

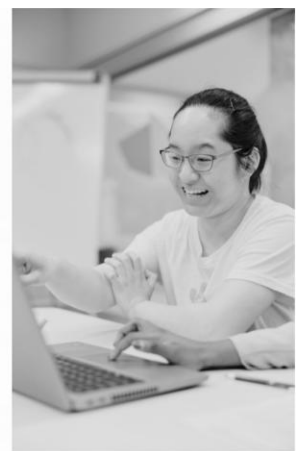
Strengthening the ASL Interpreting Profession

Recommendations for Workforce Stability and Inclusive Employment

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Executive Summary

American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are essential to ensuring equitable access to employment for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Across British Columbia, however, persistent workforce shortages and systemic challenges threaten the stability of the ASL interpreting profession. Despite high and growing demand, the supply of qualified Interpreters remains insufficient and unevenly distributed.

This report draws on labour market research and findings from the *Closing the Gap: Best Practices for Supporting d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Workers in British Columbia* project, including focus groups and interviews with ASL interpreters, D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, and employers. Participants in *Closing the Gap* shared that workforce instability is driven by inconsistent training and education, decentralized employment models, income volatility, limited opportunities for career progression, and insufficient employer awareness and knowledge. These challenges result in unfilled service requests, variable service delivery, burnout among Interpreters, and reduced opportunities to support D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers, particularly in specialized, rural, and high-demand contexts.

This recommendations report proposes a coordinated, system-level response focused on five priorities: promoting the ASL interpreting profession; strengthening education and career pathways; modernizing employment and compensation models; building employer capacity to plan for and integrate interpreting services; and improving policy alignment and regional coordination. Targeted investments in these areas would stabilize workforce supply, improve service quality, reduce the negative impacts of unmet demand, and support inclusive labour market participation for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers.

Introduction

The American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting profession plays a critical role in enabling inclusive employment for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. ASL Interpreters provide essential communication access across the employment lifecycle, from job search and interviews to workplace training, collaboration, and advancement (Breen, 2015; Carty, 2010). However, persistent Interpreter shortages and systemic challenges in education, employment models, and coordination threaten the stability of this profession.

Shortages of qualified Sign language Interpreters have been reported for decades. Research dating back to the 1960s and 1970s identified growing demand alongside insufficient Interpreter supply, particularly within education and other public service settings (e.g., Baily & Straub, 1992; Jones et al., 1997). This literature linked Interpreter shortages to broader structural shifts, including the integration of D/deaf individuals into mainstream institutions and expanding requirements for communication access across sectors.

While much of this early literature reflects the U.S. context, it establishes that interpreter shortages are not a recent or isolated phenomenon. ASL Interpreters working in British Columbia similarly describe long-standing and systemic workforce constraints, evidenced by unfulfilled requests, scheduling bottlenecks, and limited capacity in specialized and rural/remote settings.

This report aims to guide stakeholders in strengthening the ASL interpreting workforce in British Columbia and improving equitable access to interpreting services. While the primary geographic focus is British Columbia, many recommendations have relevance across Canada. The report draws on labour market research and findings from the *Closing the Gap: Best Practices for*

Supporting d/Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Workers in British Columbia research project, which included focus groups and interviews with Interpreters, D/deaf and Hard of Hearing persons, and employers. Insights from focus groups and interviews were analyzed to identify recurring challenges and actionable solutions.

Why This Matters

Demand for ASL interpreting services in British Columbia is high, yet supply remains insufficient, with fewer than 300 registered Interpreters in the province serving thousands of Deaf signing individuals (Province of British Columbia, 2021). This imbalance reflects systemic factors such as limited training program availability, geographic disparities, and early-career attrition. Overall, the profession faces both opportunities for growth and structural challenges that require coordinated action to ensure sustainable access and workforce stability.

What This Report Offers

The recommendations presented here aim to:

- Address workforce shortages and retention challenges.
- Promote ASL interpreting as a viable and rewarding career.
- Strengthen education and professional development pathways.
- Enhance coordination among stakeholders.
- Inspire policies that ensure sustainable access to interpreting services.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can help build a resilient ASL interpreting profession and create workplaces that are accessible, inclusive, and equitable for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

In what follows, we begin by examining challenges associated with the profession, before turning to recommendations and implementation considerations.

Challenges Associated with the ASL Interpreting Profession in British Columbia

Participants in *Closing the Gap* identified a range of challenges affecting entry into the profession, Interpreter retention, and overall workforce stability. These challenges span education and training, employment models, and systemic coordination, shaping both the professional experiences of Interpreters and the accessibility of services for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

Entry into the Profession

Interpreters described significant barriers to entering the profession, beginning with limited access to training programs. Participants highlighted frequent closures and inconsistencies across ASL interpreting programs across Canada, resulting in uneven availability by region. Financial barriers, particularly high tuition costs, and lack of standardized curriculum across regions further exacerbate inequities.

When programs do exist, they are often under-advertised, contributing to low public awareness of the profession. As one participant remarked, *“if I didn’t live in the province where it was already being offered, I probably would never have found my way there”* (ASL01-02).

Participants also reported a lack of clear, widely communicated career pathway guidance. There is limited structured information outlining how individuals move from initial interest, to learning ASL, to Interpreter training, certification, and employment. As a result, many Interpreters reported entering the field by chance, often due to their personal interests in language or working with D/deaf or Hard of Hearing communities, rather than through intentional career planning.

Training programs were described as highly demanding and inflexible, with limited systemic supports for students. Rigid program structures, such as fixed timelines for completion, leave little room to accommodate personal circumstances. One participant shared that,

It's a really demanding program [...] so many people drop out [...] there's no flexibility like so many other degrees [...] one of my classmates had to take a pause from the interpreting program because her daughter needed her and she had to be at home. And there was no option to change the structure of the program to kind of meet that need (ASL01-02).

Participants noted that these challenges contributed to attrition among peers and colleagues, with some students leaving training prematurely, and others reconsidering long-term participation in the profession.

Retention and Advancement in the Profession

Once Interpreters enter the workforce, new challenges emerge that impact retention, particularly within the first five years of practice. Interpreters reported high attrition driven by burnout, uncompensated travel time, and emotional strain, compounded by the absence of structured supports for early-career interpreters. Mentorship opportunities exist but are often informal or under-resourced: *"There's so little resources once you're done graduating. I'm signed up with a few [mentorship] programs, but what those programs can offer is extremely limited because everything like that is done on people's volunteer time, unpaid time"* (ASL01-02).

The nature of freelance and contract work means that new graduates experience limited structured skill-building opportunities in the field. Remarking on a new graduate's professional situation, one experienced Interpreter reflects,

As a new Interpreter, she may not be qualified for the breadth and depth of the work that is being requested [...] and because we are not employees of somewhere, there is no mechanism to say, "OK, [ASL01-02], as a new practitioner, we're going to scaffold your skills in so that you can go and work with these two Interpreters" [...] And so that's part of I think this, the shortage of Interpreters, is that there is no sustainable way to say "absolutely, let's bring new Interpreters in" (ASL01-01).

Participants further described tension between freelance and contract work models. Freelance work offers flexibility but creates instability and unpredictability in income, described as the *"golden handcuffs"* of the profession. Contract roles offer stability but often lower pay and limited advancement. Some contract roles also come with additional contextual challenges; for example, one participant shared that when they worked in a classroom setting, they were sometimes treated as a teacher's assistant, rather than as a contractor supporting communication access for a student.

As for compensation, Interpreters cited wage variability and low pay rates as direct, persistent pain points. Pay rates often fail to reflect the complexity or emotional demands of specialized work, such as that required in medical and legal contexts or correctional facilities. Wages

frequently do not scale with experience, and compensation varies widely across settings (i.e., K–12, post-secondary, medical, legal, community). There are no pensions or benefits associated with the profession.

Interpreters additionally reported unclear advancement pathways throughout their professional history. Few formal progression ladders exist, leaving Interpreters uncertain about career growth. This is compounded by the nature of interpretation, especially in the case of freelance and contract arrangements, where services are typically short-term events. In such cases, the expectations set by stakeholders limit Interpreters in space and time; Interpreters are largely not anchored to a location or professional network for long-term periods.

Existing advancement pathways typically involve specializing in fields that require background training, such as medical, legal, and mental health interpreting, but interpreting in these fields can be more demanding and the pay doesn't always reflect the intensity of the labour. Nor do existing Interpreter Education Programs provide fulsome training opportunities that prepare graduates for these specializations.

Supply and Demand

Meeting the demand for ASL interpreting services in British Columbia has been a long-standing challenge. As early as the 1990s, a Disability Services Grant Report Summary documented shortages of qualified interpreters across postsecondary institutions (University Colleges and Program Planning Branch, 2001). While the policy and service landscape has evolved since that time, concerns about availability persist. *Closing the Gap* participants reported ongoing unmet demand for and inequitable access to interpreting services, evidenced by regularly unfulfilled requests.

Building on previous research (Baily and Straub, 1992; McLaughlin, 2010), a 2009 Provincial Review of ASL/Deaf Studies and Interpreter Education in British Columbia estimates that the appropriate ratio of ASL Interpreters to D/deaf individuals is 1 Interpreter for every 12 D/deaf individuals (Gordon & Hardy, 2009). Yet participants in our study were hesitant to commit to a ratio. One participant remarked that 1 Interpreter for every 4 or 5 D/deaf individuals would be useful, but most indicated that the demand varies widely by context, with some assignments requiring multiple Interpreters or specialized expertise. In addition, because requests for services cluster around peak demand days or times, scheduling bottlenecks are common, and requests for services during these windows may be unfulfilled, especially for last-minute bookings or assignments in rural or remote areas where the travel time, distance, and costs are economically unfeasible for Interpreters.

Another factor impacting the supply-demand dynamic in the profession is the lengthy pathway for new graduates to establish themselves and their careers, and to develop enough experience to be able to handle more complex assignments. Recent graduates described struggles securing consistent work that was appropriately complex for their experience levels.

Finally, building relationships with other Interpreters as well as service agencies is necessary for career success but remains a barrier for new graduates.

Emotional and Ethical Dimensions of ASL Interpretation Labour

Some Interpreters described compassion fatigue and an emotional toll associated with the work. Interpreters often navigate high-stakes, emotionally charged contexts (e.g., medical, trauma-related), which can lead to stress and burnout. Such experiences were described in association

with not only medical settings but also professional workplace settings when social and communicative misalignment between parties was observed. In workplace settings, social and communicative tension between D/deaf or Hard of Hearing workers and jobseekers and employers can lead to frustration for Interpreters, especially when misunderstandings between the parties were due to interpretation error, yet the employer faulted the D/deaf or Hard of Hearing worker or jobseeker.

The above example highlights one of many ethical dilemmas experienced by Interpreters. Generally, balancing neutrality with cultural mediation, managing conflicts of interest, and ensuring faithful interpretation while supporting empowerment are ongoing challenges.

Such ethical dilemmas cause Interpreters to experience advocacy ambiguity. Interpreters were divided on whether advocacy is part of their role, creating tension around boundaries and expectations. Some Interpreters stated their services begin and end with interpretation, while others expressed instances when it was appropriate to go beyond interpretation as a service and advocate for D/deaf or Hard of Hearing persons. For example, one Interpreter working in a school setting reported “*sticking up for*” a D/deaf or Hard of Hearing student by informing their teacher about their right to an Interpreter during course assessments (ASL04-01). They also described teaching employers about available interpretation services and government funding to encourage ongoing accommodations as instances of advocacy. Another Interpreter reported “*taking initiative*” in workplace meetings by prompting input from the D/deaf or Hard of Hearing worker who was being overlooked during the discussion (ASL02-01).

Employer Awareness and Attitudes about ASL Interpretation

Interpreters reported persistent knowledge gaps among employers, including limited understanding of Interpreter roles, qualifications, and booking processes. Participants noted that misconceptions about both the cost and necessity of interpreting services can contribute to ambivalence towards accommodations and inclusive practices. In some cases, employers limit when interpretation is considered ‘necessary,’ such as declining to provide Interpreters for monthly staff meetings when D/deaf or Hard of Hearing employees hold entry-level positions, under the assumption that the information shared is not relevant to them.

Interpreters emphasized that these decisions overlook the broader importance of workplace connection and access to information. They also constrain opportunities for professional growth by limiting the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing employees’ ability to stay informed, build relationships, and demonstrate readiness for advancement.

Poor employer understanding also affects interpretation service quality. Inappropriate interpreter-client matching, unrealistic expectations, and undervaluing Interpreters’ expertise were described as common outcomes. These dynamics create barriers to effective communication and contribute to systemic inequities in employment for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

Quality Interpretation

Both interpreters and D/deaf or Hard of Hearing participants identified quality interpretation as a major concern. D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers emphasized the importance of Interpreter continuity and cultural-linguistic competency, particularly when technical knowledge is required. As one D/deaf or Hard of Hearing participant explained: “*And honestly, I think that, oh, you know, we want to sound smart. And unfortunately, sometimes how people perceive us is through the Interpreter’s voice. And so if the Interpreter is struggling to understand what we’re saying, the person who is listening gets an impression of us, and it’s not our fault, it’s based on the*

interpretation. So, if we have a good interpreter who we have a relationship with, who we worked with frequently, then everything just goes a lot more smoothly” (DHH01-01).

Frequent turnover and lack of qualified Interpreters heightens the risk of instances of misunderstanding and eroded trust. Interpreters echoed these concerns, noting that learning specialized terminology and subject matter takes time and consistency: *“I would really struggle if a deaf person had just graduated from their MBA and they were looking for work somewhere [...] I’m supposed to come in and know business and finance terms, when really all my work has been in education or social services [...] the Interpreter’s really going to kind of butcher this [...] And then the employers like, “do I really want to hire this person? Because they don’t actually sound like they know what they’re talking about” (ASL01-01).*

Decentralization and its Impact on Workforce Stability

The profession operates within a decentralized system with multiple agencies coordinating service delivery. ASL Interpreters in our study noted this system can lead to inefficiencies in scheduling, procurement, and Interpreter-client matching, in turn contributing to inequitable access and irregular request fulfilment. Under this system, interpretation services are often contracted through bids, and hiring parties frequently prioritize low cost over fit or skill. Such practices undermine continuity for complex or ongoing assignments and erode trust among employers and the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community. For Interpreters, then, decentralization contributes to the challenges described above, including unpredictable workloads, income variability, and limited opportunities for advancement.

Recommendations for Supporting the ASL Interpretation Profession

Building a sustainable ASL interpreting profession requires coordinated action across education, employment, and policy domains. The following recommendations are informed by Interpreter and D/deaf and Hard of Hearing participant perspectives from *Closing the Gap*, as well as labour market research. Each recommendation addresses barriers identified in the previous section and aims to strengthen the profession while improving access for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers.

Promote ASL interpreting as a Profession

ASL Interpreters shared low public awareness and unclear career pathways as contributors to workforce shortages and program under-enrollment. Increasing visibility and positioning ASL interpreting as a viable, rewarding career requires coordinated outreach and education strategies.

Recommendation: Increase public awareness and position ASL interpreting as a viable career.

Participants emphasized that unless people have early exposure to someone who is D/deaf and Hard of Hearing, they are not likely to know the barriers faced by the community and the service that interpretation provides. To address lack of public awareness, develop information campaigns that introduce ASL interpreting and show its role in accessibility. This could involve:

- Developing a central information hub offering clear, accessible resources about interpreting services and career pathways.
- Outreach initiatives through community events, social media, job fairs, and partnerships with organizations serving people who are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing.

- Media engagement to normalize Interpreter visibility.

Recommendation: Highlight success stories. Showcase Interpreters working across diverse sectors and the positive impact of interpreting on D/deaf and Hard of Hearing employment outcomes. Use video profiles and case studies to humanize the profession and inspire interest.

Recommendation: Expand ASL learning opportunities. Several participants shared that an interest in the language brought them to the profession. Integrating affordable and accessible ASL courses in schools, libraries, and community programs would help increase awareness of the language, build foundational language skills, and promote interest in interpreting careers. Offering online and hybrid learning options would help to reach rural and remote learners.

Strengthen Education and Career Pathways

ASL Interpreters described program closures, inconsistent curricula, and limited supports as barriers to entry and retention in the profession. Addressing these gaps requires coordinated action across education providers, professional associations, and government.

Recommendation: Stabilize and expand Interpreter training programs. Maintain existing Interpreter Education Programs and develop new ones in provinces that lack training options in the field. Postsecondary educational institutes can also create dedicated Bachelor of Arts degree pathways for ASL training, or certification programs. While curriculum may be flexible and tailored to regional contexts, all graduates should learn the same competencies regardless of the program. Integrate specialized tracks (e.g., legal, mental health interpretation) with the certification process built-in where necessary (e.g., medical interpretation) to address workforce shortages and better prepare graduates for entry into competitive employment.

Recommendation: Provide clear pathway guidance for students and graduates of Interpreter Education programs. Create plain-language resources outlining steps from ASL learning to certification and employment, including financial aid options, screening requirements, and an up-to-date list of service agencies and their contact information.

Recommendation: Introduce resourced mentorship opportunities among Interpreters. New graduates described the challenges associated with breaking into the profession, including building credibility and a professional network. While mentorship programs exist, they are insufficiently resourced. Create funded mentorship programs with paid and structured mentor opportunities that will encourage established Interpreters to pair with new graduates. Ensure the mentorship program offers features such as peer supervision and debriefing supports to address challenges of the profession.

Improve Employment Models and Retention

ASL Interpreters shared that income instability, competition, and a lack of supports in the profession can lead to early-career attrition and workforce shortage. Addressing these issues requires structural changes to employment models and retention strategies.

Recommendation: Establish a centralized employment system. Move away from the fragmented, decentralized freelance model by creating a centralized system that streamlines Interpreter scheduling and employment. This could look like consolidating agencies into a single coordinating hub to manage all freelance requests or developing an employer-based model where Interpreters are hired as staff rather than independent contractors, ensuring predictable income and benefits.

Recommendation: Implement fair and transparent compensation practices. Advocate for tiered pay scales that reflect experience, specialization, credentials, and emotional demands of assignments. Standardized compensation will reduce variability in bidding systems, discourage lowest-cost hiring, and incentivize Interpreters to pursue advanced training.

Recommendation: Create progression ladders and specialization tracks. Define clear advancement opportunities for Interpreters, including roles in niche or specialized interpreting contexts, teaching, policy or program development, or mentorship roles. Broadened opportunities for advancement will provide alternate pathways for Interpreters who are looking to transition away from, or supplement, freelance or contract-based service delivery.

Recommendation: Support Interpreter wellness and retention. Introduce measures to mitigate burnout and compassion fatigue, and foster resilience within the profession, such as access to mental health resources tailored to Interpreters' unique challenges, peer support groups and mentorship programs for early-career Interpreters, and structured debriefing protocols following demanding assignments.

Enhance Employer Awareness and Capacity

Employer lack of knowledge and misconceptions undermine workplace inclusion and service delivery quality among Interpreters.

Recommendation: Provide employer training on how to navigate the interpretation system in British Columbia. Service agencies and community organizations can offer employer-focused workshops, webinars, guides, and toolkits on booking Interpreters, understanding the role and behaviour of Interpreters when they are in the workplace supporting a D/deaf or Hard of Hearing worker, and fostering inclusive communication practices.

Recommendation: Embed the possibility of Interpreter services into workplace strategic planning and forecasting. Encourage workplaces to move beyond treating ASL interpretation as an ad hoc accommodation by integrating interpretation services into all core business functions and planning processes, including recruitment, onboarding, training, team meetings, performance reviews, and professional development. For example, workplaces can establish standard protocols for booking Interpreters, incorporate Interpreter access into budgets and strategic planning, and hire Interpreters as full- or part-time staff.

Recommendation: Bolster financial supports for employers. Create information campaigns for employers to introduce them to how WorkBC functions and its coverage for interpretation services. Community organizations and professional associations can advocate for further government subsidies or tax incentives to offset Interpreter costs, reducing barriers to hiring and accommodating D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers.

Advance Policy and System-Level Coordination

Fragmented systems and uneven policy coverage perpetuate inequities in the profession for Interpreters.

Recommendation: Mandate Interpreter access. Sign language is recognized as the primary language for communication among Deaf persons in the Accessible British Columbia Act, but Interpreter access is not required by law. Community organizations and professional associations can advocate for legislation and policies guaranteeing Interpreter access in the workplace.

Recommendation: Establish at least one regional coordination council in British Columbia. Create a multi-stakeholder body to coordinate Interpreter education, service delivery, and workforce planning, ensuring alignment and shared accountability among key stakeholders in the field. Ensure ASL Interpreter and D/deaf and Hard of Hearing perspectives are fully integrated, with members of these communities playing active roles on the council and in shaping ASL Interpreter programs, policies, and services within BC and across regions.

Implementation Considerations

As the ASL Interpreting profession in British Columbia operates within a complex ecosystem involving multiple agencies and funding streams, few training institutions, community organizations, and uneven policy frameworks, implementing the recommendations outlined in this report will require a deliberate approach that anticipates several systemic and operational challenges.

Anticipated Challenges

Several barriers may impede the implementation of recommendations. Lack of coordination among service agencies creates inefficiencies in scheduling and workforce planning. Funding constraints pose a major challenge, as expanding Interpreter training programs, piloting centralized employment models, and establishing resourced mentorship programs and networks require sustained investment. Regional disparities further complicate implementation, with rural and remote areas facing entrenched Interpreter shortages and offering limited incentives for Interpreters. Resistance to change among employers and service agencies may slow adoption of new models, while the burden of collecting and analyzing data across decentralized systems can strain resources for policy makers and researchers.

Mitigation Strategies

To overcome these challenges, stakeholders should adopt a phased approach. Small-scale pilots, such as centralized employment hubs or resourced mentorship programs, can be launched first to test feasibility and refine models before scaling regionally and provincially. Funding strategies should be diversified, combining government grants, employer contributions, and private sponsorships to ensure stability. Standardized toolkits and templates can be developed by researchers, community organizations, or other associations in the field to help employers implement best practices, including resources such as Interpreter booking guides and accessibility checklists. Change management supports, such as training and communication campaigns, can build buy-in among employers and service providers. Establishing regional coordination councils will foster collaboration among Interpreter education programs, certifying bodies, service agencies, the Interpreter community, and the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community, while employer incentives, such as tax credits or subsidies, can reduce financial barriers to hiring Interpreters and providing accommodations.

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation

Measuring progress is essential for accountability and long-term success. Evaluation should combine quantitative indicators, such as Interpreter retention rates and request fulfillment, with qualitative feedback from Interpreters, employers, and D/deaf and Hard of Hearing people.

Data should be collected and published on an annual basis by Sign language associations (e.g., West Coast Association of Visual Language Interpreters, or WAVLI) and the Labour Market Development and Immigration Division within the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and

Future Skills in the Government of British Columbia, to maintain transparency and allow stakeholders to adjust strategies based on emerging needs and data trends.

By embedding evaluation into every stage of implementation, stakeholders can ensure that efforts remain responsive, equitable, and aligned with the overarching goals of inclusive employment for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community and sustainable employment for the Interpreter community.

Domain	Indicator	Data Source
Capacity	- Applicant and enrollment count year-over-year across ASL training programs in British Columbia - Annual completion rates of students in ASL training programs in British Columbia	- Interpreter Education Programs - Service Agencies
Access & Quality	- Rate of filled vs. unfilled requests for freelance Interpreting services per quarter - Average time to hire for contract positions such as in schools year-over-year	- Service Agencies - School districts - Employer surveys
Social Impact and Value	- Hiring and retention rates of D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers who work with ASL Interpreters - Frequency and quality of ASL Interpretation service delivery from the perspective of D/deaf and Hard of Hearing Workers - User satisfaction from the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing client perspective and the employer client perspective - Promotion rates of D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers who work with ASL Interpreters	- Employer surveys and HR data - ASL Interpreter Associations - D/deaf or Hard of Hearing Associations
Retention & Progression	- Longitudinal retention rates (1-, 3-, 5-year) for Interpreters - Wage progression vs. experience - Rate of specialization uptake among ASL Interpreters - Rate of filled vs. unfilled requests for specialized Interpreter services per sector and per quarter (legal, medical, etc.) - Meaningfulness in work from ASL Interpreter perspective - Quality of work from ASL Interpreter perspective	- Interpreter Associations - Employer surveys - Service Agencies
Equity & Inclusion	- Employment outcomes for underserved demographics among D/deaf and Hard of Hearing workers (e.g., rural and remote workers) - Access parity across regions in British Columbia and across industries/sectors	- Accessibility Audit data from organizations - Employer surveys and HR data

Conclusion

ASL interpreters are essential to creating equitable workplaces and enabling full participation for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Yet the profession faces persistent challenges, ranging from workforce shortages and decentralized employment systems to limited training opportunities

and low public awareness. These barriers not only undermine stability in the profession but also impact access to employment for the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a starting point for coordinated action across education, employment, and policy domains. By stabilizing training programs, improving career pathways, centralizing employment models, and embedding Interpreter services into workplace strategies, stakeholders can strengthen the profession and ensure reliable access to interpretation services. Equally important are efforts to raise public awareness, expand ASL learning opportunities, and foster employer capacity to create inclusive workplaces.

Achieving these goals will require collaboration among interpreter associations, certifying bodies, education programs, service agencies, employers, and organizations serving the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Each has a role to play, from advocating for changes in policy and funding models to implementing practical supports and promoting cultural change.

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