

## **Interpreter Services for Hearing Impaired Clients Served by the Division of Children and Family Services**

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS or Division) strives to provide equitable services to all clients. In order to provide quality services to clients who are hearing impaired, DCFS uses Communications Plus as the contractor for American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services. The Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) funds this entire contract. As such, the contract is 100% federally funded.

Through the Communications Plus contract, ASL interpretation services are available statewide twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week, though, twenty-four-hour notice to the contract provider is preferred when possible. However, Communications Plus has a staff member to answer calls for interpretation requests 24/7. Frontline staff may directly contact Communications Plus for ASL interpretation services in order to connect field staff and the clients they are serving to necessary translation services as quickly as possible.

[Division Policy II-D](#) instructs staff that at any point during a child maltreatment investigation, when the person being interviewed cannot clearly communicate, then the investigator shall arrange for an interpreter before continuing the interview. The interpreter must be trained and appropriately certified to translate the specific language needed. Policy prohibits family members from serving as interpreters. [Procedure II-G2](#) also requires staff to specifically consider the inclusion of interpreters prior to scheduling a Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting.

In addition, New Staff Training for Family Service Workers (FSWs) covers the availability of interpretation services for clients throughout the life of a case (both in-home and foster care cases) when discussing the development of case plans, services available for staff to include in the family case plan, and preparation for home visits and other interactions with clients by securing interpretation services.

In the past staff have been provided with a one-page 'Interpreter Services for DCFS' handout that summarizes all interpretation services for the state, provides applicable contact numbers, and lists the specific information the worker must provide to make the referral. Recent communication has also gone out to all staff reminding them of the importance of using interpreter services, which included the 'Interpreter Services for DCFS' handout once again.