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Alberta Society of the DeafBlind

**Alberta Society of the DeafBlind  
Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct  
For Support Service Providers**

**ASL Summary:** <https://youtu.be/rVzEqa7t8cl>

*Confidentiality*

SSPs are often involved in the personal affairs of the DeafBlind person. Whether the work is in the public or private sphere, everything must be kept confidential including who is involved, and the communication or activities that took place.

If the SSP witnesses abuse, as required by law, it must be reported.

*Professional Conduct*

The purpose of SSP services is to enable and empower the DeafBlind person to make their own decisions. To enable and empower the DeafBlind person to do everything possible, even simple things, as independently as possible. The SSP will promote the DeafBlind person's autonomy and independence in a supportive and respectful manner, while at the same time protecting their integrity.

The SSP does not criticize, influence, force, persuade or advise the DeafBlind person, but respects their decisions. With safety in mind, the SSP takes direction from the DeafBlind person.

The SSP is expected to use good judgement. SSPs must accept responsibility for their own decisions. Factors that should be taken into consideration include the design of the environment, the demands of the setting, as well as other important factors such as the DeafBlind person's medical, physical, cognitive and developmental abilities.<sup>1</sup>

The SSP will behave honestly and with integrity. They must endeavour to avoid any situations that can appear as a conflict of interest.

The SSP is not permitted to lend or borrow money or goods from the DeafBlind person.

When assisting the DeafBlind person with financial or money situations, SSPs must protect themselves and protect the DeafBlind person by taking actions and making decisions to ensure that no misunderstandings and/or concerns of theft or fraud will occur.

While working, the SSP should not be using their cell phone or other mobile devices, unless it is related to their work duties with the DeafBlind person.<sup>2</sup>

SSPs do not do their own errands or personal tasks such as shopping, errands, or other tasks when with a DeafBlind person. The consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating substances is prohibited.<sup>3</sup>

The SSP is expected to behave in a professional manner at all times:

- Treat everyone respectfully
- Be punctual and ready to work
- Dress appropriately for the setting; remove jewellery that is distracting
- Wear colours preferred by the DeafBlind person<sup>4</sup>
- Get permission from the DeafBlind person before using perfume or other scented products; personal hygiene odours are noticeable, unscented products may be preferred
- Unless permission is given, smoking should be avoided while working as an SSP

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<sup>1</sup> See ASDB SSP Role Description and Responsibilities available on our web site <http://www.albertadeafblind.ca/> for a comprehensive outline of the expectations of SSPs

<sup>2</sup> No texting or phone calls with others (unless permission is given from the DeafBlind person). No checking social media or looking at web sites (unless work related). No photos, 'selfies' or videos should be taken without the permission of the DeafBlind person, and others involved.

<sup>3</sup> If the SSP is volunteering, these restrictions regarding personal shopping, drinking, etc. may be relaxed, if approved in advance by the DeafBlind person.

<sup>4</sup> To help with effective communication, DeafBlind consumers may also prefer SSPs to wear tops with a certain length of sleeve, or higher necklines. Where possible, please respect these preferences.

### *Scope of Practice*

SSPs serve as sighted guides and are required to be knowledgeable about various guiding techniques used with DeafBlind persons, as well as the preferred techniques of individual consumers. Safety is first priority.

The SSP constantly describes the physical environment and dynamic surroundings, therefore the SSP must be fluent in the language, and various communication methods and techniques used by DeafBlind persons, as well as the preferences of individual consumers.

If asked by the DeafBlind person, SSPs can offer opinions regarding colour and style of clothing, items of food, quality and price (sales) of products, types of exercise, etc. without making decisions or choices for the DeafBlind person. SSP observations or experiences can be helpful information, but encourage the DeafBlind person to make their own choices, or to ask the sales person's opinion, especially when several options are available.

Some SSPs may also be skilled Communication Facilitators (CF). The skills required of a CF are very different than the skills required for working as an SSP. The CF role is to relay a signer's ASL vocabulary as well as the accompanying facial grammar, emotions, movements, gestures, etc., in a manner accessible to the DeafBlind person (e.g., tactile, limited frame). All this visual information must be transmitted from the original signer to the DeafBlind person, to ensure the full depth of the message and its intent are captured.<sup>5</sup>

The CF, like an interpreter,<sup>6</sup> cannot offer opinions, comments, or participate in discussions. The CF focuses only on communicating the messages and environmental information present in the setting.<sup>7</sup>

SSPs (and CFs) will accept work they are qualified to do. If they are not qualified, they must decline the work. They must remain neutral throughout all their assignments.

SSPs (and CFs) must understand and follow all the responsibilities of their role and adhere to the policies and procedures as outlined by the paying organization.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See ASDB Glossary of Terms available on our web site <http://www.albertadeafblind.ca/>

<sup>6</sup> See ASDB Glossary of Terms available on our web site <http://www.albertadeafblind.ca/>

<sup>7</sup> If the CF is volunteering, this restriction may be relaxed, if agreed upon by the DeafBlind person.

<sup>8</sup> For example: ASDB SSP Role Description and Responsibilities, the ASDB Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, ASDB Internal Policies and Procedures: SSP Services for DeafBlind Members' Personal Needs; these resources are available on our web site <http://www.albertadeafblind.ca/>

### *Respectful Relationships*

The SSP must endeavour to maintain clear and open communication with DeafBlind consumers. This includes learning and using the DeafBlind consumer's communication and navigation preferences. Try to discuss in advance any issues or potential problems that might come up in future and to explore options for how to handle them. If issues or problems do happen, they are to be discussed with the other person immediately, with the goal of trying to work out a resolution and finding ideas about how to work well together in the future (the goal is not to accuse or blame).

Disrespectful, bullying or intimidating behaviour from either party toward the other should not be tolerated. Such actions should be reported.

When working together at events, SSPs will cooperate with interpreters, CFs, and other SSP colleagues in a spirit of collaboration and respect. In situations or events where SSPs, CFs, and interpreters are working together, they should all cooperate as a team to ensure effective, successful communication for everyone: Deaf, DeafBlind, hard of hearing, and hearing.

### *Business Practices*

When accepting an assignment, make clear and specific arrangements with the DeafBlind person regarding the meeting place and time. Rendezvous and transportation<sup>9</sup> details must be agreed upon and confirmed in advance.

SSPs may politely decline (refuse) requests to work.

When SSPs agree to accept an appointment, they must follow through on this responsibility. If necessary, the SSP must find a substitute SSP to go to the appointment, making sure the DeafBlind person agrees to the change.

SSPs will bill only for services provided. SSPs must discuss and have agreements in advance about payment for services as well as any payment for expenses<sup>10</sup> incurred during the assignment.

SSPs will follow the invoicing processes, procedures for accepting appointments and other policies and regulations of the paying organization.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For example: perhaps the SSP will pick up the DeafBlind person and drive to the desired location, perhaps the SSP will meet the DeafBlind person at their home and they will take public transit together, perhaps the SSP will meet the DeafBlind person at the desired (or another) location and carry on from there.

<sup>10</sup> For example, fuel, mileage, transit or taxi fares, tickets for admission, meals.

### *Professional Development*

SSPs are responsible to advance their knowledge and skills by participating in professional development opportunities specific to the work of an SSP.<sup>12</sup>

SSPs are responsible to keep current about trends and practices with respect to SSP services, as well as activities and advocacy efforts in DeafBlind communities by reading articles and watching videos on the Internet about SSP, CF and DeafBlind topics and issues. Where available and permitted, SSPs should be members of organizations representing DeafBlind people and associations of SSPs.

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<sup>11</sup> For example ASDB Internal Policies and Procedures: SSP Services for DeafBlind Members' Personal Needs; these documents are available on our web site <http://www.albertadeafblind.ca/>

<sup>12</sup> For example workshops, DeafBlind camps, participating in discussions with colleagues (other SSPs, Deaf / hearing interpreters, CFs) about ideas to improve service, techniques and business practices.

## Resources

*The ASDB SSP Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct document was created using the valuable information provided in the following documents:*

[Communication Access Network Guidelines for Contracted SSPs \(ND\).](#)

[http://www.cancorp.org/pdf/ssp\\_guideline\\_042010.pdf](http://www.cancorp.org/pdf/ssp_guideline_042010.pdf)

Deafblind International. (1999). Guidelines on Best Practice for Service Provision to Deafblind People.

<http://www.deafblindinternational.org/PDF/Guidelines%20for%20Best%20Practice%20for%20Service%20Provision%20to%20Deafblind%20People.pdf>

Morgan, S. (2001). What's My Role? A Comparison of the Responsibilities of Interpreters, Interveners, and Support Service Providers. *Deaf Blind Perspectives*. Vol 9 (1).

<http://www.hadley.edu/IAER2015/comparing%20interpreter,%20intervener,%20and%20Ossp.pdf>

Nuccio J., & Smith T. (2010). Comprehensive Training for Deaf-Blind Persons and Their Support Service Providers. Seattle, Washington. <http://seattledbcs.org/dbssp-curriculum/>

Resource Centre for Manitobans who are Deaf-Blind (ND). Training and service practices. Winnipeg, Manitoba. <http://www.rcmdb.mb.ca>

South Dakota Department of Human Services (ND). Role of the SSP – SSP Fact Sheet.

<http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/fos/documents/ROLEOFTHESSP.pdf>