

**Title:** Filling in a blank form, and advice.

**Summary:** A student is asked to sign a blank form, which she does. The educational interpreter / CSW translates the form, and then explains what the problem is.

**Dilemma:**

A conscientious Deaf student has good use of BSL, and requires me to translate and interpret written and spoken English.

During a lesson the tutor approached the bench that the student was working at and asked for him to sign a form. The student signed it, and after doing so, asked what the form was for. The tutor could not answer the question and instead asked me to read, translate and sign it. Before she could respond, the tutor had gone on to the next student. I asked him if she wanted me to translate the form, which she did.

The form was a learning agreement between the student and the college. It stated that the student should sign to agree to the following exam, it's time and location, the method in which the exam will be conducted, etc. Although the agreement was quite clear, the important information about the exam had not been filled in.

After translating the form the student said that she didn't really understand it. So she asked me what it meant. I felt that I had to explain fully, and signed, 'it's an agreement to attend an exam on a day in a room but it doesn't say which exam, day, or room.' I then went on to explain that the form will probably be filled in afterwards, which meant she is agreeing to something that she doesn't know about. I added that it could cause problems in the future, and it wasn't really a good idea to sign something that hadn't been finalized.

He was quite confused, and none of her classmates seemed to have noticed that they had signed anything, let alone what it meant. I asked her if she wanted me to express my concern to the tutor, which she did. I called the tutor over and explained the concern using sign and speech. The tutor said I would have to say this to the Head of Department, and didn't seem to care.

At this point another student overheard and refused to sign her form. Later the Head of Department came into the workshop and not only acknowledged my concern, but apologised profusely. She knew it was wrong to ask the students to sign the forms, but insisted she had been pressured because of the forthcoming inspection. I translated the conversation to the student who chose not to ask for the form back.

The dilemmas include:

Does the interpreter have a responsibility to do something if he sees the Deaf person signing a form with details to be filled in later?

If the interpreter translates a form, but the Deaf person doesn't really understand or realize the implications, should the interpreter explain, makes these explicit?

Does it matter that the Deaf person was a student, and the interpreter working in education?

**Perspectives:**

None posted yet.

