

# Introducing American Sign Language to Health Care Professionals

by Elaine Ernst Schneider and Joanne Mikola

## Excerpt from the Introduction:

*Q: Is it people who have lost their hearing after speech was established who tend to read lips?*

A: Yes, this is usually the case although there are some exceptions, like children who just seem to have a natural affinity for reading lips.


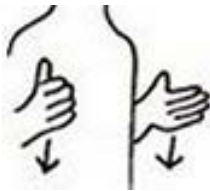

First line health care workers – ambulance attendants, clinic receptionists, ER RNs, etc. need to gather accurate information in order to treat the patient correctly and in a timely fashion. Effective communication needs a sender and a receiver and a common means of verification. Triage and treatment personnel CANNOT receive signed information in return with fluent accuracy without a more intensive study of signed languages. Questions asked of the client and/or Deaf or Hard of Hearing family members should therefore not be ‘open-ended’ but rather limited to yes/no type answers.





This introductory package covers sample, initial interview questions including:

- \* Hello. My name is *point to name badge* or *fingerspell your name*. pg. 3, ASL Alphabet ...Appendix 1
- \* I do not read signs, but I have learned to sign a few questions so that I can help you. pg. 3
- \* Please sign 'yes' or 'no' answers only or write your answer here. pg. 4
- \* Do you read lips? pg. 4
- \* Is someone with you that can interpret for you and me? pg. 5
- \* The community/hospital interpreter may take up to an hour to get here. pg. 5
- \* What is the problem? pg. 5, Are you sick or hurt? pg. 6
- \* Where do you hurt right now? Show me. pg. 6
- \* How long has this been happening? pg. 6
- \* Hours, days, weeks, more? pg. 6 [Chart of signed numbers 1 - 10] pg. 7
- \* Has this happened before? pg. 7
- \* Have you treated this injury yourself? pg. 7
- \* What have you tried? pg. 7, Ice? Medicine? What medicine? pg. 8
- \* Have you taken medicine today? pg. 8
- \* What was it? pg. 8
- \* Did you bring your medication(s) with you? pg. 8
- \* We will help you. Stay calm pg. 8 ....OR... Help is coming pg. 9
- \* Do you have hospital card with you? pg. 9
- \* Insurance cards? pg. 9
- \* Do you know the name of your doctor? pg. 9
- \* What medicines can you NOT take? (allergies) pg. 10
- \* Are you having trouble breathing? pg. 10
- \* Do you have any trouble with your heart? pg. 11
- \* Do you have a history of blood pressure disease? pg. 11
- \* Do you have a history of headaches? pg. 11
- \* Have you seen a Doctor about this? pg. 11

**Plus our alphabetical 'Cheat Sheet' charts describing the action(s) needed to perform each sign. pg. 12 - 15**

Examples of our Graphic presentation:

Is someone with you that can interpret for you and me?			
	+		
<b>Interpreter</b>		<b>with</b>	
			<b>you?</b>

Stay calm. Help is coming			
			
<b>Calm,</b>		<b>stay.</b>	
			
			<b>come...</b>

Excerpt from our 'Cheat Sheet' Chart:

<i>Signs</i>	<i>Word Descriptions of Actions</i>
sick	Middle fingers, both hands, point to head (right) and chest (left) at the same time.
signing, signs	Using "d" hands, rotate in a circular motion toward the body. Hands should not be parallel - keep one hand up when the other is down and vice versa.
stay, continue	Place the thumb of a right "a" hand on top of the thumb of the left "a" hand and move both hands forward, as if "pressing on."

*About the Authors and Artists*

**Joanne B. Mikola** is the co-founder and CEO for the [www.lesstutor.com](http://www.lesstutor.com) website. Joanne's life-long passions include creative problem solving, puzzles and mysteries. These were constantly fueled with her past career choices of Emergency and Operating Room nursing and post-graduate teaching, and are currently maintained by motherhood and computers.

**Elaine Ernst Schneider** entered the classroom as a special education teacher in the 1970's. Since then, she has taught mainstream English Grammar, Literature, music K-12, deaf education, psychology, Algebra, creative writing, social studies, law, and science in both public and private schools. Today, she writes curriculum for several companies, as well as freelance articles on education and is the co-founder and Managing Editor for the educational website [www.lesstutor.com](http://www.lesstutor.com). She is currently working on a project with Pearson Prentice Hall as an author of an on-line teacher's professional development course for the Council for Exceptional Children.