareness, special education processes, special education vocabulary, and language acquisition.

4. Professional Conduct

- a) If an LEA has reason to believe that a parent/guardian needs interpretation services to fully participate in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, the LEA should reach out to the parent/guardian to offer such services. However, Qualified Interpreters shall not provide services without the express consent of the parent/guardian.
- b) Interpreters adhere to meeting norms, objectives, and goals as set by the IEP Team and meeting facilitator; interpreters respect all participants in the meeting and apply sensitivity towards diverse identities and cultures of all participants.
- c) Interpreters convey their role and responsibilities to the meeting participants; interpreters represent their interpreting credentials honestly and accurately.
- d) Interpreters will assume responsibility and accountability for their performance at all times and continually strive to demonstrate proficiency in skill and professional practice.

5. Accuracy

- a) Interpreters shall strive to translate the message to be interpreted with precision and accuracy; they shall endeavor to render the message without embellishment, omission, or alteration.
- b) Interpreters shall interpret discussions among meeting participants to ensure the parent/guardian is fully informed and included in the meeting process.
- c) Interpreters shall point out and immediately correct any error in interpretation regardless of cause (e.g., misunderstanding, noise, side conversations, etc.).

6. Impartiality

- a) Interpreters prioritize interpreting throughout the course of the meeting; interpreters should avoid serving in dual roles.
- b) A parent/guardian may request that the Interpreter provided by the LEA serve no other role in the meeting other than as an interpreter, and the LEA should make reasonable efforts to fulfill the request.
 - i. If a parent/guardian believes their request was unreasonably denied, they would have the right to request a due process hearing, State complaint, mediation, ISBE monitoring, or an Office of Civil Rights (OCR) investigation.
- c) Interpreters shall refrain from any utterance, gesture, or communication that indicates a bias or opinion regarding the content of the messages translated.
- d) Interpreters should refrain from altering a spoken message for political, religious, moral, or philosophical reasons, or pursuant to any other biased or subjective consideration.
- e) Should interpreters become aware of personal circumstances or conflicts of interest that may interfere with their effectiveness to provide accurate and unbiased interpretation services, they shall remove themselves from the assignment/meeting.

7. Confidentiality

- a) Interpreters maintain strict confidentiality regarding all information disclosed before, during, and after the meeting for which they are providing interpretation services.
- b) Interpreters adhere to federal, state, and LEA policies governing educational settings regarding privacy and confidentiality (e.g., *Individuals with Disabilities Act*, *Americans with Disabilities Act*, the *Illinois School Code*, mandatory reporting requirements, district Board policies, FERPA, HIPAA, etc.).
- c) Interpreters shall refrain from deriving any personal gain whatsoever from confidential and personal information they may have acquired via their duties as a Qualified Interpreter.