

**Alabama Department of Mental Health  
SLPI INFORMATION MEMO**

Enclosed are the following to help you prepare for your SLPI:

1. The SLPI: A Brief Description (Attachment 1)
2. SLPI: Information for Candidates - Explains SLPI procedures and the basis for evaluating your sign language communication skills (Attachment 2)
3. SLPI: Tips for Candidates - Provides hints on strategies to use during the SLPI in order to do well (Attachment 3)
4. The SLPI Rating Scale (Attachment 4)
5. Permission to use slpi videotapes for training, demonstration, and research (Attachment 5)
6. Release of Information Form (Attachment 6)
7. Information Regarding Distance Interviews (Attachment 7)

Also on this website is a SLPI Application. In order to request an appointment, you will need to complete the documents included in this memo and complete the SLPI application.

If you have any questions about your scheduled SLPI, please contact Shannon Reese, SLPI Scheduler, [shannon.reese@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:shannon.reese@mh.alabama.gov) or Charlene J. Crump, SLPI Coordinator at [charlene.crump@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:charlene.crump@mh.alabama.gov)

***Note:** For best recording of your interview, you should wear medium-to-dark, solid colored clothing which contrasts with your skin tone. Regardless of your skin tone, please do not wear white or very light colored clothing. Thank you.*

## ATTACHMENT 1

### **A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI)**

Dr. Frank Caccamise & William Newell  
National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)  
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)  
Rochester, NY 14623-5604

The SLPI, a conversational approach to sign language communication skills assessment, is based on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) (also known as the Language Proficiency Interview/LPI). Like the O/LPI, the SLPI permits interview content to vary according to the job responsibilities, background, and interests of each person interviewed. Consistent with the O/LPI, the goal of the SLPI is to assess how well people are able to use sign language for their communication needs, and, as appropriate, to assist people in development of their sign language communication skills.

The SLPI involves a one-to-one conversation between the interviewer and candidate/interviewee, with each interviewee videotaped and subsequently rated independently by SLPI raters. [See Attachments 2 and 3 for SLPI candidate information and tips.] The basis for ratings is the SLPI Rating Scale (Attachment 4), a standard scale based on a highly skilled, knowledgeable native/native-like signer.

The SLPI assesses American Sign Language (ASL) as it is used among skilled sign language communicators in the United States. This use includes the full range of ASL from pure, linguistic descriptions of ASL to English influenced signing. This full range is characterized by (a) meaning-based sign language vocabulary selection consistent with standardized signs in current use by skilled language users, and (b) a variety of grammatical features that are consistent with effective use of gestural/visual language for communication. These grammatical features include: (a) space, indexing, eye gaze, sign movement directionality, and body shifts to separate ideas and to identify and discuss persons, places, and objects present and not present; (b) classifiers for describing and representing persons, places, and objects and their movements (for example, use of the index finger to represent "a person"); (c) sign-word order which facilitates effective communication in gestural-visual language; and (d) facial expressions and other body movements (non-manual signals) to support and add to information communicated (for example, affirmative and negative head movements). In addition to vocabulary and grammatical features, clarity of sign production, fluency, and comprehension are important to effective communication when using a gestural-visual language, and therefore are considered in SLPI ratings. Further explanation of what is assessed by the SLPI is provided in the SLPI Training Workshop Notebook, Section 5, "Skills Important for Effective Sign Language Communication and Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) Rating Levels." Copies of this paper are available from the PROGRAM SLPI Coordinator.

As we have discussed consistently in SLPI presentations and published materials, follow-up is critical to successful use of the SLPI. Thus, SLPI candidates are encouraged to schedule SLPI follow-up meetings. During follow-up meetings candidates have the opportunity to meet with sign language specialists to review and discuss their SLPI videotapes as a basis for planning skill development activities based on their individual communication skills and needs.

## ATTACHMENT 2

### **SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

1. We will have a conversation about social and work topics. I will ask you questions, and you may ask me questions.
2. We want to get the best sample of your American Sign Language (ASL) skills.
3. In order to elicit your best ASL skills, I may ask you to “re-sign” (restate) some responses.
4. We will evaluate your ASL skills, including: (a) ASL vocabulary; (b) clarity and control of sign production; (c) use of ASL grammar (for example, use of space, sign directionality, classifiers, time indicators, and sentence and discourse structure); (d) nonmanual behaviors such as facial expressions and body shifts; (e) fluency or smoothness of sign and fingerspelling production; and (f) comprehension (skill in receiving ASL).
5. Please try to maintain a good “signing posture;” that is, please sit upright. This should help you show your best ASL skills.
6. Please answer my questions as completely as possible.

Do you have any questions? Please use ASL.

NOTE: PLEASE USE YOUR BEST ASL.

## ATTACHMENT 3

### **SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) TIPS FOR CANDIDATES**

1. RELAX: Sip a cup of coffee, rub your hands, talk about the weather—anything that will help you to relax and be confident.
2. RATE OF SIGNING: Sign at a rate that is comfortable for you. If you know that you make many mistakes when you sign quickly, slow down.
3. KEEP SIGNING: Don't stop the conversation by answering simply YES or NO. Be generous. Give details, explain your point, develop your thoughts, and make comparisons. Anything that shows you can discuss a topic in depth will help you perform better. If you are not a "talkative" person by nature, you must make an extra effort to communicate during the interview.
4. DON'T DOWNGRADE YOURSELF: Don't apologize for your signing skills. Be positive. Let the interview show your skills.

#### WHAT TO DO...

1. IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE: If you know you made a mistake, correct it and continue. Correcting a mistake can help your performance.
2. IF YOU ARE LOST IN A LONG EXPLANATION: Stop. Think. Say something like, "Let me tell you again—it is complicated." Then try again. Don't worry about what happened. No one expects you to sign without mistakes.
3. IF YOU BECOME NERVOUS DURING THE INTERVIEW: The interviewer will know you are nervous and help you. You can stop for a few seconds and get control. Relax. Admit that you are nervous and joke about it. Often this is enough to make you comfortable again.
4. IF SOMETHING IS INTERFERING WITH YOUR SIGNING: If the air conditioner bothers you, say so. If you can't see the interviewer clearly, say so. Remember that this is your interview. You should have the best possible interview conditions.

ATTACHMENT 4

**SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) RATING SCALE<sup>a</sup>**

<u><b>RATINGS</b></u>	<u><b>DESCRIPTORS<sup>b</sup></b></u>
<u><b>Superior Plus</b></u>	<b>Able to have a fully shared and natural conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> All aspects of signing are native-like.
<u><b>Superior</b></u>	<b>Able to have a fully shared conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> Very broad sign language vocabulary, near native-like production and fluency, excellent use of sign language grammatical features, and excellent comprehension for normal signing rate.
<u><b>Advanced Plus</b></u>	Exhibits some superior level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u> .
<u><b>Advanced</b></u>	<b>Able to have a generally shared conversation with good, spontaneous elaboration for both social and work topics.</b> Broad sign language vocabulary knowledge and clear, accurate production of signs and fingerspelling at a normal/near-normal rate; occasional misproductions do not detract from conversational flow. Good use of many sign language grammatical features and comprehension good for normal signing rate.
<u><b>Intermediate Plus</b></u>	Exhibits some advanced level skills, but not all and not consistently.
<u><b>Intermediate</b></u>	<b>Able to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally 3-to-5 sentences.</b> Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed.
<u><b>Survival Plus</b></u>	Exhibits some intermediate level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u> .
<u><b>Survival</b></u>	<b>Able to discuss basic social and work topics with responses generally 1-to-3 sentences in length.</b> Some knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary with many sign vocabulary and/or sign production errors. Slow-to-moderate signing rate. Basic use of a few sign language grammatical features. Fair comprehension for signing produced at a slow-to-moderate rate with some repetition and rephrasing.
<u><b>Novice Plus</b></u>	Exhibits some survival level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u> .
<u><b>Novice</b></u>	<b>Able to provide single sign and some short phrase/sentence responses to basic questions signed at a slow-to-moderate rate with frequent repetition and rephrasing.</b> Vocabulary primarily related to everyday work and/or social areas such as basic work-related signs, family members, basic objects, colors, numbers, names of weekdays, and time. Production and fluency characterized by many sign production errors and by a slow rate with frequent inappropriate pauses/hesitations.
<u><b>No Functional Skills</b></u>	<b>(May be) Able to provide short single sign and "primarily" fingerspelled responses to some basic questions signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.</b>

<sup>a</sup>Adapted from US Foreign Service Institute & ACTFL LPI Rating Scales by William Newell & Frank Caccamise  
<sup>b</sup>For all SLPI rating descriptors, **first statement (in bold type) always a statement of ASL communicative functioning**, with all remaining statements (regular type) descriptors of ASL form (vocabulary, production, fluency, grammar, and comprehension).  
March, 1999 (revised edition).

ATTACHMENT 5

**PERMISSION TO USE SLPI VIDEOTAPES FOR  
TRAINING, DEMONSTRATION, AND RESEARCH**

Dear Testing Candidate:

In order to help ensure we are able to provide quality SLPI services, in-service training is provided for the Alabama Department of Mental Health SLPI Team Members, and training is sometimes necessary to add additional SLPI Team Members. In addition, persons who may/will be taking the SLPI often request the opportunity to see examples of signers who achieve each of the SLPI rating levels.

Given the above, we wish to request your permission to use your SLPI Interview videotape to assist us in conducting SLPI training, demonstration, and/or research.

If you are willing to give us permission, please sign below and return this form to Shannon Reese, PO Box 301410, Montgomery, AL 36130 or FAX 334.242.3025. Thank you.

My signature below signifies my granting permission to Alabama DMH to use my SLPI videotape for training, demonstration and/or research purposes

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

ATTACHMENT 6  
**SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI)  
RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM**

I request that ADMH share results of my \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ SLPI  
with the following individuals/groups                      month                      day                      year  
(please include addresses or email):

**Note:**

***Results of SLPI evaluations for ADMH employees or individuals applying for ADMH positions will automatically be forwarded to the personnel department and supervisor. Results of SLPI evaluations for Troy Sign Language or Interpreter Training Program Students or individuals applying for Troy Sign Language or Interpreter Training Program status will automatically be forwarded to the instructor and/or director of that program. My signature below indicates my understanding of this statement. I may indicate by listing below, additional individuals/agencies to which I would like my results released to on my behalf.***

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My signature below is my permission for ADMH to share my SLPI results as requested above.

Please return this form to Shannon Reese, PO Box 301410, Montgomery, AL 36130, FAX 334.242.3025 or your SLPI Interviewer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Individual Making Request**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## ATTACHMENT 7

### **SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) INFORMATION REGARDING DISTANCE INTERVIEWS**

Individuals have the choice of taking the SLPI on a local level in Alabama at the DMH central office in Montgomery, on a local level within their state at various regional offices or through video technology.

If you are in-state and are not local to Montgomery, please contact the Office of Deaf Services to schedule an appointment at the nearest testing center.

If you are out of state, and wish to take the SLPI in-person within your state, we will provide you with a list of current SLPI coordinators. There may be a cost involved. Scheduling and reporting of results will depend on the specific agency's policies and timelines.

For individuals who desire or need to test using video technology, the SLPI team will do their best to make sure that your distance interview is as effective as possible; there are some considerations that may arise as a result of the format of the interview, including technical issues and discourse or turn-taking challenges. Candidates are required to read the following statement and sign below in order to set up an appointment via video technology.

I understand that taking the SLPI via distance technology is normally recommended for individuals at an Advanced or higher signing ability. Effective SLPI interviews may or may not be hindered by the speed or clarity of the connection, and it may also impact natural discourse that are a part of the SLPI evaluation and that these issues may in turn negatively impact my final rating. I further understand that connectivity information must be provided upon application and is required to be tested at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled testing time. My signature below indicates my understanding of the information provided.

Please contact Shannon Reese ([Shannon.reese@mh.alabama.gov](mailto:Shannon.reese@mh.alabama.gov)) to schedule your appointment.

Return this form to  
Office of Deaf Services  
Attn: SLPI Coordinator  
PO Box 301410  
Montgomery, AL 36130  
FAX 334.242.3025.

---

**Signature of SLPI Testing Candidate**

---

**Date**

## ATTACHMENT 8

### **SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) TECHNICAL INFORMATION REGARDING DISTANCE INTERVIEWS**

For Remote Interviews only:

Please provide as much information as possible regarding your connection.

IP Address	
Videophone Number	
Alternate contact information, in case there is a problem with the connectivity.	
Type of videophone or remote device	
Location of device (Example: Home, Workplace, Local Deaf Service Agency)	

Additional information:

---

---

---

---

---

#### Information for the candidate:

Candidates who desire or need to test using remote video technology, are responsible for the following;

- A high speed internet connection is necessary for effective communication during the interview.
- The phone number of IP number should be provided upon application and must

be tested at least 48 hours prior to the interview.

- The candidate should sit in front of the camera in a chair with no arms or wheels.
- The lighting must be appropriate for comfortable communication to occur.
- The camera must be situated to provide an appropriate view for communication. The candidate should be framed so that the signing space is visible to the interviewer. (from just above the person's head to their waist and adequate room on each side).
- The candidate should be alone in the room during testing. No assistance is allowed nor are bystanders allowed to watch.
- The room should be free of distractions, including children, pets, or other activity.
- In order to assure the best possible interview, the interviewer may need to ask you to make adjustments such as lighting, placement or background, etc.
- All times are listed as Central Standard Time, please plan accordingly.
- The interview will be recorded.