



Legal Seat – Helsinki, Finland

WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

An International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC, UNESCO, ILO, WHO and the Council of Europe. WFD was established in Rome in 1951.

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Guidelines on Providing Access to Public Health Information in National Sign Languages during the Coronavirus Pandemic

More than 70 million deaf people throughout the world have the right to access information in their national sign languages on the Coronavirus Pandemic.

18 March 2020 | [Click here for International Sign version](#)

Key points:

- In all situations it is critical that **professional [sign language interpreters or translators](#) with national-level qualifications** are hired.
- **Information should be available through all media channels and on all platforms.** If the sign language version is only available through some channels (i.e. narrowcast), or only through web-based platforms, there is a risk that deaf people will miss out on crucial updates at critical times.
- **An interpreter should be physically present and visible on camera** alongside whomever is speaking in making new announcements. This will ensure deaf people can access information through a variety of media outlets as other members of the public do.

In this document we outline best practices for providing sign language access in different contexts.

National press conference or emergency information broadcast with interpreter present¹:

1. The sign language interpreter should be physically present (to the extent possible) and stand next to the speaker facing the audience and in shot. This ensures multiplatform and multi-channel access to the interpreter.
2. The interpreter should be displayed in the full screen image at all times, with no text or graphics covering the interpreter.
3. Broadcasts may be multiplatform but should always be broadcast on the main public TV channels to ensure easy access for a wide audience.



Live (Special) News broadcasts with interpreter in studio:

1. Positioning and size of the interpreter:
 - a. Preferred: on screen placement of the interpreter (using chromakey / green screen), size of interpreter inset should at least be half of the screen.
 - b. Alternative: interpreter is placed in a box filling 25% of the screen, separate from the actual image of the screen.
2. Broadcasts should be multiplatform but should always at least be provided on the main public TV channels to ensure easy access for a wide audience.



Live Ministerial announcements

Sign language interpreters often cannot be present on the floor of parliamentary bodies when Ministers make announcements about updates. In that case the principles for live news broadcasts should be used, with the interpreter live streamed simultaneously on-screen alongside the speaker. This is often broadcast through a parliamentary web-based platform.



¹ Image 1: South Korea. Image 2: Costa Rica. Image 3: UK. Image 4: Austria. Images 5 & 6: UK.

Informational public safety videos²:

1. It is the responsibility of public authorities to ensure that Information on the Coronavirus is made available directly in the national sign language(s) of the country, preferably created in that sign language (rather than a translation from a written or spoken text).
2. National deaf associations should be contacted for their expertise and guidance in developing these videos.
3. Best practice is for a deaf presenter to present information on the virus and safety measures, so that the information is presented by a native user of the national sign language. Deaf-specific health organisations can also provide advice on this (follow wfdeaf.org/coronavirus for updated information on videos in different countries).
4. These videos should be published on the national and public health websites alongside other public information on the Coronavirus.
5. Videos should also be subtitled in the country's national language(s).
6. Visual images should be used wherever possible to support the information.
7. Add information on how deaf persons can access the national or local health authorities either directly in sign language, or through emergency face-to-face or online interpreting services, in case of further questions.



These Guidelines are also applicable to nongovernmental and international organisations disseminating information on the Coronavirus Pandemic. National sign languages should be used as a first priority, with International Sign information for international organisations targeting a global audience.

Further information on Best Practices can be found here:

- [WFD position paper on Accessibility: Sign Language Interpreting and translation and technical developments](#)
- [WASLI and WFD Guidelines Communication during natural disasters and other mass emergencies](#)
- [WFD-WASLI Joint Statement on Access to Health Services & Interpreter Occupational Health During the Coronavirus \(COVID 19\) Containment Efforts](#)

For ongoing updates, please see www.wfdeaf.org/coronavirus

Acknowledgements. These Guidelines were compiled by Maya de Wit, Jemina Napier, and Joseph Murray with input from Alexandre Bloxs and Christopher Stone. Thanks to Maya de Wit, Jemina Napier and Alda Batory for assistance with sourcing the images used in this document.

² Image 7: India. Image 8: Zimbabwe. Links to all image references can be found at www.wfdeaf.org/coronavirus