



# Rhode Island State Police

## General Order - 55C

<i>Section:</i>	<b>Law Enforcement Operations - Field Operations</b>
<i>Article:</i>	<b>55 - Communications</b>
<i>Title:</i>	<b>Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service and Auxiliary Aids</b>
<i>Special Instructions:</i>	

### I. PURPOSE

To establish Division policy governing the use of sign language interpretation services and/or auxiliary aids for hearing-impaired persons.

### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **AUXILIARY AIDS** -- Assistive listening devices, writing instruments, written materials, note pads, and other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to hearing-impaired persons.
- B. **PRIMARY CONSIDERATION** -- the Division shall give primary consideration to the choice of hearing-impaired persons, unless it can show that another equally effective means of communication is available, or that use of the means chosen would result in a fundamental alteration in the service, program, or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens to the Division.

### III. POLICY

The Division shall furnish sign language interpretation services and/or auxiliary aids, whenever necessary, to ensure effective communication with hearing impaired persons. When a qualified sign language interpreter or auxiliary aid is required to ensure effective communication, the Division must allow hearing-impaired persons to request services and auxiliary aids of their choice and must give primary consideration to such choices.

This policy addresses only those situations where a Division member, after consulting with a hearing-impaired person, determines that the services of a qualified sign language interpreter and/or the use of auxiliary aids are necessary to ensure effective communication.

### IV. HEARING-IMPAIRED ARRESTEES

- A. The Division shall provide qualified sign language interpreters for hearing-impaired arrestees who communicate in sign language in each of the following situations:

1. At the earliest possible time after apprehension or arrest;
2. During the presentation of the Miranda warnings;
3. During all questioning and interrogation by Division members;
4. During the taking of any statement by Division members.

B. Written notice of the right to a sign language interpreter before and during all communication shall be presented to each such arrestee upon arrest. The right cannot be waived at this time.

C. The right to a sign language interpreter may be waived only:

1. By the hearing-impaired arrestee; or
2. If no problem in communication exists; and
3. Such waiver should be confirmed in writing.

E. The hearing-impaired arrestee who initially waives the right to a sign language interpreter may subsequently invoke this right. In this situation, all questioning and communication must cease until a qualified sign language interpreter is present to ensure effective communication with the hearing-impaired arrestee.

## V. OTHER HEARING-IMPAIRED PERSONS

A. The Division shall provide qualified sign language interpreters to all hearing-impaired complainants, victims, or witnesses who communicate in sign language where the length, importance or complexity of the communication indicates that an interpreter may be necessary for effective communication during:

1. All questioning by Division members except in emergency situations where the safety or welfare of the public or the person with the disability are of paramount importance.
2. The taking of any witness statement by Division members.

B. Police officers generally should not rely on family members to interpret but may do so in an emergency such as a response to an accident or when a deaf individual has been robbed and immediate information is needed.

## VII. REQUESTING AN INTERPRETER

A. When Division members need the services of a qualified sign language interpreter; they shall notify their respective Patrol Commander/Acting Patrol Commander or the Detective Commander/Assistant Detective Commander. Once approval to utilize a sign language interpreter is obtained, the Division

member shall contact the Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service which is provided through the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH), Department of Administration, One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908.

- B. CDHH maintains an up-to-date list of qualified sign language interpreters who may be used to communicate with hearing-impaired persons.
  - 1. During normal business, Monday through Friday 8:00 am- 4:00 pm, Division members shall contact CDHH at (401) 222-5300 to obtain the services of an interpreter.
  - 2. After hours, to include weekends and holidays, Division members shall contact the CDHH at (401) 586-6100.

#### VIII. AUXILIARY AIDS

- A. Auxiliary aids include assistive listening devices, writing instruments, written materials, note pads, and other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to hearing-impaired persons.
- B. They are primarily used by persons who are hard of hearing and do not use sign language. In most cases, these persons rely on auxiliary aids to ensure effective communication because they have become hard of hearing in later life.
- C. Basic auxiliary aids are available at any state police facility.

#### IX. PROVISIONS

- A. Any cost resulting from the use of qualified sign language interpreters shall be borne by the Division.
- B. All qualified sign language interpreters have been previously approved by the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH).
- C. The CDHH may be contacted at (401) 265-5511 for additional information.



By Order of Colonel Assumpico

Ann C. Assumpico  
Colonel  
Superintendent