

LRB 4250: Proposed Changes to Sign Language Interpreter Licensure

Changes	Rationale
License Cycle and Renewal	The proposed bill allows interpreters to work indefinitely under permanent licenses, provided they maintain licensure and certification requirements where applicable. Current law has displaced interpreters from work due to restrictive licensure renewal requirements.
Setting Restrictions	The DSPS license is intended for generalist practitioners who work in a variety of settings. Current law allows interpreters without national certification to interpret in critical situations such as legal, mental health and medical settings. The proposed legislation protects consumers and businesses, requiring an advance standard of skill before entering a high-risk environment, avoiding potential for miscommunication and legal recourse.
Enforcement	Enforcement has been identified as a weakness in the current license due to limited penalties for infractions. Many Deaf community members have not attempted to file a complaint, and for those who have, many grievances have been inadequately addressed or remedied. The addition of the Sign Language Interpreting Examining Board will have the governance authority to seek punitive measures and will encourage consumers to file complaints and will further prevent unlicensed practice of interpreting in the state of Wisconsin.
Title Protection	Under the proposed law, no individual may use any title relating to sign language interpreters unless the individual is licensed under DSPS, falls under the educational interpreter exemption, or is interpreting in specific religious settings. In order to protect consumers from fraud, unlicensed individuals caught providing sign language interpreting services for compensation will incur severe penalties.
Competing Certifications	There are two competing national certification programs (RID and BEI) that vary in requirements, evaluation, and credential levels. Proposed changes ensure Wisconsin licensed interpreters have equivalent qualifications regardless of certification. In order to protect the interest of the public from substandard levels of knowledge and skill, the proposed license structure establishes a clear pathway for both deaf and hearing interpreters.
Replacing the Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA)	The Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing under the Department of Health Services recognizes that the WITA assessment is outdated and needs to be replaced. It cannot formally remove the program because it is currently written into the license requirements. The proposed changes require DHS to provide updated testing for licensure; ODHHS has been in the process of obtaining the BEI certification exams since late 2015.
CEU Requirements	Certification programs vary in their CEU cycle requirements. Additionally, one license category (Intermediate-Deaf) does not require a certification to obtain a license but will expect interpreters in that category to maintain continuing education standards equivalent to their peers.
MOU Committee	A committee of stakeholders is established and charged with creating a MOU guideline for when and where a DPI license and DSPS license is a requirement. Committee shall meet before each license renewal cycle to either continue the MOU agreement or recommend updates.
Video Remote Interpreting	Because some states do not have minimum standards for sign language interpreters to work, the proposed bill includes a provision to require video remote interpreters to be licensed whether providing services to clients within the state or working in the state as a remote interpreter.

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For more information: <http://wisrid.org/licensure.html>

Summary

LRB-4250 would replace the Wisconsin license for sign language interpreters that was passed in 2010: Wisconsin §440.032. Current licensure no longer reflects the evolution of a growing profession and proposed changes which updates and models best practices for sign language interpreters.

Licensure is key to protecting consumers from fraud or substandard skills in very critical situations such as education, employment, medical, and legal settings.

Since the passing of the law, the field of sign language interpretation has increased its expectations of practitioners to obtain knowledge and techniques acquired through formal study. This includes a set of language processing skills, ethical decision making skills, and breadth/depth of technical knowledge. Using national standards for interpreters, the proposed licensure model appropriately places interpreters in categories based on education, training, and skill level.

Proposed Licensure Tiers

<p style="text-align: center;">Intermediate Hearing</p> <p>Requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of a bachelor's degree • Successful completion of an interpreter training program completion • BEI Basic certification or equivalent <p>Alternative options available for those who may only have an associate's degree in sign language interpretation or are BEI Basic certified prior to the enactment of the law</p> <p>Setting Restriction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot interpret in legal or mental health settings. • Cannot interpret in medical settings unless team interpreting with an advanced-licensed interpreter (deaf or hearing) 	<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced Hearing</p> <p>Requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of a bachelor's degree • Successful completion of an interpreter training program completion • BEI Advance, BEI Master, or RID NIC certification or equivalent <p>Alternative options available for those who are already certified prior to enactment with BEI Advance, BEI Master, RID NIC or any of the previous iterations of RID's national interpreter certification program: CI, CT, IC, TC, NIC Advance, NIC Master, MCSC, CSC.</p> <p>Setting Restriction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot interpret in legal unless listed on the Wisconsin Supreme Court Interpreter Roster
<p style="text-align: center;">Intermediate Deaf</p> <p>Requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a minimum of a high school diploma • Intense, comprehensive training as a Deaf Interpreter based on specialized deaf interpreting skills, ASL language development, and observation with Deaf interpreters. <p>Setting Restriction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot interpret in legal unless listed on the Wisconsin Supreme Court Interpreter Roster 	<p style="text-align: center;">Advanced Deaf</p> <p>Requires</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires minimum of an associate's degree • CDI or equivalent certification <p>Setting Restriction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot interpret in legal unless listed on the Wisconsin Supreme Court Interpreter Roster