**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Regarding New Qualifications for Educational Interpreters**

**In State Regulations**

1. **What qualifications are required immediately of educational interpreters as a result of the new State Regulations, that became effective July 7, 2009?**

Personnel providing educational interpreting services for children using **sign language** shall have one of the following:

* a valid Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) Level III; or
* a passing score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Written Test along with a minimum of a Level 3.5 on the EIPA Performance Test; or
* any other state qualification or national certification (excluding Certificate of Deaf Interpretation) recognized by the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of hearing (VDDHH) as equivalent to or exceeding the VQAS Level III.

Personnel providing educational interpreting services for children using **cued speech/language** shall have one of the following:

* a valid VQAS Level III for cued speech; or
* a national Transliteration Skills Certificate from the Testing, Evaluation and Certificate Unit (TEC Unit) or equivalent as recognized by VDDHH.

Personnel providing educational interpreting services for children requiring **oral** interpretation shall meet minimum requirements for competency on the VQAS written assessment of the Code of Ethics.

(See the Virginia Regulations at 8 VAC 20-81-40 E. 1.)

1. **May personnel who provide interpreting services for children who use sign language or cued speech/language and who do not hold the required qualifications be employed?**

From now until January 1, 2010, personnel who provide interpreting services for children who use sign language or cued speech/language and who do not hold the required qualifications may be employed in accordance with the following criteria:

* Personnel shall have, at minimum, a valid VQAS Level I, or its equivalent, as determined by the VDDHH; or
* Personnel shall have a passing score on the EIPA Written test and a minimum score of 2.5 on the EIPA Performance Test upon hiring date in any local educational agency in Virginia.

(See the Virginia Regulations at 8 VAC 20-81-40 E. 2.)

1. **Beginning January 1, 2010, what qualifications are required of educational interpreters?**

The following qualification requirements for personnel providing interpreting services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing will become effective January 1, 2010.

Personnel providing educational interpreting services for children using **sign language** shall hold:

* A valid VQAS Level III; or
* A passing score on the EIPA Written Test along with a minimum of a Level 3.5 on the EIPA Performance Test; or
* Any other state qualification or national certification (excluding Certificate of Deaf Interpretation) recognized by the VDDHH as equivalent to or exceeding the VQAS Level III.
* Under no circumstances shall local educational agencies or private special education schools hire interpreters who hold qualifications below a VQAS Level II, EIPA Level 3.0 or the equivalent from another state.
* Interpreters hired with a VQAS Level II, EIPA Level 3.0 or the equivalent shall have two years from the date of hire to reach the required qualifications.

Personnel providing educational interpreting services for children using **cued speech/language** shall have a valid VQAS Level III for cued speech or hold a national Transliteration Skills Certificate from TEC Unit or equivalent as recognized by the VDDHH.

* Under no circumstances shall local educational agencies or private special education schools hire educational interpreters to provide cued speech/language services who hold qualifications below a VQAS Level I in cued speech or the equivalent from another state.
* Educational Interpreters to provide cued speech hired with a VQAS Level I or the equivalent or a VQAS Level II or the equivalent have three years from the date of hire to reach the required qualifications.

Personnel providing educational interpreting services for children requiring **oral** interpreting shall hold a national Oral Transliteration Certificate (OTC) or equivalent recognized by the VDDHH.

(See the Virginia Regulations at 8 VAC 20-81-40 E. 3)

1. **Do the regulations for educational interpreter qualifications apply to those individuals providing sign language services for a child who is not deaf or hard of hearing?**

No. For a child who is not deaf or hard of hearing but for whom sign language services are specified in the IEP to address expressive and/or receptive language needs, the sign language services shall be provided by an individual meeting the requirements determined appropriate by the local educational agency.

(See the Virginia Regulations at 8 VAC 20-81-40 E. 4.)

1. **Why were the qualifications for educational interpreters changed?**

One of the greatest factors affecting the education of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in the regular education setting is the interpreter. A qualified interpreter is required to provide basic access to the classroom. When an educational interpreter lacks interpreting skills and knowledge needed to work as an effective educational team member, the ability of the students who are deaf or hard of hearing to appropriately access the full content of the classroom may be compromised.

1. **In the past, the Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS), National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and National Interpreter Certificate (NIC) were accepted by Virginia as assessment tools for educational interpreters. Why has the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment®** **(EIPA) been added as an acceptable assessment tool for educational interpreters in Virginia?**

The EIPA offers another option for Virginia educational interpreters to receive accurate and timely assessment of their interpreting skills and knowledge. The EIPA is now used by more than 28 state departments of education to determine minimal competency requirements for educational interpreters. For more information on the EIPA, go to <http://www.classroominterpreting.org/eipa/standards/index.asp>

1. **What is the EIPA?**

The EIPA is a tool that evaluates the voice-to-sign and sign-to voice skills of interpreters who work in the elementary through secondary classroom using videotape stimulus materials and a procedure that includes a comprehensive rating system. EIPA products and services are provided through the EIPA Diagnostic Center at Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. The EIPA is used to evaluate interpreters who work with students who use predominately American Sign Language (ASL), Manually-Coded English (MCE) or Pidgin Sign English (PSE).

The EIPA Written Test is a comprehensive multiple-choice test that evaluates the interpreter’s understanding of information that is important when working with students in an education setting. The test consists of 210 questions and takes approximately one and a half to four hours to complete. This computer-based test is administered through the Internet. A passing score on the EIPA Written Test is not required by Boys Town before taking the EIPA Performance Assessment, but is required to meet Virginia’s qualification requirements for educational interpreters who use an EIPA Performance Assessment level to meet qualifications.

1. **What do the level and sign system on the EIPA Performance Test results mean?**

An individual taking the EIPA Performance Test selects a videotape by grade level (elementary or secondary) and by the sign language or system being used.

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| --- | --- |
| **Level:** | **Receptive stimulus tapes presented in:** |
| Elementary | Child signer using MCE (more Manually Coded English with some Pidgin Signed English) |
| Child signer using PSE (more Pidgin Signed English with some American Sign Language) |
| Child signer using ASL (more American Sign Language with some Pidgin Signed English) |
| Secondary | Teen signer using MCE (more Manually Coded English with some Pidgin Signed English) |
| Teen signer using PSE (more Pidgin Signed English with some American Sign Language) |
| Teen signer using ASL (more American Sign Language with some Pidgin Signed English) |

An example of an individual’s EIPA score could be “EIPA Secondary PSE 3.7,” which represents the grade level (secondary), the language modality (Pidgin Signed English with some American Sign Language), and the total summary EIPA score (3.7.) Levels go from 1 to 5 in increments, with 1 assigned to a beginner, and 5 to a person with advanced skills.

Administrators in local school divisions should solicit the assistance of knowledgeable individuals to match the interpreter with a student using the same sign language/sign system.

Individuals with EIPA levels should only be interpreting in the schools. They are not qualified by their level to interpret in the community.

1. **How does one register to take the EIPA in Virginia?**

The EIPA written test is a computer-based test administered through the Internet. For information on registration, contact:

Teresa McEvoy, (402) 452-5042, or mcevoyt@boystown.org or contact the EIPA Diagnostic Center at (402) 452-5000 or eipa@boystown.org.

The EIPA Diagnostic Center has determined that the EIPA written test needs to be revised and rewritten. Registration will re-open on August 25th and the first testing date will be September 8, 2009.

Individuals can apply through Boys Town to administer the EIPA Performance Test. To find out how to register for the EIPA Performance Test in Virginia, contact an EIPA approved Local Test Administrator. Currently there are two approved administrators:

Laurie B. Malheiros
Phone: (804) 356-6450
Email: lmalheiros@comcast.net

Lindy J. Jacobs

Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Phone: (540) 256-3333

Email: LJacobs@rockingham.k12.va.us

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) also plans on becoming an approved administrator of the EIPA Performance Test.

1. **Where can I find detailed information about each of the accepted assessments for educational interpreters?**

For more information on VQAS testing, see <http://www.vddhh.org/VQASRegistration.htm#About%20Expiration%20Dates>

For more information about National Interpreter Certification, see <http://www.rid.org/content/index.cfm/AID/44>

For more information on EIPA testing, see <http://www.classroominterpreting.org/eipa/standards/index.asp>

For more information on the Testing, Evaluation, and Certification Unit, Inc, the national certifying body for cued speech transliterators, see <http://www.tecunit.com>

1. **Are there requirements for maintenance of a VQAS or EIPA level or national certification?**

The VQAS Level expires every three years, and a person must retest.

The NAD-RID National Council on Interpreting (NCI) requires that holders of NAD/RID certification and NIC certifications maintain their skills by earning a minimum of 8.0 CEUs (80 contact hours) during each four-year certification maintenance cycle. Testing for RID and NAD national certification assessments is no longer available. They have been replaced by the National Interpreting Certification (NIC).

Interpreters who have passed the EIPA written test and scored at least a 4.0 on the EIPA performance test may now join RID as certified members and maintain certification through the RID Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) and Ethical Practices System (EPS).

Boys Town, the administering agency for EIPA, does not require any maintenance of levels, and the EIPA level does not expire. Virginia Regulations do not detail requirements for maintenance of skills for those holding EIPA levels either. (Please see #12, below.)

1. **If there are no requirements for an educational interpreter to maintain their EIPA level or to retest periodically, how can we ensure that they retain their skills?**

It will be critical that individuals who hold an EIPA level continue to receive training to maintain their knowledge and skills. As with any language, if one doesn’t use their ASL or sign language skills, he or she will lose them. Working with the same limited number of students may not promote growth. Many states that use the EIPA to ensure minimal competency of their interpreters require them to document attendance at a specified number of hours of continued education per year. The Virginia Department of Education strongly recommends that school divisions develop local policies that require interpreters with EIPA levels to maintain a minimum number of 20 contact hours per year of training. Training must be approved by the educational interpreter professional development grant coordinator in their region. As in the past, individual interpreters will be asked to log their contact hours of training and submit them to their regional grant coordinators. Grant coordinators will send special education directors contact hours for interpreters in their division in December and in June, and will submit them to DOE at the end of the school year. Those interpreters with an EIPA score of 4.0 or better who are maintaining certification through the RID Certification Maintenance Program may provide documentation from RID.

1. **Will Virginia Department of Education continue to fund professional development opportunities for educational interpreters?**

Yes. Contingent upon the availability of resources, VDOE will continue to fund professional development activities for educational interpreters. As in past years, regional coordinators will develop training plans for each interpreter who does not meet minimal standards, plan regional training programs to meet their needs, approve course work at local institutes of higher education, and arrange mentoring/tutoring opportunities for individuals. They will also continue to monitor individual contact hours spent in professional development, and report to special education directors and to DOE as described in Question #12.

1. **What can I do to recruit and retain qualified interpreters in my school division?**

A separate document entitled, “Recruitment Strategies” is available upon request. Contact Dr. Debbie Pfeiffer at Debbie.Pfeiffer@doe.virginia.gov . This document will be posted to the VDOE website.

1. **What strategies have been used to assist educational interpreters in attaining the required levels of competency?**

Consider the following:

* + Offer incentives such as salary scales based on level/certification and degrees or paying testing fees for assessments.
	+ Hire a full-time certified interpreter who is not responsible for interpreting to mentor/train the interpreters in your school division who do not currently meet state standards. If you do not employ a large number of educational interpreters, consider sharing this trainer position with a nearby school division.
	+ Require a minimum number of hours of training per year, and monitor contact hours of training; provide feedback to interpreters regarding their attendance.
	+ Offer work days for interpreters on which they may attend trainings to increase their knowledge and skills. Work with other special education directors in your region and the grant coordinator for educational interpreters’ professional development to plan trainings on common work days.

If you have further questions or need additional information, contact Dr. Debbie Pfeiffer at Debbie.Pfeiffer@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 371 – 4059.