



Responses to questions:

Q1. Section 1.0 Project Overview, page 7, third sentence and Section 1.2 page 7, "...The Department is seeking sign language interpreter services for the hearing impaired utilizing American Sign Language (ASL) and Universal Sign Language (USL)..." Please explain the term Universal Sign Language (USL). Although we are very familiar with ASL, and our research shows that there is also an International Sign Language, we do not understand the term Universal Sign Language/USL, which occurs throughout the document. May we assume that the Department is looking for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters who possess appropriate licenses and/or certifications within the State?

R1. **International Sign Language (ISL) or for the purpose of this procurement, Universal Sign Language (USL), refers to linguistic features that are thought to be universal among sign languages. The goal of this procurement is to provide accurate interpreter services for hearing impaired individuals from English speaking households and non-English speaking households.**

Q2. Employees vs. Subcontractors. Section 1.7.3, page 9, identifies the use of "subcontractors" whereas Section 3.5, Listing page 15 refers to interpreters being "employed/contracted to provide services." Section 3.0, Programmatic Information, paragraph 3, page 15 states "Interpreters/Translators must be employees of the contracting agency." It also says in Section 3.23, #10, page 18 "Interpreters must be employees of the contracting agency..."

The standard practice in the interpreting industry for the hearing impaired is that interpreters be considered subcontractors since they usually work a very short period of time on any assignment and perform work for more than one entity. Can we assume that interpreters and/or translators to be used for purposes of this contract may be contract ASL interpreters (and thus subcontractors in this contract) and not necessarily employees?

R2. **Yes.**

Q3. Section 3.1 Availability and Response Time, page 15. "The Department requires confirmation and assignment of an interpreter/translator within one hour of a request." Given the licensure and certification requirements and limited availability of qualified sign interpreters, our experience has shown that this may be a very difficult requirement to comply with. Would DHR consider a requirement of "within one hour of a request or as soon as possible"?

R3. **For emergency situations, an interpreter may be needed quickly. If the vendor can not provide an interpreter within that timeframe, it could be critical in meeting the needs of the family. We will expect a vendor to maintain a pool of services so this requirement can be met. There may be rare exceptions, which must be approved by SDHR.**

Q4. Section 3.1 Availability and Response Time, page 15. "If telephone services are required, then translation services must be available within thirty minutes of a request." Please explain what type of telephone services this paragraph refers to.

R4. **Ignore/delete this requirement. Vendors will not be required to respond to this requirement for this procurement.**



- Q5.** Section 3.3 Cancellations, page 15. “The Department reserves the right to cancel interpreter appointments within twenty-four hours of their scheduled time without penalty or charge.” Our understanding of this statement is that if DHR cancels an appointment in less than 24 hours, the contractor can bill for the appointment. Please confirm that our understanding is correct or, if not, please clarify the cancellation clause.
- R5. Yes.**
- Q6.** Section 3.5 Listing, page 15. “As applicable, vendors may be required to include a list of other qualified interpreters for languages not listed above.” Please explain what other languages this refers to. Our understanding is that this procurement pertains to interpreting for the hearing impaired only.
- R6. Ignore/delete this requirement. Vendors will not be required to respond to this requirement for this procurement.**
- Q7.** Section 3.23, Face to Face Interpreter Services, page 17. “Vendors must effectively manage the scheduling and coordination ...for both non-emergency and emergency situations.” Given the one-hour response requirement in Section 3.1, please explain what an emergency situation is considered to be.
- a. Paragraph 1, page 17. Referring to our question #3, would DHR consider a requirement of response time of “within one hour of a request or as soon as possible”?
 - b. Paragraph 1, page 17 “Vendors must provide written confirmation to a referring county social worker of scheduling for all requests for face-to-face interpreter services.” Many requests come within short timeframes or when social workers are in the field, thus he/she does not have immediate access to a fax machine (or computer or smartphone) when requesting an interpreter. Given that the goal is to provide the social worker with the interpreter’s name as soon as possible, could the requirement be amended so that we can provide the social worker a telephone call first, with follow up by email or fax, if required?
 - c. Paragraph 3, page 17. “Interpreters may serve no more than ten families at any one time.” Does this refer to a period of one day? For example, if Interpreter A arrives at County X office to interpret for a client, and more clients arrive while she is there, he/she may interpret for no more than 10 of them?
 - d. Paragraph 8, page 18. “Vendors must ensure that interpreters have reliable transportation, a valid Alabama driver’s license and current automobile insurance...” We understand the intent of this sentence is that the interpreter must have adequate transportation to the interpreting site and it is his/her responsibility to get there and the Contractor’s responsibility to communicate to the interpreter when and where he/she is to arrive. Do we understand this correctly? If not, please explain.
 - e. Paragraph 10, page 18. “...the Vendor must attest that all interpreters have completed criminal history checks and CAN Central Registry clearances.” Paragraph 4.2.5.1.6, #10 on page 21 also states that “each employee (i.e. interpreter) has had an ABI and an FBI criminal background check.” Given that the interpreter is required never to be alone with a DHR client nor participate in unsupervised visits, and must always be accompanied by a DHR social worker or family service provider, please clarify the requirement for these background checks and whether all three are required.



- R7. a. A child abuse report is received by the county where either the child or family member is hearing impaired, as an example.**
- b. No, the requirement remains as presented in the RFP.**
- c. No more than 10 families served in a day per interpreter, unless in an emergency situation and approved by SDHR prior to the service delivery.**
- d. Yes.**
- e. For face-to-face interpreters, this is a requirement.**
- Q8.** Section 4.2, Proposal Format, page 19. Are inexpensive (vinyl) three-ring binders permissible, given that a normal stapler may not be effective to collate?
- R8. Yes.**
- Q9.** Section 4.2.5.2, page 22 Vendor Financial Stability. "Vendors must submit an audited financial summary for the past year ..." As a small business, we have never been required to do a formal audit, as this is a very expensive and time consuming procedure, usually not required of businesses of our size. Our CPA firm assures us that submitting a Financial Compilation, which would include the balance sheet along with Statements of Income and Retained Earnings would give DHR an adequate picture of our finances. Would this be permissible?
- R9. Yes.**