

# Ethics

THOU SHALT OR THOU SHALT NOT



## Training objectives

▶ Be able to describe:

What is a code of ethics  
Why a code of ethics exists  
What the interpreter code of ethics covers



We are going to be going over each point and explain what it means.

# Code of Ethics – What and Why?

- ▶ A code of ethics is a set of principles and rules used by companies, professional organizations and individuals to govern their decision making in choosing between right and wrong. Depending on the context of a given code of ethics, penalties and/or sanctions may result from a violation.
- ▶ Codes of ethics are generally used in the business and professional context to assure the public that corporations and members of regulated professions are acting in a socially and professionally acceptable manner. Organizations with an established and published code of ethics have in place review processes and appeals procedures to guard against malicious or self-serving use of the code for individual benefit.

## Code of Ethics – Why?

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# What is a code of ethics?

- ▶ A code is a set of rules
- ▶ Everyone within a profession or function is supposed to follow this set of rules
- ▶ A code is usually set by the people who will live by it and whose reputation it defines
- ▶ A code of ethics describes correct conduct in a certain role

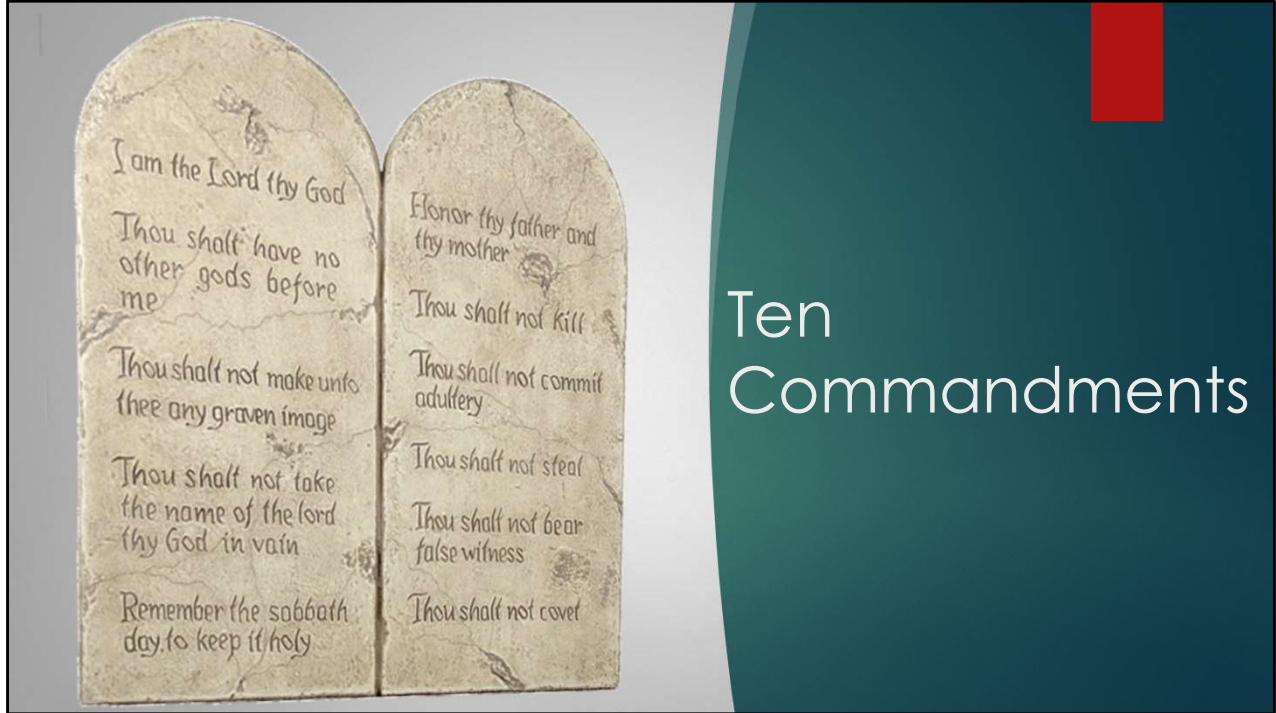


Lets review in general what is a code of ethics. Many professions have a code of ethics, Doctors, Lawyers, Airplane Pilots, and so how does this apply to us as interpreters?

- A code of ethics basically is a set of rules.
- These codes are tailored for certain professions, that reflect certain job responsibilities that these professions carry out.
- A code is usually set by the people who will live by it and whose reputation it defines
- A code of ethics describes correct conduct in a certain role

We take care of Deaf people...is it important that we do it in a certain way? Is what we do any different than selling shoes? Why do we have a code of ethics and someone selling shoes do not?

The easiest way to answer that question is Deaf people first and Deaf safety. Shoes may have ware but ultimately people are not distressed their shoe comes to harm the same way as a family member, friend or themselves come to harm. These code of ethics are there not only to protect the Deaf but also to protect the interpreters who provide service to them.



### **Codes for Individuals**

Individual codes of ethics are most commonly seen as part of the tenets of a religion but can also be considered to be those unwritten rules of behavior instilled in an individual by their upbringing and environment.

Society at large assumes that certain ethical behaviors are defined regardless of religion, geographic location or nationality.

Examples of societal ethical behavior can include such things as:

- Respect for another's property
- Refraining from violence against another
- Treating others with civility

Certain codes of ethics can apply only to members of select groups and are not necessarily in step with society as a whole. Examples of this phenomenon include the criminal organization of Japan known as the Yakuza.

### **Yakuza**

Theft from and violence against non-Yakuza are considered perfectly acceptable, but there are definite rules for acceptable and regulated behavior between Yakuza members, the breaking of which can be followed by harsh punishments. Individual and societal codes of ethics can therefore be seen as more elastic than those of corporations and professional organizations.

## Ten Commandments

One of the most famous codes of ethics that apply to individuals is the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments find their roots in religion and not all of them will resonate with all people. Most people, however, can appreciate the ethical reasoning behind at least some of the Ten commandments even if they do not believe the religious teachings surrounding them.

1. I am the Lord your God, You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
10. You shall not covet

Codes of ethics are present at all levels of society, business and individual behavior. Many are codified in writing and enforced with penalties while others are more [malleable](#) and dependent on the individual's perception of right and wrong.

Regardless of their source or means of enforcement, codes of ethics permeate modern life and are factors to be considered in almost every facet of daily life, from proper work behavior to double parking to grabbing the daily latte.

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## Health Care Code of Ethics (in general) Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Therapists...



- ▶ Protects patients from harm
  - correct info for good health outcomes
  - financial safety from predators
  - maintains privacy and empowers patient
- ▶ Clarifies the role of the worker
  - scope, what does he do, what does he not do
  - professional boundaries and relationships
- ▶ Defines a superior worker from those not so good
  - quality of work
  - professional habits

So... here are some other industries and other professions that adhere to a code of ethics. They are there to:

- Protect patients from harm
- To distribute correct information
- Provide financial safety from predators who may prey on people in distress
- Helps maintain privacy which empowers the patient to feel safe.
- It also clarifies the role of the worker (some do's and don'ts)
- What is the scope of the profession, what lies within and without that scope. What am I suppose to do and what should I try not to get involved in.

If YOU are a nurse and was asked to do brain surgery would the code of ethics guide YOU on that? If you asked me as a doctor when I am a nurse I would question your sanity.... These rules and regulations are there specifically to keep job responsibilities within the realm of people who have been trained and hold credentials and to carry out that task safely. Every state has their own rules and regulations so you have to be trained and certified for that task. If someone wanted to help a family member, it would be up to them to take the training, the test, and become certified. This also applies for interpreters...you have to be a bonified, educated, trained, vetted and certified person to perform that task. IF you have interpreted in the schools, or community... you may have training, and

education but may not be medically specific. Having these code of ethics will clarify the role of the worker.

- What are the professional boundaries and relationship with co-workers and the relationship you have with the Deaf.
- It also helps clearly define a superior workers performance and
- separates them from an average or not so good performance
- It shows the quality of work
- And helps instill the professional habits you maintain to keep your skills sharp

## Interpreter Code of Ethics – Why did they fight so hard to create it?

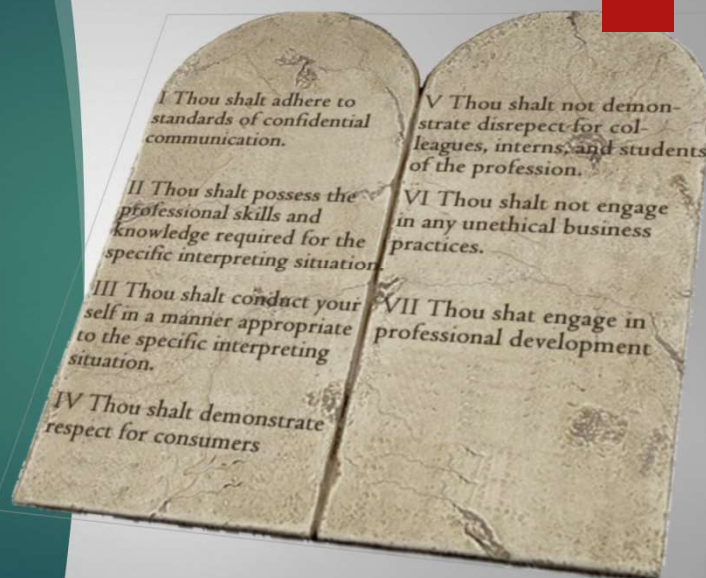
- ▶ “My interpreter told me that the other interpreter in town would gossip about me, so I should always get appointments that would fit with her schedule. This slowed down my course of treatment so much that I lost my insurance before I could finish treatment, and now I can't afford to go to the doctor.”
- ▶ “My interpreter was with me when I had to terminate my pregnancy due to vary severe abnormalities in the fetus. The interpreter keeps telling me that God does not allow abortions. I am so depressed that I cannot take care of myself or my two children.”
- ▶ “My interpreter took a picture of me and posted it on their Facebook page”
- ▶ “When I go to the heart doctor, my interpreter likes to talk to the doctor in English. He tells everyone that he went to medical school back in his country. The doctor hardly pays any attention to me, and the interpreter tells me not to ask so many questions, just to do what the doctor instructs me to do.”



These are some true scenarios, from the Deaf point of view. In each case the Deaf person is anguished and not led to their happiness. In each scenario it was the interpreter and the way they performed their function. The role of the interpreter is there to make the access equal. They are there to put the Deaf person on an equal playing ground with hearing people. We must be very careful not to add any additional burden to the Deaf.

# Interpreter Code of Ethics

1. Confidential Communication
2. Professional skills and knowledge
3. Appropriate conduct
4. Demonstrate respect for consumers
5. Demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession
6. Maintain ethical business practices
7. Engage in professional development

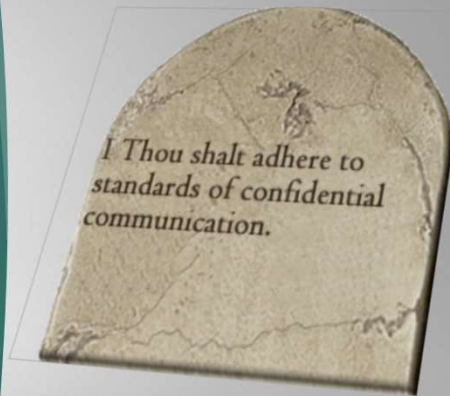


## The element of the code of ethics:

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## Guiding Principle: Commandment #1

- ▶ Interpreters hold a position of trust in their role as linguistic and cultural facilitators of communication. Confidentiality is highly valued by consumers and is essential to protecting all involved.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #1**

Thou shalt adhere to standards of confidential communication

Interpreters hold a position of trust in their role as linguistic and cultural facilitators of communication. **Confidentiality** is highly valued by consumers and is essential to protecting all involved.

## Guiding Principle: Commandment #1

- ▶ Each interpreting situation (e.g., elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, legal, medical, mental health) has a standard of confidentiality.
- ▶ Under the reasonable interpreter standard, professional interpreters are expected to know the general requirements and applicability of various levels of confidentiality.
- ▶ Exceptions to confidentiality include, for example, federal and state laws requiring mandatory reporting of abuse or threats of suicide, or responding to subpoenas.

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Exceptions to **confidentiality** include, for example, federal and state laws requiring mandatory reporting of abuse or threats of suicide, or responding to subpoenas.

# Illustrative Behavior Commandment # 1

- ▶ 1.1 Share assignment-related information only on a confidential and “as-needed” basis (e.g., supervisors, interpreter team members, members of the educational team, hiring entities).
- ▶ 1.2 Manage data, invoices, records, or other situational or consumer-specific information in a manner consistent with maintaining consumer confidentiality (e.g., shredding, locked files).
- ▶ 1.3 Inform consumers when federal or state mandates require disclosure of confidential information.

## **Illustrative Behavior Commandment #1**

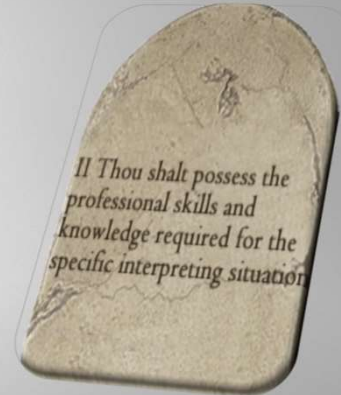
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## Guiding Principle: Commandment #2

- ▶ Interpreters are expected to stay abreast of evolving language use and trends in the profession of interpreting as well as in the American Deaf community.
- ▶ Interpreters accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, communication mode, setting, and consumer needs. Interpreters possess knowledge of American Deaf culture and deafness-related resources.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #2**

Thou shalt possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation

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## Illustrative Behavior Commandment #2

- ▶ 2.1 Provide service delivery regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor.
- ▶ 2.2 Assess consumer needs and the interpreting situation before and during the assignment and make adjustments as needed.
- ▶ 2.3 Render the message faithfully by conveying the content and spirit of what is being communicated, using language most readily understood by consumers, and correcting errors discreetly and expeditiously.
- ▶ 2.4 Request support (e.g., certified deaf interpreters, team members, language facilitators) when needed to fully convey the message or to address exceptional communication challenges (e.g. cognitive disabilities, foreign sign language, emerging language ability, or lack of formal instruction or language).
- ▶ 2.5 Refrain from providing counsel, advice, or personal opinions.
- ▶ 2.6 Judiciously provide information or referral regarding available interpreting or community resources without infringing upon consumers' rights.

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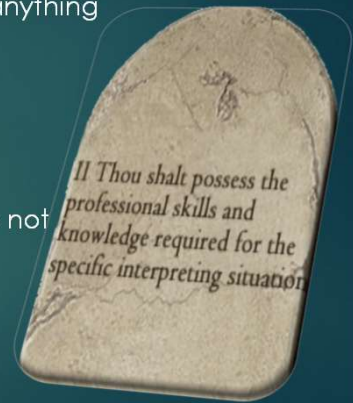
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# Accuracy and Completeness THOU SHALT...



- ▶ Transmit the meaning. Do not leave anything out. Do not add anything unless you claim it. Do not change anything.
- ▶ Transmit the tone. This is vital information.
- ▶ Transmit any meaning from body language.
- ▶ Clarify your own understanding of statements from all parties.
- ▶ Notice and be aware of the integrity of the message. If you do not understand it, maybe it was ambiguous or mistaken.



**2.3** Render the message faithfully by conveying the content and spirit of what is being communicated, using language most readily understood by consumers, and correcting errors discreetly and expeditiously.

Lets take a look at accuracy or completeness.

We all know we can't use the same number of words when we interpret. The word order is always going to be different. With specific language pairing it's going to last longer than to say it in English. The picture that is painted at one end should look the same when you deliver it on the other end when you deliver it to the other party. You are transmitting the fundamental meaning, which means its really important not to leave anything out. And also not to add anything that wasn't there originally. Don't change anything. It may take more words to create that same picture but it should have the same content without skipping or adding something.

It's also important to transmit the tone. That's why we don't like those robotic computer voices. It makes a big difference when asked: "How are you doing?" and the tone is robotic and says: "I'm doing alright" opposed to "I'm alright" with a tone that sounds like your smiling. It's important that we transmit the tone in the picture we paint in the second language.

**Question:** When I hear a person speaking in a foreign language like Cantonese it sounds as though the person ends every sentence with a upper inflection. So it makes it difficult to figure out what that persons emotional content or tone is. You don't have the same cues as an English speaking person. As an English person listing to another English person you can follow intonation and tone and get meaning from it. So if I was in China and they were talking to me in Cantonese...my interpreter...are you telling me that "my interpreter" would be telling the tone as well? I would not be able to pick that up on my own...

Your interpreter would be transmitting the tone of what ever tone the speaker was using. You can't assign a tone to a language or social group, it's a very individual thing. It has to be a determination you make on a person by person basis, and do the best you can to relay the way they are presenting themselves to you speak their language and understand the culture they are coming from for you to give that same impression over to the other side.

Sometimes there are misunderstandings. Sometimes that culture explanation needs to take place. The interpreters are there to help reline the compos. Make sure people are really getting what the intent was. Body language, tone and many things that are specific to the culture that you yourself either know a lot about or are from – these are things you can perceive and understand quickly.

If there is ever any doubt, you clarify! You clarify your own understanding from all parties. Sometimes there is time pressure and people say things quickly. You want to make sure you got the details correct and you may need to ask for repetition or clarification. These are standards of practice.

**Overall** – it's to notice and be aware of the integrity of the entire message as a whole. If you don't understand it, perhaps there was some ambiguous or someone mis-spoke. You need to ask for clarification to make sure you understand before you try convert it into a second language.

So is it more important for me to be accurate than to be really fast and look like I know what I am doing? Yes! Fast and slick is not what we want. We want accuracy and to be helpful!

# Accuracy – Ethical Problem Solving

- ▶ Let the speaker know if you do not understand what they say. Have them explain it. Do not guess.
- ▶ Write down important numbers or names to help you remember.
- ▶ Ask the speaker to repeat if you forgot something they said.
- ▶ Convey speaker's emotion, anger, bad words. It is fine to remind all parties that you are transmitting the message not originating it.
- ▶ Correct any mistakes you make ASAP, openly.
- ▶ Acknowledge when interpreter limitations may affect accuracy of information (lack of medical knowledge, inability to understand dialect of the person, etc.)



Here we come to problem solving when we are faced with dilemmas in accuracy.

Thou Shalt:

As mentioned before asking for clarification is always the right thing to do.

It is important to let the (hearing) representative or (deaf) client know if you do not understand something they said. Sometimes people speak very swiftly or someone forgot to put their teeth in that day. So it can be a challenge. You may have to ask things to be repeated.

Never assume....oh, I think this is what they said. Always check and verify. Ask them to explain it. Example of Spanish...it's spoken in many countries around the world. There are a lot of regional variations for something as simple as the word for "peanut". You want to verify and asks for an example.

For the same reason you may need to write down numbers or names so you can repeat them correctly.

## Question:

Should I put up my hand and say...oh, your starting to talk about numbers...let me look in my bag for a pencil, oh can I borrow your pen? Is that what I should be doing?

There is a certain tool kit that is important for all interpreters to carry with them. It's a small pad and more than 1 pen incase one runs out, tic tac's or throt lodgers what ever your favorite thing is along with a small bottle of water. Have them in a small bag or fanny

pack so your not putting stuff down. We need to keep our voices moving, we need to hydrate and blow our nose, but most importantly we need to be able to take notes as needed. Be sure to properly shred them for privacy when finished with them.

We mentioned before about properly convey the speaker's emotion. That includes when people are upset. Remember hearing people get upset too. People deal with it...they are upset...there needs to be de-escalation and reassurance take place. It's not our responsibility to edit or answer anything that is said. Even if you disagree with it, even if you think I'm a religious person and I don't ever use bad language. If the patient said it you need to know what the equivalents are so you can say it in English. They need to know that the Deaf person is that upset. Then they can take steps to de-escalate the situation.

The same way that we are open and transparent about interpreting negative emotion or bad language we also have to be open and transparent about correcting any mistakes, OPENLY. Often mistakes are not that big...big or small, as soon as we realize it, put your hand up, make the letter "t" with your hands, what ever you use a gestor you use to interrupt and let them know that the interpreter would like to correct...I just realized that I have a better word than the one I used, let people know. Everyone always appreciates the correction and respects you for making the correction as opposed to looking slick and quick.

All of us know that we make mistakes on a daily bases and we are all trying our best. Being transparent about making your own mistake only adds to the trust that people have in you as the interpreter because they know you own it and your going to be transparent. Any time you are off track...circle back and get back on track. That's a very good bond of trust to build with people.

## Accuracy – Scenario Quiz

The speaker uses a term that you do not understand while explaining to a Deaf person what might go wrong. You:

- ▶ A ) Leave out that sentence, as the Deaf person already has enough to worry about.
- ▶ B) Sign to the Deaf person: "I don't understand part of what is said, sorry."
- ▶ C) Say to both the Deaf and the speaker: "The interpreter asks the speaker to break down the term X for me, so that I can interpret, I do not understand the term X."
- ▶ D) Remember the last time you interpreted for a Deaf person having the same situation, and repeat what you heard at that time.



### Accuracy - Scenario Quiz

C

A) Leaving out an entire sentence is not congruent with accuracy.

Yes, sometimes the Deaf person has a great deal to worry about, but it is not our job to censor information. We should not decide if someone else should or should not receive parts of information. Our job is as completely as possible carry that message efficiently to the other person.

B) So, signing to the Deaf person "I don't understand part of what is said, sorry." is NOT the way to handle accuracy dilemmas.

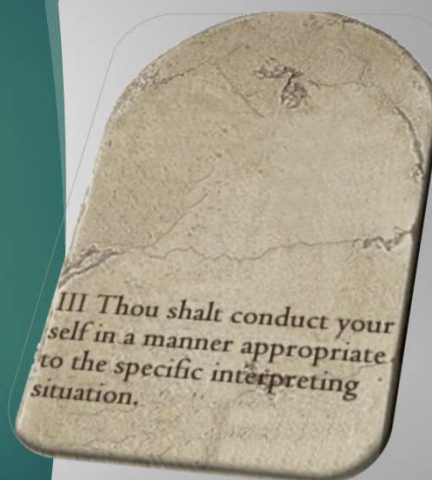
C) Say to both the Deaf and the speaker: "I'm sorry, but I don't understand what was meant by term X, would you please explain as I am not familiar with term X."

D) Remember the last time you interpreted for a Deaf person having the same situation, and repeat what you heard at that time.

If we were all shoes, maybe a treatment for shoe leather would apply the same to all shoes. But we are not shoes, we are people. There may be an entirely different reason. So we can through this answer out!

## Guiding Principle: Commandment #3

- ▶ Interpreters are expected to present themselves appropriately in demeanor and appearance. They avoid situations that result in conflicting roles or perceived or actual conflicts of interest.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #3**

Thou shalt conduct your self in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation

Interpreters are expected to present themselves appropriately in demeanor and appearance. They avoid situations that result in conflicting roles or perceived or actual conflicts of interest.

## Illustrative Behavior Commandment #3



### Illustrative Behavior Commandment #3

3.1 Consult with appropriate persons regarding the interpreting situation to determine issues such as placement and adaptations necessary to interpret effectively.

3.2 Decline assignments or withdraw from the interpreting profession when not competent due to physical, mental, or emotional factors.

3.3 Avoid performing dual or conflicting roles in interdisciplinary (e.g. educational or mental health teams) or other settings.

3.4 Comply with established workplace codes of conduct, notify appropriate personnel if there is a conflict with this Code of Professional Conduct, and actively seek resolution where warranted.

3.5 Conduct and present themselves in an unobtrusive manner and exercise care in choice of attire.

3.6 Refrain from the use of mind altering substances before or during the performance of duties.

3.7 Disclose to parties involved any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

3.8 Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest that might cause harm or interfere with the effectiveness of interpreting services.

3.9 Refrain from using confidential interpreted information for personal, monetary, or professional gain.

3.10 Refrain from using confidential interpreted information for the benefit of personal or professional affiliations or entities.

# Cultural Sensitivity and Respect

- ▶ Interpreters cannot represent the client culturally, but they can educate the staff on terms or cultural nuances that would be generally considered rude in the Deaf person home country, so the staff can avoid insulting or intimidating the individual.
- ▶ Staff should NOT ask the interpreter to explain the Deaf needs or behavior.

## Cultural Sensitivity and Respect

Now were going to talk about a fun topic: Cultural Sensitivity and Respect

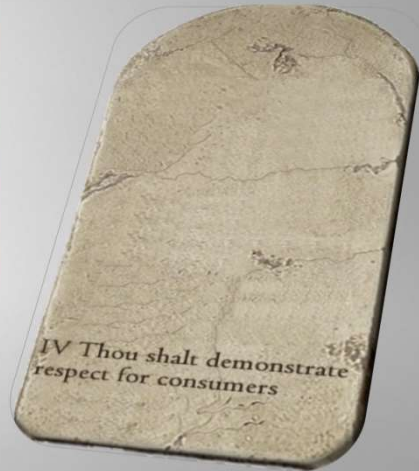
I have things that are important to me, my deeply held values, I have goals, I have needs, and I have preferences.

We have to make sure that we are not trampling on anyone's landscape.

- 1) We want to avoid insulting someone
- 2) We want to be sensitive to misunderstanding. They may misunderstand the meaning or the intent. With the interpreters voice check with the speaker on what they actually mean if it is unclear to you. We are not speaking for Deaf client or we are not speaking for the speaker...we are not explaining them either. We are giving "the floor" to have it explained to get the meaning from the Deaf or speaker.

## Guiding Principle: Commandment #4

- ▶ Interpreters are expected to honor consumer preferences in selection of interpreters and interpreting dynamics, while recognizing the realities of qualifications, availability, and situation.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #4**

Thou shalt demonstrate respect for consumers

Interpreters are expected to honor consumer preferences in selection of interpreters and interpreting dynamics, while recognizing the realities of qualifications, availability, and situation.

## Illustrative Behavior Commandment #4

- ▶ 4.1 Consider consumer requests or needs regarding language preferences, and render the message accordingly (interpreted or transliterated).
- ▶ 4.2 Approach consumers with a professional demeanor at all times.
- ▶ 4.3 Obtain the consent of consumer before bringing an intern to an assignment.
- ▶ 4.4 Facilitate communication access and equality, and support the full interaction and independence of consumers.

### **Illustrative Behavior Commandment #4**

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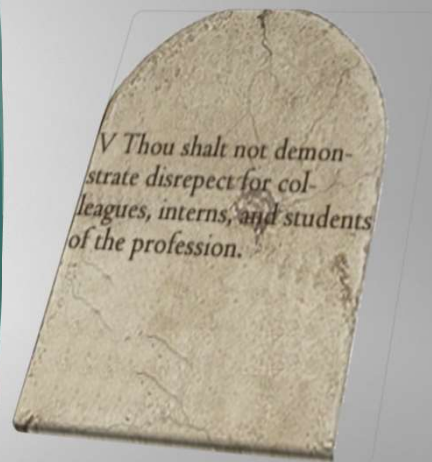
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## Guiding Principle: Commandment #5

- ▶ Interpreters are expected to collaborate with colleagues to foster the delivery of effective interpreting services. They also understand that the manner in which they relate to colleagues reflects upon the profession in general.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #5**

Thou shalt not demonstrate disrespect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession

Interpreters are expected to collaborate with colleagues to foster the delivery of effective interpreting services. They also understand that the manner in which they relate to colleagues reflects upon the profession in general.

## Illustrative Behavior Commandment #5

- ▶ 5.1 Maintain civility toward colleagues, interns, and students.
- ▶ 5.2 Work cooperatively with team members through consultation before assignments regarding logistics, providing professional and courteous assistance when asked and monitoring the accuracy of the message while functioning in the role of the support interpreter.
- ▶ 5.3 Approach colleagues privately to discuss and resolve breaches of ethical or professional conduct through standard conflict resolution methods; file a formal grievance only after such attempts have been unsuccessful or the breaches are harmful or habitual.
- ▶ 5.4 Assist and encourage colleagues by sharing information and serving as mentors when appropriate.
- ▶ 5.5 Obtain the consent of colleagues before bringing an intern to an assignment.

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5.5 Obtain the consent of colleagues before bringing an intern to an assignment.

## Guiding Principle: Commandment #6

- ▶ Interpreters are expected to conduct their business in a professional manner whether in private practice or in the employ of an agency or other entity. Professional interpreters are entitled to a living wage based on their qualifications and expertise. Interpreters are also entitled to working conditions conducive to effective service delivery.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #6**

Thou shalt not engage in any unethical business practices

Interpreters are expected to conduct their business in a professional manner whether in private practice or in the employ of an agency or other entity. Professional interpreters are entitled to a living wage based on their qualifications and expertise. Interpreters are also entitled to working conditions conducive to effective service delivery.

## Illustrative Behavior Commandment #6

6.1 Accurately represent qualifications, such as certification, educational background, and experience, and provide documentation when requested.

6.2 Honor professional commitments and terminate assignments only when fair and justifiable grounds exist.

6.3 Promote conditions that are conducive to effective communication, inform the parties involved if such conditions do not exist, and seek appropriate remedies.

6.4 Inform appropriate parties in a timely manner when delayed or unable to fulfill assignments.

6.5 Reserve the option to decline or discontinue assignments if working conditions are not safe, healthy, or conducive to interpreting.

6.6 Refrain from harassment or coercion before, during, or after the provision of interpreting services.

6.7 Render pro bono services in a fair and reasonable manner.

6.8 Charge fair and reasonable fees for the performance of interpreting services and arrange for payment in a professional and judicious manner.

### Illustrative Behavior Commandment #6

6.1 Accurately represent qualifications, such as certification, educational background, and experience, and provide documentation when requested.

6.2 Honor professional commitments and terminate assignments only when fair and justifiable grounds exist.

6.3 Promote conditions that are conducive to effective communication, inform the parties involved if such conditions do not exist, and seek appropriate remedies.

6.4 Inform appropriate parties in a timely manner when delayed or unable to fulfill assignments.

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## Guiding Principle: Commandment #7

- ▶ Interpreters are expected to foster and maintain interpreting competence and the stature of the profession through ongoing development of knowledge and skills.



### **Guiding Principle: Commandment #7**

Thou shalt engage in professional development

Interpreters are expected to foster and maintain interpreting competence and the stature of the profession through ongoing development of knowledge and skills.

## Illustrative Behavior Commandment #7

- ▶ 7.1 Increase knowledge and strengthen skills through activities such as:
  - pursuing higher education;
  - attending workshops and conferences;
  - seeking mentoring and supervision opportunities;
  - participating in community events; and
  - engaging in independent studies.
- ▶ 7.2 Keep abreast of laws, policies, rules, and regulations that affect the profession.

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