

Service Fund

The service fund is appropriated under Wis. Stat. §§ 20.435 (6) (a) and (hs) to pay for communication access services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Communication access services include sign language interpreters, communication access real-time translation (CART) services, and support service providers (SSP). The Department of Health Services (DHS) will typically approve funding if the sponsoring entity is not required to provide access by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or would cause the entity undue financial hardship. Service fund requests are reviewed and determined on a case-by-case basis. Priority is given to emergency, medical, and mental health situations; alcohol and drug treatment; legal matters; and funerals. Conferences sponsored by nonprofit organizations and other situations that are not covered by ADA or Section 504 are also considered.

Organizations and individuals are eligible to apply for service fund monies once a request for an accommodation has been made. All requests for service fund monies must be received by the DHS Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) at least two weeks in advance of the event, unless the request is for a funeral.

Sign language interpreters who are paid for using the service fund monies must hold a valid license from the Department of Safety and Professional Services. It is recommended that interpreters with advanced credentials such as a special certificate: legal (SC:L) or qualified mental health interpreter (QMHI) is used in legal or mental health situations. To apply for the service fund, or for more information, please visit: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/servicefund.htm.

Please contact Bette Mentz-Powell, service fund coordinator, at bette.mentzpowell@dhs.wisconsin.gov or 608-319-1249 with any questions.

