Dear QAST Candidate,

The information below is the Arkansas Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) Handbook for Interpreters. The handbook includes:

- Prerequisites for Testing
- QAST Screening Procedures for the Applicant/Candidate
- Maintaining a Level
- Functional Descriptions of QAST Levels
- QAST Professional Conduct Standards
- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) Code of Professional Conduct

These materials cover many of the questions posed by candidates interested in taking the QAST. Please be sure to read each part of the packet thoroughly. When sending in your fees and application, be sure to include all the necessary fees for your written and performance test, as any error will delay your testing date.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact the QAST Evaluation Team in the Interpreting Department with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Sincerely,

QAST Evaluation Team Member
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

ALL PROCEDURES AND CONTENT OF THE QAST SCREENING TESTS ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

VIOLATION OF THIS CONFIDENTIALITY BY THE CANDIDATE WILL RESULT IN SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS WHICH MAY INCLUDE SUSPENSION/REVOCATION OF CREDENTIAL OR BEING PERMANENTLY BANNED FROM TAKING THE ARKANSAS QAST.
ARKANSAS QUALITY ASSURANCE SCREENING TEST (QAST)
FOR SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

QAST SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR THE APPLICANT/CANDIDATE

PREREQUISITES FOR QAST TESTING:

- January 1, 2021: Each new candidate must have at least a BA or take the necessary steps to an alternative pathway to be allowed to test.

* Students that are enrolled in an Interpreter Education Program and are required to test for their educational benchmark will also be eligible to test.

**Interpreters who have already achieved a QAST level yet have no formal education will be “grandfathered” in and allowed to retest as long as their level stays current and they maintain their CEU’s.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS: Once these prerequisites have been implemented they may be waived for students in an accredited IEP if the test is a requirement for their educational benchmark. If a candidate does not have a BA, or is not in or completed an accredited IEP, they may be granted an alternative pathway. Interpreters that once held a QAST level and have lapsed will be required to comply with all prerequisites for QAST testing or take the necessary steps to an alternative pathway. Candidates that are unable to qualify using the alternative pathway will not be allowed to test.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY STEPS: An interpreter may be granted an alternative pathway to testing if they are able to provide ALL of the following under Step One or Step Two.

STEP ONE

- They are a current member of the Arkansas Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (ARID)
- Documentation showing that they currently hold another type of interpreting credential such as EIPA, BEI etc.
- Able to provide documentation of at least 10 CEU’s earned in the past 12 months

STEP TWO

- Provide an Alternative Pathway application along with required documentation to receive the 100 points necessary to become eligible for testing.

APPLICATION FORMS AND FEES FOR THE QAST: To apply for testing the following items must be submitted at least one week prior to testing:

- Application
- Prerequisite documentation
- Fee(s) stated on the application form
- Copy of the candidates current Driver’s License

** Please note that there is a separate application for out of state candidates.
** Due to the fact that interpreters working in the field are privy to sensitive information and situations the interpreter candidate may also be asked to provide a background check before testing.
Fees are non-refundable. In the event of an illness or emergency, with prior notice, the applicant may be rescheduled for screening without an additional fee.

PERFORMANCE TEST OPTIONS: The candidate has two options for testing: The first option is a Live Panel test with feedback and results before they leave. The second is a Video QAST where the candidate takes the performance test in front of a camera. Their performance is then sent to 3 evaluators to be scored. Feedback and results will be emailed to the candidate within 60 days of testing.

Once an application for testing has been received, the applicant has 6 months to schedule their written and performance test. If the applicant has made no effort to schedule their test in the allotted time, all fees submitted for testing will be lost.

WRITTEN TEST: The written test is provided at a time prior to the performance screening. This test assesses the candidate’s knowledge of interpreting and the RID CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT. The applicant must attain at least 84% (i.e. 42 correct out of 50 multiple choice questions) to become a candidate for the performance portion.

COMPOSITION OF THE QAST TEAM: The team consists of: the Coordinator, three trained evaluators (hearing interpreters and a deaf consumer), and a transliterator who will transliterate the candidate’s sign to voice performance. The coordinator monitors the process and tallies the scores from the individual evaluator’s assessments of the candidate’s performance.
* A culturally diverse team will be provided upon request.

WARM UP TIME AND THE TEST: Candidates taking the Live Panel test are encouraged to arrive one hour before their scheduled screening. Warm up materials are available to assist in preparation for the screening. The duration of the screening is approximately one hour and 15 minutes. Candidates taking the Video QAST will be given an appointment time and a 2 hour time slot. This allows time for the candidate to view the warm up material, take the interview and performance portion of the test.

Each evaluator will score the candidate’s performance in the following three areas:

1. **The Interview:** During the Interview portion, the screening team may or may not use their voices when communicating with the candidate. The candidate must rely on one’s receptive sign language skills. Candidates will be given several scenarios and asked how they would handle each one, and explain why they came to that decision. Candidates are required to sign for themselves. The candidate must pass the interview with a score of 70% to continue on to the interpreting and transliterating performance screening.

2. **Transliterator Skills:** Interactive videotaped materials are used for candidates to transliterate messages from sign to voice and voice to sign (signed English mode).

3. **Interpreting Skills:** Interactive videotaped materials are used for candidates to interpret messages from sign to voice and voice to sign (American Sign Language). The candidate may receive different levels for interpretation and transliteration.

FEEDBACK: The QAST Team is available immediately following the Live Panel test to answer questions and provide feedback during this closing interview. Team members will take the opportunity to discuss the candidate’s strengths, weaknesses, and directions for further improvements and growth.
WHEN A LEVEL IS RECEIVED: If a candidate receives a level they have earned a “STATE CREDENTIAL.”

A QAST LEVEL IS NOT CERTIFICATION

LICENSURE: Any person with a credential intending to work as an interpreter MUST APPLY FOR A LICENSE. Anyone working as a professional interpreter without the proper qualifications and license may be fined between $100-$500 each time they are reported for interpreting without a license.

To obtain a license send your application to:
Arkansas Department of Health
Licensing Office
Advisory Board for Interpreters
4815 West Markham St., Slot 29
Little Rock, AR 72205-3867
The application for an interpreter license can be found at this website:

For more information about the licensure rules and regulations go to:

For more information about the licensure law go to:

CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEU’S): Once a level is received the interpreter is required to earn at least 10 CEU’s per calendar year. Interpreters screened for the first time between Jan 1-July 31 are required to earn 10 CEU’s by Dec 31 of the same calendar year that they screened. Interpreters screened for the first time between Aug 1 – Dec 31 are required to earn 10 CEU’s by Dec 31 of the next calendar year after they screened. The CEU’s earned must be earned in 2 different content areas: Each Interpreter must earn 7 CEU’s in Professional Development and 3 CEU’s in Professional Ethics. All CEU’s must be submitted to ARS to maintain a QAST level. Once all CEU’s have been received the interpreter will be issued a certificate of completion to make a copy and send to the Arkansas Department of Health for licensure.

RE-SCREENING: One is encouraged and expected to upgrade skills and interpreting abilities; therefore, re-screening is required if the candidate wants to maintain or renew their QAST level. A candidate must wait six months before re-screening on Levels 1-3 or Levels 4-5. A 6 months wait is not required to take Level 4-5 upon receiving a Level 3.

REVOKING LEVEL DUE TO NON SUBMISSION OF 10 CEU’S: Interpreters with a QAST level, who fail to turn in their required 10 CEU’s to ARS by Dec. 31st, will lose their QAST level. In order to re-test the interpreter must submit 10 CEU’s with their application. * If an interpreter’s level was not due to expire when their level was revoked, they may be eligible for a one time reinstatement upon submitting their 10 CEU’s.
FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTIONS OF QAST LEVELS

BEGINNERS SCREENING PERFORMANCE
LEVEL 1-3

LEVEL 1: Beginner
Expiration: Two (2) years **10 CEU’s required yearly**

The candidate is able to transliterate or interpret 50% of the beginner’s performance screening tape(s). A LEVEL 1 interpreter may be used for one to one situations on a non-technical basis in which the interpreter has an opportunity to stop for clarification and receive feedback from the consumer who is deaf and the consumer who is hearing. The Level 1 Interpreter is a beginner that scored between 50%-69% on both their expressive and receptive skills.

LEVEL 2: Beginner-Intermediate
Expiration: Two (2) years **10 CEU’s required yearly**

The candidate is able to transliterate or interpret 70% of the beginner’s performance screening. Interpreters holding this credential should limit their work to one-on-one situations and a select few group sessions/workshops/seminars where communication can be interrupted occasionally for clarification. This level reflects limited voicing and limited platform abilities. Teaming with higher level and/or certified interpreter is encouraged to build skill. The Level 2 Interpreter is a beginner that scored between 70%-84% on both their expressive and receptive skills.

LEVEL 3: Intermediate
Expiration: Two (2) years **10 CEU’s required yearly**

The candidate is able to transliterate or interpret 85% of the beginner’s performance screening. Interpreters holding this credential should keep their focus on working one-on-one situations and group sessions/workshops/seminars with limited voicing needs. This level reflects stronger skills (ASL and Transliterateing) than Levels 1 and 2. Teaming with higher level and/or certified interpreter is encouraged to build skill. The Level 3 Interpreter is a beginner that scored between 85%-100% on both their expressive and receptive skills.

ADVANCED SCREENING PERFORMANCE
LEVELS 4-5

LEVEL 4: Intermediate-Advanced
Expiration: Five (5) years **10 CEU’s required yearly**

The candidate is able to interpret or transliterate 70% of the advanced performance screening. This interpreter functions well expressively and receptively in most technical situations and can function
well as an interpreter/transliterator. Discretion should be used regarding the situation and language level of the consumer. Please consult CPC and use professional judgment. The Level 4 Interpreter is an advanced level interpreter that scored between 70%-84% on both their expressive and receptive skills.

LEVEL 5: Advanced
Expiration: (Permanent) **10 CEU’s required yearly**

The candidate is able to interpret or transliterate 85% of the advanced performance screening. This interpreter functions well expressively and receptively as an interpreter/transliterator in a majority of situations. No restrictions are indicated. Please consult CPC and use professional judgment. The Level 5 Interpreter is an advanced level interpreter that scored between 85%-100% on both their expressive and receptive skills.

Arkansas Department of Health Licensure Summary of Credentials

A. Credentials. Sign language interpreters’ credentials are based on levels of proficiency, and in order to protect the health, welfare and safety of the consumers, interpreters shall only accept assignments appropriate for their proficiency based upon accepted credentials for licensure.

B. Teaming. In the event a team of Interpreters is required to manage the communication accessibility of an assignment, a mixture of proficiency levels may be acceptable only if the following criteria are met:
1. The primary Interpreter’s proficiency level meets or exceeds the required qualifications for that setting;
2. The primary Interpreter agrees to serve as a mentor and to monitor the services of the secondary Interpreter.
3. The secondary Interpreter’s proficiency level is only one (1) category lower than the proficiency level required for that setting; and
4. The secondary Interpreter agrees to adhere to the guidance given by the primary Interpreter during the teaming assignment.

C. Evidence of Licensure. Upon request of any consumer or hiring entity, an interpreter shall show proof of his or her Arkansas license that will indicate qualifications.

D. Levels

The following list of settings for qualifications is not all-inclusive.

Levels:
(1). QAST I; BEI I
Registration, Classroom Extracurricular Activities
Social Services – Independent Living, Basic Living Skills, Bus Card
Civic Club Meetings, Recreation, Socialization

(2). QAST II; BEI II; BEI Basic
Driver’s License Testing
Eligibility for services - Follow-up Interview

Support Services – Non Academic Advisors
Support Services - Orientation, Life/Job Skills
Basic Job Readiness Training (semi-skilled technical or unskilled labor)
Interview Application for Services
On-the-job Training
Sheltered Workshop
All settings listed in Subsection XI(A) 12

(3). QAST III; BEI III; BEI Advanced
Social Services –Food Stamps, Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, TEA/SNAP benefits
Continuing Education Workshops
Job Related: staff meetings, employee/employer meetings, safety workshops, job training, vocational counseling, vocational assessment
Tax preparation, credit counseling, mortgage/loan counseling
Diagnostics and Evaluations
Routine Physical Exams, in Patient/Out-Patient Hospital Care
Hospital Admissions
Nursing homes, home health services, community health education, self-help programs, 12 Step programs
Basic tutoring (out of school)
Postsecondary Education-Academic Courses, Academic Advisors
Vocational-Technology Trainings
Employment Related/Union Meetings
Child Birth Classes-Planned Parenthood
All settings listed in Subsections XI(A) & XI(B)

(4). QAST IV-V; BEI IV-V; BEI Master
Social Services Disputes
Polygraph Testing
Post Bond
Discrimination Proceedings – Prior to court
Mental Health
Meetings with Parole/Probation Officers
Medical – Emergency Room, General Rounds and Surgery, Health Care Providers and Hospice, Medical Documents
Graduate and Post-Graduate Education
Restraining Order Application
Speaker or Lectures
Civil Weddings Performed in or out of a Courtroom
Employment Related – Job Interview/Application, Firing, Disciplining, Performance Appraisals
Tax Assessment/Appeal Proceedings
All settings listed in Subsections XI(A), XI(B), & XI(C)

(5). RID Credentials
Legal Proceedings in/out of the courts
Domestic/Family Violence Calls and Investigations 13
Abuse Calls and Investigations
Legislation
Governmental Proceedings
Pre-Trial Release
Peace Bonds/Restraining Orders, Copyrights/Patents
RID Code of Professional Conduct

A code of professional conduct is a necessary component to any profession to maintain standards for the individuals within that profession to adhere. It brings about accountability, responsibility and trust to the individuals that the profession serves. RID, along with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), co-authored the ethical code of conduct for interpreters. Both organizations uphold high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct for interpreters. At the core of this code of conduct are the seven tenets, which are followed by guiding principles and illustrations.

The tenets are to be viewed holistically and as a guide to complete professional behavior. When in doubt, one should refer to the explicit language of the tenet.

TENETS
1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
7. Interpreters engage in professional development.

Definitions
For the purpose of this document, the following terms are used:

Colleagues: Other interpreters.

Conflict of Interest: A conflict between the private interests (personal, financial, or professional) and the official or professional responsibilities of an interpreter in a position of trust, whether actual or perceived, deriving from a specific interpreting situation.

Consumers: Individuals and entities who are part of the interpreted situation. This includes individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, and hearing.

1.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

Tenet: Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.

Guiding Principle: Interpreters hold a position of trust in their role as linguistic and cultural facilitators of communication. Confidentiality is highly valued by consumers and is essential to protecting all involved. Each interpreting situation (e.g., elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education, legal, medical, mental health) has a standard of confidentiality. Under the reasonable interpreter standard, professional interpreters are expected to know the general requirements and
applicability of various levels of confidentiality. Exceptions to confidentiality include, for example, federal and state laws requiring mandatory reporting of abuse or threats of suicide, or responding to subpoenas.

**Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:**
1. Share assignment-related information only on a confidential and “as-needed” basis (e.g., supervisors, interpreter team members, members of the educational team, hiring entities).
2. Manage data, invoices, records, or other situational or consumer-specific information in a manner consistent with maintaining consumer confidentiality (e.g., shredding, locked files).
3. Inform consumers when federal or state mandates require disclosure of confidential information.

**2.0 PROFESSIONALISM**

**Tenet:** Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.

**Guiding Principle:** Interpreters are expected to stay abreast of evolving language use and trends in the profession of interpreting as well as in the American Deaf community. Interpreters accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, communication mode, setting, and consumer needs. Interpreters possess knowledge of American Deaf culture and deafness-related resources.

**Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:**
1. Provide service delivery regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor.
2. Assess consumer needs and the interpreting situation before and during the assignment and make adjustments as needed.
3. Render the message faithfully by conveying the content and spirit of what is being communicated, using language most readily understood by consumers, and correcting errors discreetly and expeditiously.
4. Request support (e.g., certified deaf interpreters, team members, language facilitators) when needed to fully convey the message or to address exceptional communication challenges (e.g., cognitive disabilities, foreign sign language, emerging language ability, or lack of formal instruction or language).
5. Refrain from providing counsel, advice, or personal opinions.
6. Judiciously provide information or referral regarding available interpreting or community resources without infringing upon consumers’ rights.

**3.0 CONDUCT**

**Tenet:** Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.

**Guiding Principle:** Interpreters are expected to present themselves appropriately in demeanor and appearance. They avoid situations that result in conflicting roles or perceived or actual conflicts of interest.

**Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:**
1. Consult with appropriate persons regarding the interpreting situation to determine issues such as placement and adaptations necessary to interpret effectively.
2. Decline assignments or withdraw from the interpreting profession when not competent due to physical, mental, or emotional factors.
3.3 Avoid performing dual or conflicting roles in interdisciplinary (e.g. educational or mental health teams) or other settings.
3.4 Comply with established workplace codes of conduct, notify appropriate personnel if there is a conflict with this Code of Professional Conduct, and actively seek resolution where warranted.
3.5 Conduct and present themselves in an unobtrusive manner and exercise care in choice of attire.
3.6 Refrain from the use of mind-altering substances before or during the performance of duties.
3.7 Disclose to parties involved any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
3.8 Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest that might cause harm or interfere with the effectiveness of interpreting services.
3.9 Refrain from using confidential interpreted information for personal, monetary, or professional gain.
3.10 Refrain from using confidential interpreted information for the benefit of personal or professional affiliations or entities.

4.0 RESPECT FOR CONSUMERS

Tenet: Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.

Guiding Principle: Interpreters are expected to honor consumer preferences in selection of interpreters and interpreting dynamics, while recognizing the realities of qualifications, availability, and situation.

Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:
4.1 Consider consumer requests or needs regarding language preferences, and render the message accordingly (interpreted or transliterated).
4.2 Approach consumers with a professional demeanor at all times.
4.3 Obtain the consent of consumers before bringing an intern to an assignment.
4.4 Facilitate communication access and equality, and support the full interaction and independence of consumers.

5.0 RESPECT FOR COLLEAGUES

Tenet: Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns and students of the profession.

Guiding Principle: Interpreters are expected to collaborate with colleagues to foster the delivery of effective interpreting services. They also understand that the manner in which they relate to colleagues reflects upon the profession in general.

Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:
5.1 Maintain civility toward colleagues, interns, and students.
5.2 Work cooperatively with team members through consultation before assignments regarding logistics, providing professional and courteous assistance when asked and monitoring the accuracy of the message while functioning in the role of the support interpreter.
5.3 Approach colleagues privately to discuss and resolve breaches of ethical or professional conduct through standard conflict resolution methods; file a formal grievance only after such attempts have been unsuccessful or the breaches are harmful or habitual.
5.4 Assist and encourage colleagues by sharing information and serving as mentors when appropriate.
5.5 Obtain the consent of colleagues before bringing an intern to an assignment.
6.0 BUSINESS PRACTICES

Tenet: Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.

Guiding Principle: Interpreters are expected to conduct their business in a professional manner whether in private practice or in the employ of an agency or other entity. Professional interpreters are entitled to a living wage based on their qualifications and expertise. Interpreters are also entitled to working conditions conducive to effective service delivery.

Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:
6.1 Accurately represent qualifications, such as certification, educational background, and experience, and provide documentation when requested.
6.2 Honor professional commitments and terminate assignments only when fair and justifiable grounds exist.
6.3 Promote conditions that are conducive to effective communication, inform the parties involved if such conditions do not exist, and seek appropriate remedies.
6.4 Inform appropriate parties in a timely manner when delayed or unable to fulfill assignments.
6.5 Reserve the option to decline or discontinue assignments if working conditions are not safe, healthy, or conducive to interpreting.
6.6 Refrain from harassment or coercion before, during, or after the provision of interpreting services.
6.7 Render pro bono services in a fair and reasonable manner.
6.8 Charge fair and reasonable fees for the performance of interpreting services and arrange for payment in a professional and judicious manner.

7.0 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Tenet: Interpreters engage in professional development.

Guiding Principle: Interpreters are expected to foster and maintain interpreting competence and the stature of the profession through ongoing development of knowledge and skills.

Illustrative Behavior - Interpreters:
7.1 Increase knowledge and strengthen skills through activities such as:
• pursuing higher education;
• attending workshops and conferences;
• seeking mentoring and supervision opportunities;
• participating in community events; and
• engaging in independent studies.
  1.2 Keep abreast of laws, policies, rules, and regulations that affect the profession.