

Louisiana Commission for the Deaf Interpreter Needs Assessment Summary Report

ASL Video link :

<https://youtu.be/3jDgu3LR4Z8>

INTRODUCTION:

The Louisiana Commission for the Deaf (LCD) Interpreter Needs Assessment report is one step toward the LCD's 2022-2024 strategic plan goal that states, "LCD will establish new systems and standards for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting which define, describe, and incentivize new expectations for and oversight of the quality of ASL interpreters, including those in educational settings."

LCD contracted with Innivee Strategies Inc. to gather data and make recommendations that would support the development of a sign language interpretation framework, and this report is the result of the contract.

PROJECT GOALS:

The Project goals were to identify the needs, gaps, and challenges to develop a successful plan of action to establish ASL interpreter standards.

Innivee Strategies **studied** academic research on ASL interpreter standards and laws/systems in other states ASL interpreter standards, **developed** educational information for Louisiana audiences for focus groups and surveys **Provided six** focus groups, and distributed a survey accessible in ASL and English.

The Focus groups and surveys included:

- ASL interpreters,
- Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing community members who use ASL to communicate,
- Entities seeking and paying for ASL interpreters, either directly or through agencies,
- Agencies with employed and contracted ASL interpreters for hire,
- Interpreter Education Programs (IEP) and interpreter trainers,

The Total full responses for both survey and focus groups were 145

Innivee Strategies analyzed the data to produce this report.

Areas of Focus:

There were three areas of focus; **First, Understanding** the current market, **Second, Determining** what the oversight authority should look like **and lastly Learning** about the preferred approach to regulating the profession.

There were two areas that were not focused on; First, **Recommending** or deciding which certifications to recognize, and lastly, **Recommending** or deciding the ASL interpreter standards.

Findings:

Joseph Tseng explored how an interpreting occupation becomes professionalized. He developed four phases that identify how an occupation moves from the formation stage to a formal profession. The Tseng model was used to analyze the data from available and new information about the state of Louisiana and the ASL interpreting, including through focus groups and survey responses, and interviews with key contacts.

The Tseng model for the professionalization of ASL interpreters included four phases: Phase 1: Market Disorder, Phase 2: Consensus & Commitment, Phase 3: Professional Association, and Phase 4: Political Persuasion.

Innivee Strategies learned from focus groups and surveys that Louisiana is in Phase 1 while moving toward some parts of Phase 2.

Data results and recommendations:

Louisiana is in Phase 1 of a model of four phases in attaining state-wide professionalization of interpreters. Innivee Strategies made a number of recommendations to attain this progress toward this goal.

Based on the data results the recommended actions are as follows:

First, take legislative action to create an oversight authority to:

track the progress of the professionalization of ASL interpreters; determine the proper structure of the oversight authority within the state government; establish the funding source and process; discuss the implementation of standards and recognition of such standards (e.g. certification, etc.); define the envisioned process of providing enforcement of the regulations (e.g. grievance process); identify the professional development requirements; and to determine the role of the oversight authority on specialized interpreting professions (e.g. educational interpreters, legal interpreters, medical interpreters, mental health interpreters, etc.).

Second, identify funding and support training and workshops for all affected groups such as interpreters, deaf consumers, hiring entities, etc.

Third, Engage with Deaf experts and Deaf-led organizations in the interpreting field to provide this training.

Fourth, Explore opportunities to enhance the professionalization of ASL interpreters by increasing the interpreter pay rates that fairly compensates and recognizes ASL interpreters as professionals.

Fifth, to increase the pipeline of potential and professional interpreters through the following strategies: Encourage more K-12 instruction of ASL, provision of ASL classes, Increase ASL classes and enrollment at higher education programs, Expand the number of interpreter education programs, in particular establishing a four-year degree program, Create incentives to become ASL interpreters and to retain ASL interpreters in the state, Facilitate stronger collaboration between interpreting agencies, Examine competitive strategies that have an adverse impact on the supply of ASL interpreters, And to explore and adopt new technologies that empower consumers to make decisions and stay informed about their ASL interpreter experiences.

Sixth, Provide professional development to ASL interpreters such as; Mentorship (ASL interpreters and Deaf language models), Shadowing, Internships, Training, Assessments, Education, and financial support for taking certifications and assessments

Seventh, Strengthen the professional associations by; Volunteer leadership development, Governance development, Strategic prioritization, and fund and grantmaking capacity building

Eighth, to develop collaboration; Among ASL interpreter agencies, Among ASL interpreters, Between ASL interpreters & agencies, Between ASL interpreters & the Deaf community, and between ASL interpreter agencies & the Deaf community

Lastly, Diversify ASL interpreters by Partnering with New Orleans Black Deaf Advocates (NOBDA) and BIPOC ASL interpreters, And recruiting and providing incentives to BIPOC ASL interpreters.

Conclusion:

The key takeaway from the report is to go through the process of building capacity, systems, accountability, and trust through collaborative relationships and communication to attain the goal of getting to the goal of professionalization of ASL interpreters.

If you are interested and would like to read the full report, visit the LCD website at <https://ldh.la.gov/page/LCD>