

## **Code of Conduct for Communication Professionals**

Effective from 1 January 2010

The purpose of this *Code of Conduct* is to ensure that NRCPD-registered communication professionals carry out their work with a due regard for the rights of deaf and hearing people involved in, or affected by, all aspects of the communication process. The Code is supported by guidelines for the benefit of consumers and practitioners.

A communication professional is anyone registered with NRCPD as a:

- Sign Language Interpreter
- Lipspeaker
- Electronic or Manual Notetaker
- Speech to Text Reporter
- LSP – Deafblind Manual

It is a condition of registration that communication professionals confirm their agreement to abide by the Code and the accompanying guidelines. Any alleged breach of the Code will be addressed through the complaints procedures applicable.

This Code replaces any previous Codes issued by the Independent Registration Panel or the ACE/Deafblind Registration Panel. It will remain in force until amended or revoked by the NRCPD Registration Board. Notice of amendment will be made on the NRCPD website and through other appropriate means.

# NRCPD Code of Conduct

The **Code of Conduct** sets out the professional and ethical principles that must underpin the work of all NRCPD registrants when working with consumers, or managing, training, supervising or mentoring other communication professionals. It prescribes standards of conduct that must be adhered to in order to:

- provide assurance of professional standards to users of the services of communication professionals, and to the public at large, and
- maintain the integrity of the professions.

**Confidentiality**      You must respect the confidential nature of any information gained in the course of your professional activity.

**Competence**        You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence, and if necessary, refer on to another proficient professional.

**Integrity**            You must seek to reflect credit on your profession.

You must seek to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

**Impartiality**        You must avoid discrimination against parties involved in an assignment, either directly or indirectly, on any grounds.

You must disclose any information, including conflicts of interest, which may make you unsuitable for an assignment or call into question your impartiality, and decline or withdraw from the assignment if this cannot be satisfactorily resolved.

**Professional Development**      You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.

# NRCPD Code of Conduct Guidelines

The aim of these Guidelines is to ensure that the Code of Conduct is clearly understood, and that communications across languages and cultures are carried out consistently, competently and impartially.

See page 9 for glossary of terms used in this Code.

## **1. Confidentiality      You must respect the confidential nature of any information gained in the course of your professional activity**

- 1.1** You are expected to keep confidential any information pertaining to, or arising from, an assignment. However, there may be circumstances where disclosure is acceptable, such as:
- a. You may pass on information pertaining to or arising from an assignment if failure to do so could result in prosecution, or if required to do so by law.
  - b. You may pass on information pertaining to or arising from an assignment to protect the welfare of an individual or the community at large.
  - c. You may wish to use evidence of performance for training, assessment or professional development purposes. You should respect the consumer's right to confidentiality, and only use such evidence with their permission.
- 1.2** Information exchanged in the public domain is not confidential.
- 1.3** If required, and with the agreement of all parties, you may work to the confidentiality policy of the employing institution.

**2. Competence**                      **You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence, and if necessary, refer on to another proficient professional**

- 2.1 You should only undertake assignments for which you have the appropriate qualifications, competence, and experience.
- 2.2 You should strive to ensure that complete and effective communication takes place; you should not add nor take anything away from the intended meaning and should keep to the spirit of what is said or signed.
- 2.3 You should, in advance where practicable, seek to ensure that the necessary conditions for effective communication are provided (e.g. being seated where you can see/be seen/be heard clearly; provision for adequate breaks, etc). Where this is not the case you should make it known to the parties concerned and, if the deficiency is likely to be a serious impediment to effective performance, you should indicate to the organiser your inability to continue with the assignment.
- 2.4 If there are communication problems during an assignment, you should look to solve these using your professional skills. If the problem persists, you should indicate to the organiser your inability to continue with the assignment.
- 2.5 In the event of a breakdown as described in 2.3 or 2.4 above, you should report the circumstances to the principal as soon as possible afterwards.

### **3. Integrity**

**You must seek to reflect credit on your profession**

**You must seek to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity**

- 3.1** You should not bring your profession into disrepute by conducting yourself in a manner at variance with the high standards expected of a professional person.
- 3.2** You should not knowingly or negligently act in a way that is likely to be detrimental to your profession, or to the reputation of the NRCPD.
- 3.3** You should endeavour to behave in a manner appropriate to the context of the interaction.
- 3.4** You should respect the ethics and the working practices of other professions, and support your colleagues in the course of their duties in order to ensure the provision of the best quality service to all consumers.
- 3.5** If you are unable to undertake an assignment that you have accepted, the principal should be informed as soon as possible. If you are in a position to do so, you should assist in finding an appropriate communication professional to take your place. You should not hand over an assignment to another communication professional without the agreement of the principal.
- 3.6** You may advertise your services but what is advertised must be accurate, relevant and must not mislead.

#### **4. Impartiality**

**You must avoid discrimination against parties involved in an assignment, either directly or indirectly, on any grounds**

**You must disclose any information, including conflicts of interest, which may make you unsuitable for an assignment or call into question your impartiality, and decline or withdraw from the assignment if this cannot be satisfactorily resolved**

- 4.1 You should be impartial, and should not act in any way that might demonstrate prejudice or preference.
- 4.2 You should not accept an assignment where your impartiality could be questioned. You should disclose any business, financial or other interest, which may make you unsuitable for an assignment.
- 4.3 Unforeseen conflicts of interest should be declared as soon as they become apparent, if these have not been disclosed when accepting an assignment.
- 4.4 You should not gain any improper or financial benefit from any information acquired while you are working.

#### **5. Professional Development**

**You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date**

- 5.1 You are expected to support the reputation of your profession, and work to improve your professional standards and status through continuing professional development.
- 5.2 You should make sure that your knowledge, skills and performance are of a good quality, up to date, and relevant to your scope of practice. If you work in a range of different domains, including legal, health, education, and community, you should make sure that whatever the setting, you are capable of practising competently and effectively.

## Additional Guidelines for Specific Professions:

### 6. Lipspeakers (Level 2)

As a Level 2 Lipspeaker, you are expected to know your own limitations of competence, and to comply with paragraph 2.1 of the *Code of Conduct* when deciding which assignments you are currently experienced and competent to accept.

**Assignments within the criminal justice system, solicitors meetings, and consultations in mental health and social services contexts must always be refused.**

Occasionally, despite having done everything you can to make sure that an assignment is within your level of competence, you may find yourself in a Level 3 assignment where a Level 3 Lipspeaker is not available. In these circumstances, you must inform all parties of the situation, and may only continue with the assignment with the agreement of the consumer. This does **not** apply to assignments in police contexts, courts, tribunals, solicitor meetings or consultations, mental health and social services contexts, which you must **always** refuse (see 2 above), and the assignment should be referred to a Member of the Register of Level 3 Lipspeakers (but see 3.5 above).

### 7. Speech to Text Reporters

You should ask for papers and information from the *principal* or *consumer* no later than one week before the assignment. This will allow you to update your dictionary and give the best service with a fully updated dictionary, and correctly spelled words.

### 8. LSPs – Deafblind Manual

You should use the Deafblind Manual chosen by the deafblind person at the speed which is best for them. In addition to communicating what is being said, you will give the mood of the situation and information about what can be seen, the way people are talking, and background information.

## **9. Notetakers**

You must only accept work where you have appropriate qualifications, skill, experience, and competence. You should ensure that the client requires an electronic or manual notetaker rather than a verbatim speech to text reporter.

## **10. Sign Language Interpreters (Trainee and Junior Trainee Interpreters)**

Individual sign language interpreters are expected to know their own limitations and act within the spirit of the Code of Conduct in deciding which assignments they are currently experienced and competent to accept (see 2.1 above).

However, there are currently no limitations in force regarding particular domains for Trainee and Junior Trainee Interpreters (TI/JTI) other than in a legal setting, where the National Agreement stipulates that only Members of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRSLI) should be used.

In addition it is recommended that assignments in the mental health and social services contexts should only be undertaken by an MRSLI.

## **Glossary:**

<b><i>Communication Professional or Registrant:</i></b>	Any person registered with NRCPD.
<b><i>Principal:</i></b>	The person or organisation that books the services of a communication professional.
<b><i>Consumer:</i></b>	The person/people at the assignment using the services of a communication professional.
<b><i>Organiser:</i></b>	The person running the meeting or in overall charge during the assignment.
<b><i>Assignment:</i></b>	Work carried out by the communication professional, including related activities such as managing, training, supervising, examining and mentoring.
<b><i>Parties:</i></b>	All those involved in the assignment.
<b><i>Sign Language Interpreter:</i></b>	A communication professional who facilitates communication either between users of a sign language such as British Sign Language (BSL) and users of a spoken language, or between users of two different sign languages. Interpreters will use their skill and knowledge of the two languages, and their understanding of any cultural differences that might exist between those for whom they are interpreting, to receive a message given in one language and pass it on in the other language.
<b><i>Lipspeaker:</i></b>	A communication professional who repeats a speaker's message for people who lipread the spoken word. Lipspeakers use unvoiced speech to achieve clear

communication, and if required by a lipreader, the lipspeaker can support the speaker's message with appropriate facial expression, natural gesture and fingerspelling.

**LSP –  
Deafblind  
Manual:** A communication professional who uses the Deafblind Manual Alphabet when facilitating communication between a deafblind person and a hearing person.

**Speech to Text  
Reporter  
(STTR):** A communication professional who uses a phonetic machine shorthand system to provide simultaneous verbatim text from the spoken word for display on a computer and/or projector screen.

**Electronic  
Notetaker:** A communication professional who produces an accurately typed summary which a deaf person uses and may take away, eg as a saved file, for revision or reference.

[Electronic notetakers should not be confused with STTRs: electronic notetakers provide a précis service, while STTRs provide a verbatim service.]

**Manual  
Notetaker:** A communication professional who takes handwritten précis notes which a deaf person uses and may take away for revision or reference.