

ATTACHMENT 5 - BIDDER INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Solicitation Specific Questions

Bidder Name:

Center for Disability Rights, Inc. DBA Sign Language Connection (SLC)

Instructions: Complete all questions below. Questions may have a drop-down menu from which to select your response.

NOTE TO BIDDER: FAILURE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS WILL DELAY THE EVALUATION OF YOUR BID AND MAY RESULT IN REJECTION OF YOUR BID.

QUALITY CONTROL AND ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

#	Question	Response
1	What is your firm's selection, screening and hiring processes for temporary workers.	<p>CDR-SLC has a highly effective process to assess new, pre-certified interpreters. CDR-SLC contracts with a screening administrator who has 15 years of experience developing an effective process to evaluate new interpreters. Over the years, she has assessed hundreds of interpreters, clearing them to work as an interpreter prior to achieving RID certification. Our goal in assessing a new interpreter is multi-faceted. The following is a description of the elements reviewed in the process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English proficiency 2. ASL conversational proficiency 3. Resume, documenting education in interpreting 4. Recommendations from consumers of interpreting services on the skill and professionalism of the applicant. At least one should be from a Deaf person. 5. Interview with screening administrator. 6. RID written exam as a minimum. 7. Skills assessment, videotaped, demonstrating proficiency in English to ASL and ASL to English. 8. Background check where necessary. <p>Interpreters are hired as freelance workers and their performance is monitored.</p>

2	What are your testing, training and orientation programs for temporary workers?	We offer a mentoring program for new interpreters matching them with experienced interpreters. New interpreters are also monitored for their progress until they are able to pass the RID performance exam. We have a Policies and Procedures handbook that all new interpreters receive that explains how to work with us as an agency, our expectations, and who they should contact if they have a question. Monitoring of new interpreters includes placing them in jobs with more experienced interpreters who can provide us feedback on their skills. We also keep in touch with regular clients for feedback on their level of satisfaction with new interpreters. We encourage new interpreters to re-assess with us after a year of steady work to prove their skills have developed.
3	What type of background checks do you conduct for screening temporary workers (nature of the checks, kinds of records reviewed, number of years covered by the background check, etc.)?	We do background checks when the requestors asks for them. We have a contract with Rochester Business Alliance who conducts background checks for us. As per Question 4, we will conduct background checks as specified in the Solicitation.
4	Do you agree to perform the background checks as identified in the Solicitation as requested?	Yes.
5	How do you track individual resource performance? How does your firm reward good job performance by your temporary workers? Conversely, what types of disciplinary action does your firm use?	We routinely receive feedback from the requestors regarding their satisfaction with the interpreting services they received. One clear sign of satisfaction is when they ask us to send the same interpreter for the next meeting or event. If we receive a compliment about an interpreter, we always share that with the interpreter. If we run into a situation where someone files a complaint about an interpreter, an email is sent to that interpreter requesting information. A meeting is held to discuss the complaint and remedy the situation, or, if the situation warrants it, the interpreter is placed on probation. When we have an interpreter on staff, we are able to work on performance issues with an interpreter, assigning them a mentor or recommending workshops to improve skills that are at issue. With freelance interpreters, it often requires us to reduce or eliminate the amount of work we contract with them, or to reassess the fit between the work setting and the interpreter's comfort levels.
6	Do you have program(s) in place for quality assurance, customer satisfaction, and performance measurement? If yes, please describe.	Yes, we ask the requestors if they are satisfied with the interpreting services they receive. They are also able to make complaints as well. Our email address is shared with all requestors so that they can communicate their satisfaction or lack thereof.

7	What process do you follow to ensure the proposed resumes meet your client's request?	Our customers rely on us to verify the skills, knowledge, and abilities of our interpreters. We ask requestors if there are any specific skills they wish the interpreter to have, for example, experience interpreting in a given setting or with designated topics (i.e. legal, medical, psychiatric). As a rule, an interpreter's resume is not shared with our clients.
8	How do you schedule engagements?	Once a request is made, it is sent out to qualified interpreters. If they are available, we select the most qualified or experienced person to cover the job. That person is sent all pertinent information regarding the request. For general, non-preferred work, emails with open work are sent out daily, once or twice a day. When interpreters respond with their availability, we wait a few hours or until the next day so that we see who is the most qualified person available for the job (not the first to respond). A confirmation email is sent to the interpreter so that they know to reserve the time.
9	Do you have an electronic system for scheduling? If yes, please describe.	In 2002, SLC developed a comprehensive scheduling software program that we use on a daily basis. This program allows us to immediately enter data regarding new customers, request information, select and confirm interpreters, and confirm coverage with the requestor.
10	What processes do you use to ensure seamless service by subcontractors to NYS?	After confirming an interpreter's availability, we enter it into the scheduling software and send confirmation emails to the interpreters and the businesses/requestors. We also send weekly reminder emails to the interpreters with a list of their scheduled jobs for that week. Confirmations to interpreters include requesting person's contact information, phone or cell number, location, purpose of the meeting, names of parties involved, start and end time, and the name of the team interpreter if one is assigned, and any required paperwork that needs to be submitted.
11	How do you maintain and track unallowed and preferred candidate lists for your clients?	When a request is submitted, we ask if there are any preferences. If not, we follow up with the clients after the job to see if they would like to use the interpreter who just worked for them. Not all Deaf people have preferred interpreters, but when they do, that information is recorded in our system and new requests for that person are only sent to the 'preferred list.' We also keep track of interpreters they have asked us to not use.
12	What is your escalation and resolution policy (in case an issue or emergency arises)?	We aim to meet every request within 24 hours, and we have someone on-call in case of issues or emergencies. Emergencies need to be addressed by the director of interpreting services, Brooke Erickson. Appropriate action is taken, depending on the circumstances. We aim to resolve any issue quickly and to everyone's satisfaction.

13	<p>What is your process for providing a replacement if a Temp is rejected by the client? Please include details such as the time it takes to replace, and the training plan for the new Temp.</p>	<p>If we receive notification in advance of the event, we will replace the interpreter with someone the client wants, or will accept. If an interpreter is rejected by the client close to the actual event, it might mean that meeting needs to be rescheduled, so that we can assign a different interpreter. In the last 10 years, we have only had one or two times that this has been requested.</p> <p>Interpreters book their time at least two or three weeks in advance. Last minute rejections of an assigned interpreter may leave the request uncovered. If a request can't be covered, we notify the requestor and ask that they reschedule.</p>
14	<p>Does your company have a formal, published quality assurance program (measuring retention, job matching, performance of Temps on the job, etc.)? If yes, please provide details of the program and attach program documentation. If no, describe in detail the process your company intends to employ to ensure that NYS receives the best service and candidates possible.</p>	<p>We have a process but it is not published.</p> <p>Interpreting is a process of taking what is said in one language and translating it to another language on the spot. It requires the interpreter to have both English and ASL language fluency, familiarity with the topic, familiarity with the people who will be using the service - meaning their cognitive, linguistic, and social capabilities, and a deep familiarity with Deaf culture. If an interpreter has all these capabilities, they can cover most jobs. Some jobs require maturity, some require advanced knowledge such as common practices used in psychiatric hospitals or the courtroom. Matching the best interpreter to the job means knowing the skills and abilities of the interpreters and knowing the demands of each job.</p> <p>It is always our aim to get as much information as possible about each of these elements in order to make the right match. Most interpreting work happens in short time periods, one to two hours. If an interpreter is found to be a poor match, we replace them with a more suitable match the next time they meet. Poor matches happen because we weren't given enough information to make an appropriate choice. Over time, we work together and become better at making the right match.</p> <p>Communication with the requesting entity is paramount. We strive to get it right the first time and adjust as necessary. If any entity needs specific reports on coverage or billing, our scheduling program is designed to make this readily available.</p>
15	<p>Does your firm check websites such as Department of Health, Office of Professional Medical Conduct, etc. for licensure and/or accreditation information when hiring/providing candidates for Health Occupations? If yes, please provide the website address(es) you check. If no, please describe how you validate credentials for these professions.</p>	<p>There is only one resource that we can use to ensure accreditation of an interpreter: the database published by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. It identifies certification, specializations, and will indicate if any complaints have been filed against the member. www.rid.org.</p> <p>New York doesn't have licensure for interpreters at this time. Also, we depend on the interpreters' years of experience interpreting medical appointments and such. Furthermore, we depend on the interpreters' level of comfort with these types of assignments.</p> <p>Furthermore, we also depend on the interpreter's level of comfort with these types of assignments, as well as refer to the OPWDD website to comply with their requirements.</p>

16	What is your current fill ratio?	During the first three months of 2022, SLC had a fill rate of over 98%. Most of these unfilled requests were same-day requests or the interpreter fell ill. Historically our uncovered rate is less than 5% of all requests.
17	What is your current turnover rate for your temporary workers?	The interpreters are hired at-will and work as freelance interpreters. Supply and demand affects their availability. The more advance notice we are given, the more available the interpreters are to cover work and the less work goes unfilled.
18	What type of programs do you have to limit absenteeism and turnover?	Absenteeism, when it happens, is a serious concern that is addressed immediately. Depending on the reason for missing a job, the interpreter is asked to make amends with the requesting parties. If there is a pattern of behavior with frequent absences, we stop working with the interpreter. Each interpreter is sent an email showing their confirmed work for the next week. This greatly reduces absences.
19	What is your current absenteeism rate for your temporary staff?	During the first three months of 2022 we have only had two absentee assignments this year where the interpreter forgot about her assignments.
20	What policies/processes do you use to maintain high fill rates and to mitigate high turnover rates?	Our schedulers work hard to ensure that all jobs are covered. It is rare that requests go unfilled. If a request isn't covered, the requestor is informed and if possible, the event is rescheduled when we can have an interpreter available.
21	Do you subcontract any of your work to support excessive workloads, either via independent contractors or through other firms? Please describe your policies, your company's process and criteria for selection of subcontractors/suppliers (if applicable).	No, we have never needed to rely on outside sources to cover the work, but other agencies have subcontracts with us and use our interpreters if they can't fill jobs with their own interpreters. Should we need to resort to using another agency, we would require their personnel to meet our standards for performance and agree to our policies. They would need to agree to specific terms regarding confirmations, timeliness, cancellations, ethics, and professionalism.
22	What are your recruitment policies?	We reach out to colleges/universities that have interpreting training programs and talk to/recruit their seniors. Seniors in interpreter training programs are encouraged to observe and mentor with current working interpreters to get experience working in the community. This helps in their transition to working for us after graduation. We also post job openings in the local interpreter organization. Genesee Valley Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. All new recruits, regardless of their years of experience, go through our screening process.

23	<p>Describe your implementation plan for initiating this program at NYS if awarded a contract. Include your company's plan for taking on a large volume of requests during the first phase of the contract. Such a plan may include transferring candidates from other contractors to your company's internal resource pool, partnering with additional subcontractors to meet NYS's needs and implementing the program.</p>	<p>The Director of Interpreting Services will plan to meet with any entity where we awarded a contract to provide services. She will gather information that will assist in scheduling interpreters that will meet their needs.</p> <p>It is important to us that we know any specific needs of the requesting entity, for example, unique scheduling, number of Deaf people needing services, specific vocabulary that is used on-site, logistics for entry to the facility, and safety measures that need to be followed. All of that information is critical to providing adequate services and preventing misunderstandings with the interpreters.</p> <p>Our accounting personnel will need to meet with the requesting entity to assess specific types of paperwork required for billing purposes. This is in addition to the required items in the RFP. For example, if they require specific forms to be signed verifying services were rendered, or if there is specific requestor contact information that needs to be included when submitting an invoice.</p> <p>We also need to know what the entity expects in terms of paperwork needed from the interpreter in order for us to proceed with billing.</p> <p>For large volume contracts, it is possible to give an onsite person access to our scheduling program, so that they can make requests and monitor coverage.</p> <p>As for transferring candidates, we have a large pool of interpreters available to us. If another agency has used a specific interpreter and we also contract with that interpreter, we are willing to see if they want to do the work with us. If we have never used the other company's contractor, that person would need to express interest in working with our company and go through our screening process. We are rigorous in our screening process which helps to ensure that an interpreter actually has the skills needed to provide communication access.</p>
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