



# Sign Language Interpreter Training Program

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## ITP Student Handbook

Welcome to Tyler Junior College's  
**Sign Language Interpreter Training Program!**

(updated August 2022, DW)

The mission, philosophy, and goals of the Tyler Junior College Interpreter Training Program (TJC ITP) are in alignment with the School of Professional and Technical Programs and Tyler Junior college. Please review. [https://www.tjc.edu/downloads/download/3/student\\_handbook](https://www.tjc.edu/downloads/download/3/student_handbook)

### TJC ITP Statement of Mission and Purpose

The Tyler Junior College Interpreter Training Program prepares students to become interpreters and transliterators of American Sign Language (ASL) and English, for persons who are Deaf, Deaf-blind and Hard of Hearing to work in a variety of community settings such as K-12, Educational Settings, and Social Services within diverse populations upon graduation. An additional goal is to have graduates qualify to take the state and national tests to become professional, ethical, linguistically competent entry-level Certified American Sign Language Interpreters employed to be a service to the East Texas community, to the state of Texas, and throughout the United States. (High Stakes settings require further skill development and study such as legal, medical, and mental health.)

**TJC Mission Statement:** The College champions student and community success by providing a caring, comprehensive experience through educational excellence, stellar service, innovative programming, and authentic partnerships.

Accreditation: Tyler Junior College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate degrees. Contact SACSCOC at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, telephone 404-679-4500 or at <http://www.sacscoc.org> for questions about the accreditation of Tyler Junior College.

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# Welcome!

We are pleased that you are considering a career in this field. We take a great deal of pride in our program and all that it has to offer. We will do all that we can to help you attain your goals!

**We need you.** There are 1 in 20 Americans that are currently Deaf or Hard of Hearing. There are 3.8 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in Texas alone, with a severe shortage of certified interpreters. About 98,000 deaf and hard of hearing individuals, including those who are deaf, as well as veterans and older people who become deaf, live in a 23-county region in East Texas, according to Susie Grona, president of the Tyler Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center's community advisory committee.

Each of you has different goals. If you are interested in helping the deaf and hard of hearing community through service organizations, please consider the American Sign Language (ASL) skills certificate offered by the program. [https://www.tjc.edu/directory\\_record/90/asl\\_skills\\_certificate](https://www.tjc.edu/directory_record/90/asl_skills_certificate) For those thinking about becoming a certified interpreting professional, TJC ITP offers a two-year degree, Sign Language Interpreting. [https://www.tjc.edu/directory\\_record/88/sign\\_language\\_interpreting\\_aas](https://www.tjc.edu/directory_record/88/sign_language_interpreting_aas)

The program is designed to prepare the student for an entry-level position in the field of sign language interpreting. It prepares you to take the basic level exam offered by the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) in the state of Texas.

## History

Tyler Junior College's Sign Language Interpreter Program began after many years of teaching American Sign language (ASL) courses by a Tyler resident and member of the local Deaf community, Frankie Widner. She was joined by D.J. Soreson who began the first steps of the Sign language Interpreter Program at TJC.

Their vision continued to form through a former student who became a certified Interpreter, Dr Judy Barnes. She was originally a teacher in the college's Developmental Reading Program and worked tirelessly in 1994 collecting data, attending meetings, and fulfilling duties to launch this dream. In the fall of 1995, Dr. Barnes began teaching two night classes and the TJC ITP was launched. Since that time the program has continued to grow and has had many wonderful teachers and students. Under her supervision, the TJC ITP was **twice awarded exemplary status** by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2001 and 2005). It continues to be the only program available in the northeastern region of Texas. Dr. Barnes retired in 2008 but her legacy lives on through the *Dr. Judy Barnes Honorary Scholarship* established in Spring 2010 to further continue her dedication and service.

Rhonda McKinzie became the new department chair in the fall of 2008 and served in that role for 14 years, retiring in the 2021-2022 academic year. New organizations were established such as the Interpreter Student Association, the Apache Signers, and the ASL Honor Society Chapter. Also, ASL lab facilities were installed in Fall 2009 and 2013.

Kim Hunt assumes the leadership of the program effective fall 2022.

# TJC ITP Philosophy

The program recognizes the dignity and value of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community's language and communication modes used by its members. American Sign Language is a living linguistic language. The faculty and staff are dedicated to instructing ITP students on its origin, grammatical structure, and use. We also acknowledge that the ASL language is an integral part of the culture. The faculty and staff promote and support the active involvement of Deaf ASL users as language models, instructors, guest speakers, and lab assistants.

We believe that interpreting is a profession that should value linguistic competency, high professional ethics, and high personal standards, and that interaction with members of the Deaf Community is essential in fully attaining these goals.

## Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the Sign Language Interpreter Training Program (TJC ITP). Your review of the Handbook is part of your orientation to this program. All incoming new TJC ITP students that are enrolled in the TJC ITP program will attend a department orientation; at which time, the program expectations will be discussed. (Orientation times and dates to be announced.)

The policies and procedures in this Handbook and in the current TJC Student Handbook are subject to amendments at any time during your time in the program. You will be notified in writing of any changes by the TJC ITP faculty to the ITP Handbook. Please look online for the most current TJC Student Handbook. <http://www.tjc.edu/StudentHandbook>

## Qualifications and Code of Professional Conduct

### For Interpreters endorsed by TJC ITP

A certified interpreter is a person who provides sign language interpreter services. To work as a certified interpreter, a person must have the skills, experience, education, and other job-related requirements of the position. In Texas, the **Board for Evaluation of Interpreters** (BEI) certification program is responsible for testing and certifying the skill level of individuals seeking to become certified interpreters in Texas (basic, advanced, or master level).

Requirements to become an ASL Interpreter as stated in the Texas BEI Study Guide Chapter 2.

2.1 Essential Abilities and attributes of Nonintermediary or NonDeaf Interpreters

2.1.1 Essential Physical Abilities

2.1.2 Essential Cognitive Abilities

2.1.3 Essential Cultural Knowledge and Linguistic Abilities

2.1.4 Essential Professional Attributes

[BEI Study Guide \(texas.gov\)](#)

The CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (CPC) of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID), shall govern the professional conduct of interpreters/transliterators certified by the Office, as well as, students of TJC ITP. See the full version in detail at [Code of Professional Conduct | Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf \(rid.org\)](#)

# TJC ITP Student Policy

(Updated Summer 2022)

## Overview and Purpose

The following policy has been established by Tyler Junior College's (TJC) Sign Language Interpreter Training Program (ITP) approved by its advisory committee and supported by the TJC administration and may supersede in some areas the general TJC policies. This applies to all students enrolled in SGNL or SLNG classes or who have declared Sign Language ASL Skills Certificate or the AAS/Certificate in Sign Language Interpreting as their major.

The purpose of this policy is to prepare students to become skilled qualified certified professional sign language interpreters, representing themselves, the interpreting profession, and the TJC ITP with the highest degree of skill, professionalism, and integrity. In addition, this policy is in place to protect the consumers (Deaf and hearing) from harm as well as provide ASL and interpreting students protection from inappropriate demands to interpret in settings that would be in violation of the Texas Board for the Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Code of Professional Conduct (CPC). Cooperation is sought among the entities who hire interpreters to assist us in keeping the integrity of the program so that it can give students a firm educational/skills foundation while maintaining respect of the Deaf community.

1. Students are expected to follow **all TJC Student Policies and Guidelines** (See <http://www.tjc.edu/StudentHandbook>) and the **TJC ITP Handbook-** [www.tjc.edu/signlanguage](http://www.tjc.edu/signlanguage).
2. Included in the above is adhering to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and the Texas Board for the Evaluation of Interpreters Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) as listed previously on previous pages above.

## TJC ITP Communication Access

This department and TJC support and promote full communication access for all Deaf and Hard of Hearing faculty, staff, students, and community which includes English and American Sign Language. Strategies and policies are in place for each segment of the program as skills are acquired by students.

The College maintains an office to support those individuals requiring interpreting services. More information is available at [https://www.tjc.edu/info/20053/new\\_student\\_orientation/189/disability\\_services](https://www.tjc.edu/info/20053/new_student_orientation/189/disability_services)

TJC ITP students to check their Canvas inbox and TJC email account regularly. Professors and TJC ITP students are instructed to electronically communicate through only TJC e-mail addresses or the learning management system (Canvas).

Social Media is used by TJC faculty, graduates, and students to post information related to ASL, Deaf, Interpreting, Self-Care, Events, etc. TJC ITP has multiple Facebook pages: a group for alumni and students, and a group for Interpreter Student Association Members.

## TJC ITP Attire and Personal Appearance Policy

The ITP department follows specific guidelines within Ethical Business Practices for ASL Interpreters. While students are involved in training, video assignments, practicum, or interpreting for the Deaf/DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing faculty, staff, students, or community in any capacity, attire and personal appearance including exposed tattoos should be professional, non-attention seeking, non-distractive, unobstructive, including solid contrasting colors such as black, maroon, navy blue, brown or dark gray. Darker skin tones can consider solid beige or cream. Requirements will be discussed as well as detailed in the syllabus. **When in doubt, please ask one of the ITP professors.**

## Program Costs

Textbooks required materials, and relevant membership information and cost will be included in each class syllabus.

ITP AAS majors are required to sit for and pass the Test of English Proficiency (TEP) after the program mid-point (completing the Intralingual skills class SLNG 1307). Passage of TEP is required prior to graduation. TJC is a test proctor facility. Cost: \$95

<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing>

- Practicum-It is possible various sites require a background check fee.
- Specialized topics and training off-campus- costs vary per site.
- Other expenses as needed.

## TJC ITP Lab Policy

This department provides an on-site ASL lab. The lab is used for instruction, recording of classwork, homework, resources, and interaction with approved students, community, and staff. Detailed lab rules will be discussed in class and posted at the lab location.

## Activities and Events

There will be many options for attending events for observation and skill practice in the local and surrounding areas. All information will be shared in class, on social media, and posted in the classrooms of the department. More detailed information is provided at the end of the handbook.

## Practicum

Students will enter their practicum in the last semester of the program. Placement will be based on grades, workforce competencies, attendance, skill, and referrals. Students must be under a certified or approved interpreter at all times. This class entails on and off-campus participation.

Due to the limited availability of practicum sites, there is no guarantee that each student can be placed in a site during the last semester of the program. It may be that the student must wait until the next long semester (Fall or Spring). To qualify for practicum experience, students must pass all pre-requisites with a minimum grade of “C” and apply to the practicum sites according to practicum guidelines set forth in SLNG 2266.

# Degree Plans & Advising

Go to [www.tcj.edu/signlanguage](http://www.tcj.edu/signlanguage) for the most updated degree plans.

**Note:** The best source of advising for ITP students is to contact the ASL ITP program coordinator or department chair. The following are general guidelines.

## Academic Awards:

The TJC ITP offers two academic awards:

ASL Skills Certificate: You may start out with this goal and change to the Interpreting degree or certificate without losing any hours. This is for those who want ASL skills to help in their career, but it does not prepare a student to interpret. Requires completion of 30 specific semester hours.

AAS Sign Language Interpreting: You may finish these degrees in 2 years; however, it is based on when you begin the first semester of courses. This degree prepares you to take the state and national interpreting board exams to become a professional certified interpreter. Requires completion of 65 specific semester hours.

## Frequency of Advising:

The program has group/individual advising each Fall and Spring to advise all ASL and Interpreting students. This helps the students stay on track and be ready for registration. In order to get the schedule that best fits your personal needs, register for SGNL and SLNG classes first as soon as online registration is available.

\*While we try to schedule first-year and second-year classes on two days per week (M/W or T/TH) – the last year you will find you must attend 4 days per week. The last semester can include a practicum. For example, your classes could be on T/TH and your practicum schedule could be MW or MWF.

## Course Offerings and Degree Completion:

It is important to stay on track with the degree plan as most of our courses are only offered once per year. You do have up to 5 years to complete a degree plan.

### If using financial aid

Please check with them regarding the required number of hours you need to take, the effects of dropping courses, and other related matters. Government and college rules change and it is your responsibility to keep yourself updated on all matters regarding your financial aid and education process.

### Sticking to the degree plan

You might only be able to take classes on your degree plan, not any extras unless you pay out of pocket. There is no double-dipping – you may not be able to use our program classes as electives to complete another AA, AS or AAS degree. Check with financial aid or registrar staff.

## Transferring to a 4-year University

Please be sure to check with them regarding course transference. Leaving TJC core complete is the best choice as it protects you from being required by other Texas universities to complete additional core classes besides the upper-level classes in your chosen degree.

## Online Courses, Distance Ed, Dual Credit:

Currently, our courses are not online. The best practice in beginning to learn ASL or interpreting is in a group face-to-face. Dual credit courses are not currently available; however, high school students may attend our courses through early college entry and if their high school agrees, earn dual credit for our courses. High school students are also eligible to complete Credit by Examination (CBE) as discussed below.

## Credit by Examination or Placement Exams:

CBE assessment is available for ASL I on specific dates during the fall and spring semesters. (Contact the department chair or program coordinator for more information.) If passed, you may begin with ASL II, Intro to Interpreting, and Visual Gestural Communications plus our core on our program degree plan list (fall degree plan courses). Otherwise, our program begins ONLY in the long summer or Spring with SGNL 1401 ASL I and ENG 1301 plus core on our program list. (See degree plan [www.tjc.edu/signlanguage](http://www.tjc.edu/signlanguage))

## Minimum Grade Requirements:

1. Students must pass all SLNG or SGNL courses with a “C” or better to pass and proceed to the next course or level. (See prerequisites in the online TJC catalog for each course)
2. If a student barely makes a “C”, it is wise to discuss his/her progress and skills with the professor. Options: Either re-take the course or audit the course (costs the same but grades do not count) and take the next level simultaneously.
3. Students in the interpreting degree/certificate must pass the Mid-Program and Exit exams with a grade of “C” or better to continue on or graduate from the program.
4. Interpreting students must successfully complete 256 hours of practicum in their last semester.
5. If a student makes a “C” on the Exit exam, the possibility of success on the board exams could be minimal. The student should take extra courses or use other measures to continue to improve in weak areas before taking the board exams. (The cost of board exams is found on their websites.)
6. Our ASL Labs are open to former students and community interpreters to use to improve skills. Open Lab hours - posted each semester - are based on the classes scheduled in the labs and the availability of faculty/staff.
7. We have departmental intervention forms (Plan of Action) in place for alerting students of the need to repeat a course due to insufficient skill attainment.

# Benchmark Exams

## Mid-Program Exam

Included in Interpreting I (SLNG 2301) Long Summer Session

- a comprehensive written multiple-choice exam containing information learned in the first 3 semesters of the program
- a Test of English Proficiency
- an expressive/receptive portion.
- Graded by a team of ITP faculty. Must pass with a minimum grade of “C”.



## Exit Exam

Taken at the end of the last semester tied to the practicum grade. This is similar to the state board exam which includes:

- expressive and receptive ASL interpreting
- expressive transliterating
- sight translation
- a comprehensive written exam. Passing this portion of the exam is a good indicator of success in passing the national written exam.
- Graded by a team of ITP faculty. Must pass with a minimum grade of “C”.

## ASL Skills Exam

Taken at the end of the SLNG 2334 (ASL 5 class). This is similar to Language Proficiency Exams and is designed to measure communicative proficiency using American Sign Language. It includes:

- An interview with the ASL 5 instructor selecting questions similar to the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview
- Graded by a team of ITP faculty. Must pass with a minimum grade of “C”.

## Activities

(See also TJC ITP FB Private Grp for students/grads for info)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/381415275227046/>

## American Sign Language Honor Society (ASLHS)

Students must be an ITP major in the Interpreting Training Program with a goal of earning an AAS degree or ASL Skills certificate to be eligible to become a member of ASLHS. You must be enrolled in nine (9) semester hours of TJC courses per semester. You may apply for membership for ASLHS after you have completed 15 hours of ASL-related coursework. For more information about ASLHS and the application, go to the following link: <http://www.tjc.edu/SignLanguage> and look in the related downloads.

## Interpreter Student Association (ISA)

For interpreting majors. This group is eligible to attend the Texas Society of Interpreters for the Deaf annual conference. They also discuss current topics in the field and support each other in the mutual goal of becoming professional interpreters.

## Apache Signers

For students in ASL III and above. A sign language performance group that performs for homecoming and other events as time for practice allows.

Deaf Community Events. Time and Location TBA See TDHHC.ORG newsletter or TJC ITP FB Grp.

# Program Learning Outcomes (current)

1. Demonstrate minimum level interpreting skills and basic fluency between American Sign Language (ASL) to Spoken English, Spoken English to American Sign Language, and Sign Translation under the guided objective of the Texas Board for the Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) basic performance exam @ 110 WPM, to become employable as professional certified interpreters.
2. Exhibit the ability to apply self-evaluation of interpreting skills to monitor readiness for professional realistic interpreting work in the interpreting profession.
3. Demonstrate knowledge and interpreter skills for various settings such as Kindergarten through 12th grade, Educational Settings, and Social Services under the guided objectives of the BEI basic performance exam, as well as the Texas Education Agency (TEA) standards of best practice for sign language interpreters.
4. Recognize and identify the effects of oppression, discrimination, power, and privilege influences within current varied populations within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and the interpreting profession by using preventive strategies and self-awareness skills.
5. Evaluating and applying ethical decisions deriving from the Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) guidelines for Sign Language Interpreters on the state and national levels.
6. Distinguish and generate best practices for independent self-care competencies including physical, mental, and emotional parameters.
7. Develop an awareness of the requirements, process, and maintenance of the sign language interpreting profession and credentialing from the State or National interpreter Certification registries.
8. Incorporate understanding and respect of the culture, language, and history of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and interpreting community.
9. Ability to use accessible resources while seeking and fulfilling the requirements for a current portfolio and attain professional development by attending various avenues of training provided by local, state, and national organizations. Retain mentor(s) pertaining to the interpreter profession.

## Consequences of Handbook and Policy Violations

### “Plan of Action” (POA) Procedure/Form for Courses

To help students who may become in danger of failing a class or for students who are being mildly disruptive in class, the ITP faculty have a “Plan of Action” form that is filled out by the professor. This is solely for each course, not the program in general. If the student is having difficulty learning the subject matter, it may be recommended to seek another career path and not retake the class.

## **Policy Violation**

The TJC ITP Faculty Team reserves the right to dismiss a student from the department for violation of program policy or for violation of the current TJC ITP Handbook.

The practicum site also has the right to refuse to allow a student to continue practicum at their site.



# Sign Language Interpreter Training Program

## POLICY ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AGREEMENT

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ A# \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Other E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Plan: \_\_\_\_\_ Interpreting \_\_\_\_\_ ASL Skills \_\_\_\_\_ ASL Courses Only

**These policies and agreements supersede any previous policies and agreements.**

### Tyler Junior College Student Handbook

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the policies and guidelines outlined in the current Tyler Junior College Student Handbook found online at [www.tjc.edu](http://www.tjc.edu). I understand that failure to comply with college policy can be grounds for disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the Sign Language Interpreter Training Program. In addition, I understand by signing this document, I agree to abide by all policies and accept the consequences for failure to abide by all policies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign Language ITP Faculty/Advisor/Chair

### Tyler Junior College Interpreter Training Program Handbook and Policy

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the policies and guidelines outlined in the current Tyler Junior College Sign Language Interpreter Training Handbook found online at [www.tjc.edu/signlanguage](http://www.tjc.edu/signlanguage). I understand that specific department policies may supersede college policy and failure to comply with department policy can be grounds for disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the program. In addition, I understand By signing this document, I agree to abide by all policies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Sign Language ITP Faculty/Advisor/Chair