



Interpreter Guidelines
February 2012

As you read through these guidelines please keep this in mind: I established VISCOM Interpreting, Inc. because I wanted not only to regard and champion interpreters in a way that would far exceed my personal freelancing experiences in the DC area from 1989 to 2001, but also to cater to the more seasoned Interpreters. Additionally, I wanted to provide services to clients in a way that left them feeling like their business mattered to me, because it truly does. I take to heart my family's old fashioned way of doing business where honesty and quality are paramount, for that reason VISCOM is small by choice. I am, therefore, able to give the attention and support that VISCOM's interpreters and clients deserve. While working for VISCOM I sincerely hope you will feel valued, because you are.

As an agency, VISCOM guarantees experienced interpreters that they will be working with interpreters of equal competency, knowledge, enthusiasm, expertise and professionalism.

When you agree to work for VISCOM, you are an integral part of VISCOM which cannot exist without you. It is vital that you are aware of my business philosophy as well as the expectations placed on VISCOM's interpreters. If these ideals are in line with your own values and you agree to meet the expectations, I want to establish a mutually beneficial business relationship with you; one based on loyalty, integrity, respect and common values.

Jina Lynne

CI & CT, Owner

VISCOM Philosophy

Maintain an exceptional reputation by ensuring high standards and providing top quality, professional interpreting services.

Hire only certified, qualified thoroughly experienced Interpreters whose professionalism, loyalty, and opinions are valued.

Assure our Clients that because of VISCOM's high standards, they are meeting ADA communication access requirements responsibly.

Benefits of Working for VISCOM

Loyalty. We are in this together. Because your approach to interpreting reflects VISCOM's philosophies and values, we will share a long and beneficial business relationship.

Appreciation. At VISCOM we recognize that it is our interpreters who provide the outstanding services we guarantee. In turn, we are committed to providing you the best possible support services and compensation.

Support. When scheduled to work for VISCOM you have access to Jina Lynne for the duration of the assignment, regardless of the time of day or night. Your decisions, judgment, and behavior on an assignment will be supported by VISCOM: especially when something goes wrong. You will always have the support you need.

Information. *Once you've accepted an assignment, you will be provided with details that are accurate and helpful for preparation and during the assignment.*

Compensation. VISCOM's rates are mindful of your experience and skills. Payment is issued within 3 weeks from the date the invoice is received.

Respect. You are highly regarded because you meet VISCOM's minimum standards therefore your team will always have the same qualifications so skills and responsibilities on the job are equally shared.

What We Expect from You:

National Certification and a minimum of 7 years of full-time, professional experience as a community interpreter are required.

Professional appearance, behavior and best interpreting effort during assignments; you shall reflect the values and reputation of VISCOM.

Prompt response to job requests, whether to accept or to decline, through the VISCOM Database.

The very best customer service shall be extended to each and every person at the assignment location.

Best practices which include timely arrival and presence functioning as an interpreter, whether in the active or supportive role, during the assignment for your full, scheduled time.

Prompt notification to VISCOM of ANY type of changes or if there are issues regarding the assignment you are covering.

Invoices shall be submitted within 35 days of the assignment; please use the VISCOM Invoice Template.

Loyalty, integrity, honesty and dependability.

VISCOM Standards & Explanation of Expectations

Quality Standards

The minimum qualifications for VISCOM Interpreters are national certification and 7 years of professional, full-time community experience. VISCOM defines community experience as in-person interpreting in a variety of settings which pose different dynamics. Therefore, working in only one setting such as educational or medical or providing video relay or video remote interpreting services would not satisfy this requirement. Reasoning is that VISCOM's guarantee to clients is that its interpreters have a wide range of experience and skill so all requests can be competently handled.

If you EVER feel that your team may not be qualified, based on skill professional demeanor, etc., for a particular assignment, please discuss this at the time of request. If that fact becomes known during the assignment, call the cell number for Jina Lynne IMMEDIATELY.

Jina Lynne is committed to focusing on the quality of what we do; when there has been a challenge or complication during an assignment, it is followed up with a mentoring discussion to assess what happened and to discuss different strategies to better handle that situation.

Appearance is important. VISCOM has developed a reputation for working with only the most professional interpreters. You are a valued, well paid professional; your appearance shall reflect that.

VISCOM will always support and establish the best working conditions for our interpreters. Clients are informed that in general any assignment lasting longer than an hour will require two interpreters. We strive to only place interpreters in a safe work environment, which will guard against carpal tunnel syndrome and physical or mental exhaustion that would render interpreters ineffective.

Responding to Requests

VISCOM is committed to providing an answer to the hiring entity as quickly as possible. The VISCOM DB allows you to respond to a request with only 3 clicks; your prompt reply to assignments offered to you is necessary so VISCOM can fulfill this promise.

Please use your professional discretion when accepting requests and please DO NOT accept an assignment that you do not really want. It is the desire of VISCOM to have only happy, professional interpreters as representatives. If you truly do not like want to cover a job offered to you because you are not interested or did not like it last time you were there, it is preferred that you decline the request.

ALWAYS respond, even if you must decline an assignment. If requests are repeatedly ignored you will be contacted to determine whether or not you still want to receive requests from VISCOM.

Customer Service

EVERYONE in the room is a CUSTOMER, so please extend your best customer service to each person. Understand that complaints from the hiring entity, your team, or anyone in the room about an interpreter behaving inappropriately, not maintaining a professional demeanor, engaging in excessive texting, etc., will affect our business relationship. Your demeanor and behavior reflect not only your own professional values but those of VISCOM.

You are expected to be in the assignment's room 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. There is consistently increased security and unpredictable escorting practices, so please allow enough time. For example: Entering a location that requires a 10 to 12 minute wait for an escort and then getting to the job location at the last moment is not considered a timely arrival. The Rate Sheet explains the Late Arrival Penalty and the required adjustment to your invoice.

VISCOM will provide business cards so it is convenient for the customer to request you again when they contact VISCOM.

Integrity on the Job

As a freelancer, you are ethically obligated to use professional discretion when accepting assignments. Therefore if anything about an assignment changes contact VISCOM. Since you were confirmed for a specific job, any changes may constitute a new request. For example, if you were confirmed for a meeting and it cancels, you should not be asked, and are not obligated, to interpret for training during that time frame instead. The reasoning is that ethically, you may have declined the request if it had been for another situation or person. VISCOM's goal is to insure you are not professionally compromised and to compensate you fairly if the changes equate to a new request. If details of your request are changed or modified, please contact VISCOM before proceeding with arrangements that differ from the original job assignment. If you do this without approval from VISCOM you may not be paid for those services.

When a team of interpreters is hired, both are expected to be physically and mentally present and working for the full assignment time. The hiring entity is paying for TWO working interpreters. VISCOM is dedicated to being fair to our clients and we will not charge for services not rendered. For example: If one interpreter is interpreting and the other is reading, texting or out of the room that means the team is not working for the full time of the assignment. If one or both members of that team are each only present and working for half of the time, then that is the amount of time you will be compensated for. Please believe that VISCOM is contacted when this type of situation occurs. You are hired as a team so function as a team.

If for some reason you need to make arrangements to adjust your begin/end time, it is necessary for you to call VISCOM to make this change. The hours billed to the hiring entity will be modified to agree with your adjusted time. Agreement between you and your team is insufficient and will affect your compensation and our business relationship.

When to Contact VISCOM

Things happen PLEASE KEEP VISCOM IN THE LOOP.

When something happens on an assignment that is out of the ordinary, whether good or bad, inform VISCOM so the matter can be dealt with when contact is made by the hiring entity. This is a vital element of the trust VISCOM wants to share with our interpreters. If VISCOM has no knowledge of an incident when either complimented or confronted by a client, the wrong message is sent.

Often assignments end early; please let VISCOM know when this happens. Of course you will bill for the scheduled number of hours, so although that is not affected, it is helpful for VISCOM to be aware of this and there may be another job you can cover for additional pay.

Billing is allowed for the time stated in the VISCOM DB. You must obtain approval from VISCOM in order to bill beyond the scheduled time. Please do not assume you can invoice for additional services if the job runs over. Call for approval before you proceed.

If you or your team is running late, please do not wait until 1 minute before the job begins to inform VISCOM; how can you possibly be assisted in one minute? Please do not think you or your team will get "in trouble" if this happens. You and your team should be present 10 minutes before the start time as a very minimum, if not, please make the call. The goal is to do whatever is necessary to take care of the situation and make certain you and/or your team are safe and no one is stuck working alone. Please make the call so you get the support you need.

If you are not well, PLEASE do not wait until the morning of the assignment to notify VISCOM. You are not expected to be healthy all the time, but you are expected to inform VISCOM in a timely manner so it is possible to arrange for a replacement.

If you do not show for an assignment, VISCOM's reputation is at stake. Please contact the office ASAP if something unforeseen happens. It is important that VISCOM replace you right away so the assignment you were scheduled for is covered or so that your team is not alone and VISCOM's reputation is not impacted.

BILLING EXPECTATIONS

Integrity of all parties is vital. You are responsible to ensure that the information on your invoice is accurate and is a true reflection of what actually happened on the job. This is required so that VISCOM can both invoice its clients and pay its interpreters accurately.

Please use the VISCOM Invoice Template; it is available on your DB page under the Forms Tab. If you use a bookkeeping program which requires you to use your own invoice, that is fine; please detail your jobs with the same information requested on the VISCOM Invoice.

You want to be paid on time, therefore, your invoice needs to be received on time.

Please submit invoices within 35 days of the assignment. If a job is invoiced beyond the 35-day deadline, 10 percent of that job will be deducted for each 15-day time frame beyond day 36.

For your invoicing convenience and to encourage you to stay within the 35-day billing limit, the VISCOM Database displays your current month's job until the 5th day of the following month. Along with the job information for each assignment, the DB displays appropriate billing rate, whether a short-notice or emergency fee is in order and if the job was cancelled and billable or cancelled and not billable.

Refer to your rate sheet or the View Rates tab on your DB page for current hourly rates and any additional fees or deductions.

You may not bill for time you were not present. If you arrived late, please list with your actual start time and the Late Arrival Penalty deduction on your invoice. Interpreters will only be paid for time they are working and present at the assignment. Working it out with your team to leave early or arrive late and billing for the entire time is NOT acceptable. If VISCOM becomes aware that this was done without VISCOM's knowledge or approval, you may not bill for the entire job.

Jobs are billed in half hour increments, however you may make deductions in quarter hour increments. For example, if the job is 8:00 - 10:15 you may bill 2.5 hours. If you were scheduled for an 8:00 – 4:00 job but arrived at 8:15, you would bill for 7.75 hours instead of 8 hours and also list the deduction for the late arrival. If an assignment is cancelled with less than 48 hours notice, it is still billable. Additionally, when this occurs, if you accept another assignment, you may bill for it and the Emergency Incentive or Short Notice Fee if applicable.

As a Freelance Interpreter, travel is your cost of doing business and is not billable. Mileage and parking fees may be discussed and negotiated on a case by case basis at the time of job acceptance.



Interpreter Signature Sheet

I, _____ understand and agree to abide by
the expectations and policies set forth in the VISCOM Interpreter Guidelines.

_____ Signature

_____ Date



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