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Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct

Preamble

The following document has been modelled on the Code of Ethics developed by the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC). The work and consultation process undertaken by AVLIC with its members is acknowledged by ASLIA National.

Input received from members of ASLIA in the first round of consultation was included herein. A second draft of the proposed new Code of Ethics for ASLIA, was distributed for a further consultation round, including major stakeholders and once again with members of ASLIA with feedback requested by 15 July 2007. ASLIA National presented the final version of the new Code of Ethics which was ratified by the membership at our AGM in Sydney on 8th September 2007.

ASLIA expects all practitioners to maintain high standards of professional conduct in their identity and capacity as an interpreter. Members of ASLIA in particular, are required to abide by the Code of Ethics and follow the Guidelines for Professional Conduct as a condition of membership of the association.

This document articulates ethical principles, values, and standards of conduct to guide all practitioners in their pursuit of professional practice. It is intended to provide direction to interpreters for ethical and professional decision-making in their day-to-day work. The Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct is the mechanism by which the public is protected in the delivery of service. It should not be considered a prescriptive set of rules, but rather a set of principles and values which should be inherent in professional practice.

VALUES UNDERLYING THE CODE OF ETHICS & GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

ASLIA values:

1. Professional accountability:

Accepting responsibility for professional decisions and actions.

2. Professional competence:

Committing to provide quality professional service throughout one's practice.

3. Non-discrimination:

Approaching professional service with respect and cultural sensitivity.

4. Integrity in professional relationships:

Dealing honestly and fairly with participants and colleagues.

5. Integrity in business practices:

Dealing honestly and ethically in all business practices.

Practitioners¹ are to understand that each of these core values and accompanying sections are to be considered when making ethical and professional decisions in their identity and capacity as an interpreter. These values are of equal weight and importance.

¹ "Practitioners" for the purpose of this document, refers to both Deaf and hearing individuals who are engaged in interpreting assignments using Auslan. "Participants" refers to both Deaf and hearing participants in any interpreted assignment.

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1. PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Interpreters accept responsibility for all professional decisions made and actions taken.

1.1. Confidentiality

- 1.1.1. Practitioners will respect the privacy of all participants and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service, be that within an interpreting assignment or in the details about an assignment. Practitioners may be released from this obligation only with the participants' authorisation or when ordered by law. Where necessary, a practitioner may exchange pertinent information with a colleague in order to provide consistent quality of service. This will be done in a manner that protects the information and the participants.
- 1.1.2. Practitioners need to be aware that other professional codes of conduct may impact upon their work. In such circumstances, practitioners will make appropriate professional decisions and conduct themselves in a manner befitting the setting and the profession.

1.2. Professional Conduct

- 1.2.1. Practitioners will hold the needs of participants' primary when making professional decisions.
- 1.2.2. Practitioners shall recognise that all work undertaken by them on an individual basis, whether pro bono or paid, will ultimately reflect the integrity of them and of the profession.
- 1.2.3. Practitioners shall conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. They shall not badger or coerce individuals or agencies to use their professional services.
- 1.2.4. Practitioners shall take into account the limitations of their linguistic abilities, knowledge and the resources available to them prior to accepting work. They will remove themselves from a given setting when they realise an inability to provide professional service.

- 1.2.5. Practitioners must be aware of personal circumstances or conflicts of interest that might interfere with their effectiveness. They will refrain from conduct that can lead to substandard performance and/or harm² to anyone, including themselves and participants.
- 1.2.6. Practitioners who are ASLIA members are accountable to ASLIA National and to their State Association for their professional and ethical conduct. Further, practitioners are responsible to discuss and resolve, in a professional manner, issues arising from breaches of ethical or professional conduct on the part of individual colleagues after they are observed. In the case where these breaches are potentially harmful to others or chronic, and attempts to resolve the issue have not been successful, such conduct should be reported to ASLIA National, and/or their State Association, in a manner directed by the appropriate grievance procedure.

1.3. Scope of Practice

- 1.3.1. When functioning as part of a professional team (for example, but not limited to; education, legal, medical or mental health settings) it is understood that practitioners will limit their expertise to interpretation. In such settings, it may be appropriate for practitioners to comment on the overall effectiveness of communication, the interpreting process and to suggest appropriate resources and referrals. This should be done only within the context of the professional team.
- 1.3.2. Practitioners will refrain from using their professional role to perform other functions that lie beyond the scope of an interpreting assignment and the parameters of their professional duties. They will not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions.
- 1.3.3. Practitioners will refrain from manipulating work situations for personal benefit or gain. When working as independent contractors, practitioners may promote their professional services within the scope of their practice. When working under the auspices of an agency or other employer, it is not ethical for the practitioners to promote their professional services independent of the agency or employer.

1.4. Integrity of Service

- 1.4.1. Practitioners will demonstrate sound professional judgment and accept responsibility for their decisions. Practitioners will make every attempt to avoid situations that constitute a real or perceived conflict of interest. Practitioners will ensure there is full

² Harm refers to injurious behaviour that causes distress to the person. This can include but is not limited to actions which are sexual, physical, emotional or verbal in nature. It can also include performance of duties while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or mind-altering substances.

disclosure to all parties should their ancillary interest be seen as a real or perceived conflict of interest.

2. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE: Interpreters provide the highest possible quality of service through all aspects of their professional practice.

2.1. Qualifications to Practice

- 2.1.1. Practitioners will be accredited by NAATI at Paraprofessional or Professional Interpreter level. Deaf Relay Interpreters will have completed appropriate training or testing. Practitioners will possess the knowledge and skills to support accurate and appropriate interpretation. It is recognized that practitioners work in a range of settings and with a variety of participants with diverse communication needs. This demands that practitioners be adept at meeting the linguistic needs of participants, the cultural dynamics of each situation, and the spirit and content of the discourse.

2.2. Faithfulness of Interpretation

- 2.2.1. Every interpretation shall be faithful to and render faithfully the message of the source text. A faithful interpretation should not be confused with a literal interpretation. The fidelity of an interpretation includes an adaptation to make the form, the tone, and the deeper meaning of the source text felt in the target language and culture.

2.3. Accountability for Professional Competence

- 2.3.1. Practitioners will accept full responsibility for the quality of their own work and will refrain from making inaccurate statements regarding their competence, education, experience or certification.
- 2.3.2. Practitioners are responsible for properly preparing themselves for the work contracted.
- 2.3.3. Practitioners will accept contracts for work only after determining they have the appropriate qualifications and can remain neutral throughout the assignment.

2.4. Ongoing Professional Development

- 2.4.1. Practitioners will incorporate current theoretical and applied knowledge into their professional practice. They will enhance that knowledge through continuing education throughout their professional careers and will strive to upgrade NAATI accreditation, as well participating in revalidation of accreditation procedures.

2.4.2. Practitioners will aim to be self-directed learners, pursuing educational opportunities which are relevant to their professional practice. This could include, but is not limited to, peer review, collegial consultation, mentoring, and obtaining regular feedback regarding specific areas of skill development.

3. NON-DISCRIMINATION: Interpreters approach professional services with respect and cultural sensitivity³ towards all participants.

3.1. Non-discrimination

3.1.1. Practitioners will respect the individuality, the right to self-determination, and the autonomy of the people with whom they work. They will not discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, personal beliefs and practices, social status or any other factor.

3.2. Communication Preferences

3.2.1. Practitioners will respect and use specific forms of communication preferred by deaf and hard of hearing participants, as well as any hearing participants, to whom they provide service. Refer also to 1.2.4.

3.3. Deaf Relay Interpreters

3.3.1. The services of a Deaf Relay Interpreter may be required when working with individuals who use regional sign dialects, non-standard signs, foreign sign languages, and those with emerging language use. They may also be used with individuals who have disabling conditions that impact on communication. Practitioners will recognise the need for a Deaf Relay Interpreter and will advocate for their inclusion as a part of the professional interpreting team where applicable.

4. INTEGRITY IN PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: Interpreters deal honestly and fairly with participants and colleagues while establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.

4.1. Professional Relationships

4.1.1. Practitioners shall understand the difference between professional and social interactions. They will establish and maintain appropriate boundaries between themselves and participants. Practitioners will assume responsibility to ensure relationships with all parties involved are reasonable, fair and professional.

³ Cultural sensitivity refers to being aware of and responding to the uniqueness of each individual and of each context within which we work.

4.2. Impartiality

- 4.2.1. Practitioners shall remain neutral, impartial, and objective. They will refrain from altering a message for political, religious, moral, or philosophical reasons, or any other biased or subjective consideration.
- 4.2.2. Should a practitioner not be able to put aside personal biases or reactions which threaten impartiality, the practitioner will examine options available to them. These may include not accepting the work, or withdrawing their services from the assignment or contract.

4.3. Respect for Colleagues

- 4.3.1. Practitioners will act toward colleagues in a spirit of mutual cooperation, treating and portraying them to others with respect, courtesy, fairness and good faith. Practitioners have a professional obligation to assist and encourage new interpreting practitioners in the profession.
- 4.3.2. Practitioners shall not abuse the good faith of other practitioners, breach trust, or use unfair tactics in dealings with colleagues or others.

4.4. Support for Professional Associations

- 4.4.1. Practitioners are expected to support ASLIA National, its State Associations, and other organisations representing the profession and the Deaf community.

5. INTEGRITY IN BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS: Interpreters establish and maintain professional boundaries with participants and colleagues in a manner that is honest and fair.

5.1. Business Practices

- 5.1.1. Practitioners will refrain from any unfair competition with their colleagues, including, but not limited to:
 - a. engaging in comparative advertising
 - b. wilfully undercutting; or
 - c. artificially inflating fees during times when market demand exceeds supply.
- 5.1.2. Practitioners will conduct themselves in all phases of the interpreting situation in a manner befitting the profession, including negotiating work and contracts, obtaining suitable preparation material, choice of attire, presentation and professional demeanour.

- 5.1.3. Practitioners will honour professional commitments made when accepting work, and will follow through on their obligations. Practitioners may not unilaterally terminate work or a contract unless they have fair and reasonable grounds to do so. Termination for the purposes of gaining better paid work is not fair or reasonable.
- 5.1.4. Practitioners shall take reasonable care of material and/or property given to them by a participant or employer (for example, speech notes or a textbook) and may not lend such or use it for purposes other than those for which it was entrusted to them.

5.2. Accurate Representation of Credentials

- 5.2.1. Practitioners shall not by any means engage in, nor allow, the use of statements regarding their credentials that are false, misleading, incomplete, or likely to mislead participants or members of the public.
- 5.2.2. Practitioners will refrain from making inaccurate statements regarding their competence, education, experience or certification. This may include, but is not limited to, interpreter directories, business cards and forms, promotional materials, resumes or publications they have authored.

5.3. Reimbursement for Services

- 5.3.1. Practitioners will bill only for services provided. Practitioners will negotiate fees, including cancellation policies, preferably in writing or contract form, before service is provided. Practitioners will be sensitive to professional and community norms when establishing fees for services.
- 5.3.2. Practitioners may also provide pro bono service in situations where the profession of interpreting and the livelihood of other practitioners will not be threatened (refer to the ASLIA National pro bono interpreting policy).

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