



# American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters

October 2017

Prepared by the Los Angeles/Orange County Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research

## Program Recommendation

This report was compiled by the Los Angeles/Orange County Center of Excellence to provide regional labor market data for the program recommendation of sign language interpreting. This report is to help determine whether there is demand in the local labor market that is not being met by the supply from programs of study (CCC and non-CCC) that align with this occupation group.

Based on the data, the COE has determined there is an unmet need for the sign language interpreting program in Los Angeles County. Reasons include:

- Overall, interpreting and translating occupations are expected to increase by 14% over the next five years
- On average, 46 awards (associate degrees and certificates) are conferred each year, providing a steady supply of graduates for sign language interpreting occupations
- 36% of the workforce has completed some community college, signaling that these jobs may be accessible for community college level students

## Occupation Codes and Descriptions

Currently, there is one occupation in the standard occupational classification (SOC) system related to the study of sign language interpreting. The occupation title and description, as well as reported job titles are included in Exhibit 1.

**Exhibit 1 – Occupations, descriptions and sample job titles**

SOC Code	Title	Description	Sample of Reported Job Titles
27-3091	Interpreters and Translators	Interpret oral or sign language, or translate written text from one language into another.	Court Interpreter, Deaf Interpreter, Educational Interpreter, Interpreter, Medical Interpreter, Paraprofessional Interpreter, Sign Language Interpreter, Spanish Interpreter, Technical Translator, Translator

Source: O\*NET Online

## Current and Future Employment

In Los Angeles County, the number of interpreters and translators is expected to increase by 14% over the next five years. Nearly 400 job opportunities will be available annually for this occupational group through 2021 due to new job growth and replacement need (e.g., retirements). Exhibit 2 contains detailed employment projections data for these occupations. *It is important to consider that this SOC code encompasses several occupations related to interpreting, and these employment projections are not solely representative of ASL interpreters.*

**Exhibit 2 – Five-year projections for interpreters and translators in Los Angeles County**

SOC	Occupation	2016 Jobs	2021 Jobs	2016 - 2021 Change	2016 - 2021 % Change	Annual Openings
27-3091	Interpreters and Translators	3,187	3,626	439	14%	379

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI)

## Earnings

In Los Angeles County, the entry-level average wage for interpreters and translators is \$18.24 per hour, which is above the MIT Living Wage<sup>1</sup> estimate of \$13.08 per hour for a single adult. The average annual earnings for this occupation group in the region is \$51,308 per year, assuming full-time employment.

Exhibit 3 contains hourly wages and annual average earnings for these occupations. Entry-level hourly earnings is represented by the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of wages, median hourly earnings is represented by the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of wages, and experienced hourly earnings is represented by the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of wages, demonstrating various levels of employment.

**Exhibit 3 – Earnings for interpreters and translators in Los Angeles County, 2016-2021**

SOC	Occupation	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings	Average Annual Earnings
27-3091	Interpreters and Translators	\$18.24	\$24.45	\$31.05	\$51,308

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI)

<sup>1</sup> MIT Living Wage Calculator. <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>

## Employer Job Postings

In this research brief, real-time labor market information is used to provide a more nuanced view of the current job market, as it captures job advertisements for occupations relevant to the field of study. Employer job postings are consulted to understand who is employing American Sign Language interpreters, and what they are looking for in potential candidates. To identify job postings related to sign language interpreters, SOC code 27-3091 was used, along with keywords such as sign\* language, ASL, and Spanish sign\*.

### Top Titles

The top job titles for employers posting ads for ASL interpreters are listed in exhibit 4. Sign language interpreter is mentioned as the job title in 39% of all relevant job postings (35 postings).

**Exhibit 4 –Job titles for ASL occupations (n=90)**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Job Postings, Full Year 2016</b>
Sign Language Interpreter	35
Interpreter	25
Sign Language Specialist	5
Educational Interpreter	3
Deaf/Hard-Of-Hearing Services Coordinator	3

Source: Labor Insight/Jobs (Burning Glass)

### Top Employers

Exhibit 5 lists the major employers hiring professionals in the field of sign language interpreters. Top employers posting job ads included Purple Communications, California State University, County of Los Angeles, Globo, and Burbank Unified. The top worksite cities in the region for these occupations were Los Angeles, Long Beach, Burbank, Pasadena, and Alhambra.

**Exhibit 5 – Top employers (n=75)**

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Job Postings, Full Year 2016</b>
Purple Communications, Inc	14
California State University	8
County Of Los Angeles	6
Globo	5
Burbank Unified	3

Source: Labor Insight/Jobs (Burning Glass)

*Certifications and Skills*

Interpreter for the deaf is the most sought after certification for this occupation group, and was included on 43% of the postings that specified a certification. Other certifications that were largely present on postings were sign language certification and certified interpreter. Job-specific skills desired by employers are data entry, customer service, and deafness.

**Exhibit 6 –Job certifications (n=23) and job skills (n=62)**

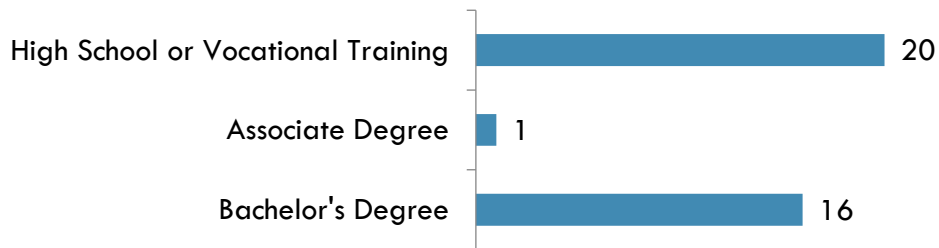
Certification	Job Postings, Full Year 2016	Skills	Job Postings, Full Year 2016
Interpreter for the Deaf	10	Data Entry	14
Sign Language Certification	5	Customer Service	12
Certified Interpreter	4	Deafness	10

Source: Labor Insight/Jobs (Burning Glass)

*Advertised Education Levels*

Exhibit 7 displays the education level requested by employers in online job ads. The majority of employers were looking for a candidate with high school or vocational training. Approximately 59% of job postings did not specify a level of education.

**Exhibit 7 – 2016 Online job ads with minimum advertised education requirements for ASL Interpreters (n=37)**



Source: Labor Insight/Jobs (Burning Glass)

**Industry Concentration**

Interpreters and translators in Los Angeles County are most often found in the all other professional, scientific, and technical services industry (38% of total jobs in the industry). Exhibit 8 shows the industries that are the largest employers of interpreters and translators in Los Angeles County.

**Exhibit 8 – Industries with the largest number of interpreters and translators, 2016**

<b>NAICS (6-Digit)</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Occupation Group Jobs in Industry</b>	<b>% of Occupation Group in Industry</b>
541990	All Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,221	38%
903611	Elementary and Secondary Schools (Local Government)	299	9%
541910	Marketing Research and Public Opinion Polling	279	9%
624120	Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities	234	7%
622110	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	131	4%

**Education and Training**

Exhibit 9 shows the typical entry-level education requirement for the occupation of interest, along with the typical on-the-job training, and percentage of workers in the field who hold a community college award or have completed some postsecondary courses. About 36% of the workforce in this occupation has completed some community college education as their highest level of education.

**Exhibit 9 – Education and training requirements, 2015-2020**

<b>SOC</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Typical entry-level education</b>	<b>Typical on-the-job training</b>	<b>% of Community College Award Holders or Some Postsecondary Coursework</b>
27-3091	Interpreters and Translators	Bachelor's degree	Short-term on-the-job training	36%

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International, Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections (Educational Attainment)

Currently, there are eight community colleges in Los Angeles County that train students in programs related to the field of sign language interpreting. Exhibit 10 displays the headcount and annual average community college awards for each of the colleges training in this field. Headcount is the actual number of students enrolled, regardless of credit hours. It is also important to note that an award is not equivalent to a single person in search of a job opening, since a student may earn more than one award (e.g. an associate degree and a certificate).

Between 2012-2015, the total annual average community college awards conferred was 46 (25 associate degrees and 21 certificates) across one program: Sign Language Interpreting (0850.10)

**Exhibit 10 – CCC Student Awards (by TOP and College)**

TOP Code	Program	College	2012 – 2015 Annual Average			Total Average CC Awards
			CCC Headcount	CCC Associate Degrees	CCC Certificates	
0850.10	Sign Language Interpreting	Compton	N/A	1	1	2
		East LA	767	N/A	N/A	N/A
		El Camino	176	11	15	26
		LA City	21	N/A	N/A	N/A
		LA Pierce	612	8	N/A	8
		LA Southwest	315	N/A	N/A	N/A
		LA Trade	341	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Mt San Antonio	1,151	5	5	10
			<b>3,383</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office MIS Data Mart

**Student Outcomes**

The CTE LaunchBoard provides student outcome data on the effectiveness of CTE programs. The following student outcome information was collected from exiters of the Sign Language Interpreting Program (TOP code 0850.10) in Los Angeles County for the 2014-15 academic year.

- The median annual wage after program completion is \$16,097
- 25% of students are earning a living wage
- 66% of students are employed within six months after completing a program

Source: CTE LaunchBoard

## Sources

O\*Net Online, Labor Insight/Jobs (Burning Glass), Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI), MIT Living Wage Calculator, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Education Attainment, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart, CTE LaunchBoard, Statewide CTE Outcomes Survey, Employment Development Department Unemployment Insurance Dataset

## Notes

Data included in this analysis represents the labor market demand for positions most closely related to ASL interpreters and translators. Standard occupational classification (SOC) codes were chosen based on the national education level required for employment (associate degree and postsecondary certificate) as well as the proportion of current workers who hold a community college award or have had some community college training. This selection process narrows the labor market analysis to the most relevant employment opportunities for students with community college education and/or training.

Traditional labor market information was used to show current and projected employment based on data trends, as well as annual average awards granted by regional community colleges. Real-time labor market information captures job post advertisements for occupations relevant to the field of study and should not be used to establish current job openings, because the numbers may include duplicate job postings or postings intended to gather a pool of applicants. Real-time labor market information can signal demand and show what employers are looking for in potential employees, but is not a perfect measure of the quantity of open positions.