



## ASSOCIATION OF VISUAL LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS OF CANADA

The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) expects its members<sup>1</sup> to maintain high standards of professional conduct in their capacity and identity as an interpreter. Members are required to abide by the Code of Ethics and follow the Guidelines for Professional Conduct as a condition of membership in the organization.

This document articulates ethical principles, values, and standards of conduct to guide all members of AVLIC in their pursuit of professional practice. It is intended to provide direction to interpreters for ethical and professional decision-making in their day-to-day work. The Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct is the mechanism by which the public is protected in the delivery of service.

### VALUES UNDERLYING THE CODE OF ETHICS & GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

AVLIC values:

- 1. Professional accountability:**  
Accepting responsibility for professional decisions and actions.
- 2. Professional competence:**  
Committing to provide quality professional service throughout one's practice.
- 3. Non-discrimination:**  
Approaching professional service with respect and cultural sensitivity.
- 4. Integrity in professional relationships:**  
Dealing honestly and fairly with consumers and colleagues.
- 5. Integrity in business practices:**  
Dealing honestly and ethically in all business practices.

**Members are to understand that each of these core values and accompanying sections are to be considered when making ethical and professional decisions in their capacity and identity as an interpreter. These values are of equal weight and importance.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Members, for the purpose of this document, refers to both Deaf and hearing individuals who hold either Active or Supporting membership.

# Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct

## 1.0 **PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Interpreters accept responsibility for all professional decisions made and actions taken.**

### 1.1 **Confidentiality**

1.1.1 Members will respect the privacy of consumers and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service. Members may be released from this obligation only with their consumers' authorization or when ordered by law.

1.1.2 Where necessary, a member may exchange pertinent information with a colleague in order to provide consistent quality of service. This will be done in a manner that protects the information and the consumers.

1.1.3 Members need to be aware that other professional codes of conduct may impact upon their work. In such circumstances, members will make appropriate professional decisions and conduct themselves in a manner befitting the setting and the profession.

### 1.2 **Professional Conduct**

1.2.1 Members will hold the needs of consumers primary when making professional decisions.

1.2.2 Members shall recognize that all work undertaken by them on an individual basis, whether pro bono or paid, will ultimately reflect the integrity of themselves and of the profession.

1.2.3 Members shall conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. They shall not badger or coerce individuals or agencies to use their professional services.

1.2.4 Members shall take into account the limitations of their abilities, knowledge and the resources available to them prior to accepting work. They will remove themselves from a given setting when they realize an inability to provide professional service.

1.2.5 Members must be aware of personal circumstances or conflict of interest that might interfere with their effectiveness. They will refrain from conduct that can lead to substandard performance and/or harm<sup>2</sup> to anyone including themselves and consumers.

1.2.6 Members are accountable to AVLIC and to their local chapter affiliate for their professional and ethical conduct. Further, members are responsible to discuss and resolve, in a professional manner, issues arising from breaches of ethical or professional conduct on the part of individual colleagues after they are observed. In the case where these breaches are potentially harmful to others or chronic, and attempts to resolve the issue have not been successful, such conduct should be reported to AVLIC

---

<sup>2</sup> Harm refers to injurious behaviour that causes distress to the person. This can include but is not limited to actions which are sexual, physical, emotional or verbal in nature. It can also include performance of duties while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or mind-altering substances.

and/or their local chapter affiliate in a manner directed by the appropriate grievance procedure.

### **1.3 Scope of Practice**

- 1.3.1 Members will refrain from using their professional role to perform other functions that lie beyond the scope of an interpreting assignment and the parameters of their professional duties. They will not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
- 1.3.2 When functioning as part of a professional team (e.g., education, legal, medical and mental health settings) it is understood that members will limit their expertise to interpretation. In such settings, it may be appropriate for members to comment on the overall effectiveness of communication, the interpreting process and to suggest appropriate resources and referrals. This should be done only within the context of the professional team.
- 1.3.3 Members will refrain from manipulating work situations for personal benefit or gain. When working as independent contractors, members may promote their professional services within the scope of their practice. When working under the auspices of an agency or other employer, it is not ethical for the members to promote their professional services independent of the agency or employer.

### **1.4 Integrity of Service**

Members will demonstrate sound professional judgment and accept responsibility for their decisions. Members will make every attempt to avoid situations that constitute a real or perceived conflict of interest. Members will ensure there is full disclosure to all parties should their ancillary interest be seen as a real or perceived conflict of interest.

## **2.0 PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE: Interpreters provide the highest possible quality of service through all aspects of their professional practice.**

### **2.1 Qualifications to Practice**

Members will possess the knowledge and skills to support accurate and appropriate interpretation. It is recognized that members work in a range of settings and with a variety of consumers. This demands that members be adept at meeting the linguistic needs of consumers, the cultural dynamics of each situation, and the spirit and content of the discourse.

### **2.2 Faithfulness of Interpretation**

Every interpretation shall be faithful to and render exactly the message of the source text. A faithful interpretation should not be confused with a literal interpretation. The fidelity of an interpretation includes an adaptation to make the form, the tone, and the deeper meaning of the source text felt in the target language and culture.

### **2.3 Accountability for Professional Competence**

- 2.3.1 Members will accept full responsibility for the quality of their own work and will refrain from making inaccurate statements regarding their competence, education, experience or certification.
- 2.3.2 Members are responsible for properly preparing themselves for the work contracted.

2.3.3 Members will accept contracts for work only after determining they have the appropriate qualifications and can remain neutral throughout the assignment.

## **2.4 Ongoing Professional Development**

2.4.1 Members will incorporate current theoretical and applied knowledge, enhance that knowledge through continuing education throughout their professional careers and will strive for AVLIC certification.

2.4.2 Members will aim to be self-directed learners, pursuing educational opportunities which are relevant to their professional practice. This could include but is not limited to peer review, collegial consultation, mentoring and regular feedback regarding specific areas of skill development.

## **3.0 NON-DISCRIMINATION: Interpreters approach professional services with respect and cultural sensitivity<sup>3</sup> towards all participants.**

### **3.1 Non-discrimination**

Members will respect the individuality, the right to self-determination, and the autonomy of the people with whom they work. They will not discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, personal beliefs and practices, social status or any other factor.

### **3.2 Communication Preferences**

Members will respect and use the form of communication preferred by those deaf and hard of hearing consumers for whom they provide service.

### **3.3 Deaf Interpreters**

The services of a Deaf interpreter may be required when working with individuals who use regional sign dialects, non-standard signs, foreign sign languages, and those with emerging language use. They may also be used with individuals who have disabling conditions that impact on communication. Members will recognize the need for a Deaf interpreter and will ensure their inclusion as a part of the professional interpreting team.

## **4.0 INTEGRITY IN PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: Interpreters deal honestly and fairly with consumers and colleagues while establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.**

### **4.1 Professional Relationships**

Members shall understand the difference between professional and social interactions. They will establish and maintain appropriate boundaries between themselves and consumers. Members will assume responsibility to ensure relationships with all parties involved are reasonable, fair and professional.

---

<sup>3</sup> Cultural sensitivity refers to being aware of and responding to the uniqueness of each individual and of each context within which we work.

## **4.2 Impartiality**

- 4.2.1 Members shall remain neutral, impartial, and objective. They will refrain from altering a message for political, religious, moral, or philosophical reasons, or any other biased or subjective consideration.
- 4.2.2 Should a member not be able to put aside personal biases or reactions which threaten impartiality, the member will examine options available to them. This may include not accepting the work or withdrawing their services from the assignment or contract.

## **4.3 Respect for Colleagues**

- 4.3.1 Members will act toward colleagues in a spirit of mutual cooperation, treating and portraying them to others with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith, etc.
- 4.3.2 Members have a professional obligation to assist and encourage new interpreting practitioners in the profession.
- 4.3.3 Members shall not abuse the good faith of other members or be guilty of a breach of trust or the use of unfair tactics.

## **4.4 Support for Professional Associations**

Members shall support AVLIC, its affiliates, and other organizations representing the profession and the Deaf community.

# **5.0 INTEGRITY IN BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS: Interpreters establish and maintain professional boundaries with consumers and colleagues in a manner that is honest and fair.**

## **5.1 Business Practices**

- 5.1.1 Members will refrain from any unfair competition with their colleagues, including but not limited to: (a) engaging in comparative advertising (b) willfully undercutting; or (c) artificially inflating fees during times when market demand exceeds supply.
- 5.1.2 Members will conduct themselves in all phases of the interpreting situation in a manner befitting the profession, including negotiating work and contracts, obtaining suitable preparation material, and choice of attire and professional demeanor.
- 5.1.3 Members will honour professional commitments made when accepting work, and will follow through on their obligations. Members may not unilaterally terminate work or a contract unless they have fair and reasonable grounds to do so.
- 5.1.4 Members shall take reasonable care of material and/or property given to them by a consumer and may not lend such or use it for purposes other than those for which it was entrusted to them.

**5.2 Accurate Representation of Credentials**

- 5.2.1 Members shall not by any means engage in, nor allow the use of, statements that are false, misleading, incomplete, or likely to mislead consumers or members of the public.
- 5.2.2 Members will refrain from making inaccurate statements regarding their competence, education, experience or certification. Only members certified by AVLIC (COI) may use the term "certified" in printed, electronic, signed or oral transmission. This may include, but is not limited to, interpreter directories, business cards and forms, promotional materials, resumes or publications they have authored.

**5.3 Reimbursement for Services**

- 5.3.1 Members will bill only for services provided. Members will negotiate fees, including cancellation policies, preferably in writing or contract form before service is provided. Members will be sensitive to professional and community norms when establishing fees for services.
- 5.3.2 Members may also provide bartered or pro bono service in situations where the profession of interpreting and the livelihood of other practitioners will not be threatened.

**RATIFIED AT THE AVLIC JULY 2000 AGM**

**References Consulted**

Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta Code of Ethics (draft, 1999). Unpublished.

Corey, Corey, & Callanan. (1993) Issues and ethics in the helping profession. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Humphrey, Janice (1999) Decisions, decisions. Amarillo, TX : H & H Publishers

Code of Ethics for Psychiatric Nurses Association of Canada. (February, 1998)

Camosum College Guidelines for Instructors, Victoria, B.C. (1997)

Code of Ethics: American Mental Health Counselors Association. (1997)

Code of Ethics: Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia. (Fall, 1998)

Code of Ethics for the National Association of Social Workers, (revised 1990)