

# 10.1 Government Sign Language Interpreter Services for D/deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons Policy

## Policy Statement

The Government of Nova Scotia is committed to ensuring that persons who are D/deaf and hard-of-hearing can participate fully and have equitable access to government services in Nova Scotia. The provision of Sign Language Interpreter Services (SLIS) allows for clear communication between persons who are D/deaf and hard-of hearing and those involved in the provision of government services.

Departments are responsible for the provision of SLIS, following reasonable accommodation practices, when requested, to persons who are D/deaf and hard-of-hearing to enable equitable access to services offered by the Government of Nova Scotia.

This policy supports the goal of the *Accessibility Act* to achieve an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

## Definitions

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

The prevention and removal of barriers (physical, attitudinal, technological, or systemic) to allow equitable access and participation for persons with disabilities or others who may experience those barriers.

### **BARRIER**

Anything that hinders or challenges the full and effective participation in society of persons with disabilities, including physical or architectural barriers, attitudinal barriers, technological barriers, and policies and practices. Accessibility barriers related to this policy could impact the delivery and receipt of goods, services, or information, and communications.

### **DEPARTMENT**

This policy applies to all Government of Nova Scotia departments and their agencies, boards, and commissions (ABCs), as outlined in Manual 100, Chapter 1.2.

**EQUITABLE/EQUITY**

Providing all members of a community with what they need to succeed.

**SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER**

A sign language interpreter is an individual who facilitates communication between D/deaf and hard-of-hearing people and hearing people and enables the provision of equal access to information, events, etc. using American Sign Language (ASL) and/or Maritime Sign Language (MSL).

**SERVICE-LEVEL AGREEMENT**

The contractual agreement signed between the Government of Nova Scotia and the supplier(s) to provide SLIS under this policy.

**REASONABLE ACCOMODATION PRACTICES**

Sign language interpreter services will be provided when requested by or for someone who is D/deaf or hard of hearing within an adequate amount of time, so as not to cause harm or undue burden on those requesting the service.

**OUTSTANDING INVOICE**

Invoices that are yet to be paid by the department utilizing the service(s) provided by the supplier(s).

**DEAF**

The term “Deaf,” with a capital D, has emerged as the term preferred by people who identify with, and belong to, a group that is culturally distinct from that of non-Deaf people. Like any cultural group, Deaf people have a language and set of social norms, behaviours, and folklore that reflect the values of their group.

**deaf**

When written with a small d, “deaf” is becoming more accepted as a reference to a hearing deficit only and detached from any discussion of culture and/or language.

**HARD-OF-HEARING**

Can denote a person with a mild-to-moderate hearing loss.

**SUPPLIER**

A person carrying on the business of providing goods or services related to the provision of Sign language Interpreter Services under this policy.

## **Policy Objectives**

- Define department responsibilities for the provision of SLIS to persons who are D/deaf and hard-of-hearing in Nova Scotia when accessing government services.
  
- To be used as a reference when departments are creating their own equitable and inclusive processes and procedures that enable accessible and reasonable provision of SLIS as requested.

## **Application**

This policy applies to all Government of Nova Scotia departments and their agencies, boards, and commissions (ABCs).

## **Policy Directives**

All departments are required to provide SLIS, following reasonable accommodation practices, to persons who are D/deaf and hard-of-hearing to enable access to government services, when requested, under this policy. It is the objective of the Government of Nova Scotia to provide equitable access to Government of Nova Scotia programs and services.

The Department of Service Nova Scotia (SNS) is responsible for the oversight and administration of the service-level agreement, including establishing terms and conditions (e.g., billing criteria, eligible expenses) for the provision of SLIS.

Departments are responsible for the cost of SLIS provided, as outlined in the service-level agreement with the supplier(s).

Any outstanding invoice for SLIS provided to departments by the supplier shall be reviewed by SNS for eligibility of payment. Outstanding invoices for delivery of service(s) that are eligible for payment under this policy will be paid by SNS on behalf of the invoiced department. SNS will submit a charge for payment by journal voucher to such departments.

## **Policy Guidelines**

SLIS for government services may be provided to persons who are D/deaf and hard-of-hearing in Nova Scotia through a variety of mediums (in-person, virtual, and/or hybrid). The accommodation practices of SLIS should consider factors such as:

- priority (e.g., emergency, time sensitivity, material impact) complexity and importance of the information to be communicated.
- context in which the communication takes place.
- media available.

## **Accountability**

### **DEPARTMENT OF SERVICE NOVA SCOTIA**

Acting on behalf of the Government of Nova Scotia, SNS is responsible for:

- Maintaining the policy to provide access to SLIS to departments.
- Maintaining, administering, and monitoring the government-wide service-level agreement for SLIS to be used by departments.
- Ensuring the service-level agreement, including billing standards, are available for departments to access.

### **DEPARTMENTS**

Departments are responsible for:

- Providing reasonable access to SLIS available under this policy for government services when requested for a person who is D/deaf or hard-of-hearing, either directly or by the supplier on their behalf.
- Assessing their own services and preparing specific information for requirements, including communication of the availability of this service and agreements with their ABCs, where applicable. Each Department shall provide Government Services, SNS, with a contact person(s) who has delegated responsibility for the administration of this policy.
- Providing relevant information to the supplier under the service-level agreement to be able to meet interpreter requirements of the request.
- Validating and paying invoices for eligible SLIS provided under the service-level agreement.

## **Monitoring**

SNS is responsible for monitoring the performance and effectiveness of the Government Sign Language Interpreter Services for D/deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons policy and the government-wide service-level agreement for SLIS services to be used by departments to ensure it is reflective of its intent.

## References

*Accessibility Act*

Government of Nova Scotia, 3.1 Sustainable Procurement Policy

## Enquiries

For questions about this policy, contact:

Director, Strategy and Operations Government Services

Department of Service Nova Scotia

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