

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Rehabilitation Services**

**Accessing Increased Rate in Providing Services to  
Individuals Requiring Communication Support  
due to Hearing Loss**

## **Background**

The Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Pre-Employment Transitioning Services (Pre-ETS) through approved community providers to individuals with most significant disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment. Historically it has been difficult to find providers willing to offer the level of support required by individuals who rely on American Sign Language (ASL) due to the high cost of interpreter services and/or lack of qualified individuals within their organization. DORS is making an enhanced rate, the Communication Support Enhanced Rate (CSER), available to Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) which have a staff person with demonstrable ASL proficiency.

## **Requirements**

1. The individual in the employ of the CRP must participate in the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI), and achieve an ASLPI rating of 3+ or higher.

The ASLPI is administered by Gallaudet University. It is a 20-25 minute video recorded interactive dialogue between the examinee and the interviewer. The interview is rated by a team of evaluators and examinees are awarded an overall proficiency level on a 0-5 rating scale. Visit [the Gallaudet website](#) for more information.

The purpose of the ASLPI is to determine global American Sign Language (ASL) proficiency of an individual. As a criterion-based evaluation designed to test an individual's overall ability to use and understand ASL, each recorded interview is rated on the basis of specific criteria in five different categories:

- **Grammar:** linguistic elements include sentence types, grammatical categories and discourse functions. Such elements are conveyed by synchronization of non-manual components (e.g., eye-gaze, inflection, and movement).
- **Vocabulary:** range and accuracy of vocabulary selection across a variety of topics. The use of colloquial expressions and figurative language is also considered.
- **Accent/Production:** accuracy of sign formation, i.e., handshape, palm orientation, location and movement as well as clarity of finger spelled words and numbers.
- **Fluency:** flow of thought which follows a rhythm and pace of delivery that fits the topic being discussed.
- **Comprehension:** overall understanding of the conversation. Also examined are the examinee's spontaneity, responses to questions, and ability to provide visual feedback to the interviewer.

In addition to Gallaudet, the Community College of Baltimore County has an Interpreter Training Program ([CCBC ITP Program](#)) which includes two years of instruction and Towson University has a [deaf studies program](#). Individuals who have completed these programs must also be able to provide an ASLPI certificate demonstrating a 3+ or higher rating.

2. The provider must submit to DORS a copy of the individual's certificate documenting a rating of 3+ or higher, which will qualify them to work with DORS consumers. Special attention will be given to their rating in receptiveness with signing/attentiveness.
3. **The certified individual, when authorized, will be the sole provider of services to the individual. Individuals not meeting certification requirements and who are not approved by DORS to provide enhanced communication support, will not provide services to the individual.**

## Communication Support Enhanced Rate Process

DORS will provide an increased rate of 25% for all vocational rehabilitation and Pre-ETS on a provider's fee schedule when:

- An individual within the organization is able to demonstrate ASL proficiency at 3+ (or higher) ASLPI rating.
- The provider submits the certification (provided by Gallaudet) to DORS.
- An addendum is prepared by DORS and signed by the provider and DORS.
- The Fee Schedule is amended to include the enhanced rate for employment services.
- Individuals who are eligible for services provided under the enhanced rate will be referred from DORS with specific information noted on the service authorization.
- The provider will notify DORS when/if the certified individual is no longer employed by the provider. At that time the rate will be removed from the provider's fee schedule.
- In accordance with DORS policy, if the provider charges a fee that is lower than the DORS rate, DORS will pay the lower of the rates.

Example:

- For providers whose rates are \$47 per hour for Job Coaching, the CSER Rate is \$59 per hour.
- For providers whose rates are \$38 per hour for Job Coaching, the CSER Rate is \$48 per hour.
- Rates for services on the fee schedule established using a provider cost will include a 25% increase (training services, EDS, WAT, etc.).

**Questions:** Kate Drake, [Catherine.Drake@maryland.gov](mailto:Catherine.Drake@maryland.gov)