

SLUSA

SIGN LANGUAGE U.S.A.

PO Box 1246 McLean, VA. 22101

<https://www.SLUSA.com>

855-SIGN-USA

Bid Response to RFP "Video Interpretation Services"

Submitted to:

Columbus Public Health, Center for Public Health Innovation

Bidder:

SLUSA

PO Box 1246 McLean, VA. 22101

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Prepared by/Authorized Representative:

Jeff Ingram

Director of Business Development

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All information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of our knowledge. Offer stands for a period of 120 days from the bid due date.

Thank you for the opportunity,



Jeff Ingram, Director of Business Development



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Company History

Sign Language USA, INC ("SLUSA") was established in 1984 by Dr. Richard F. Rosen, a former Gallaudet professor. Originally, SLUSA covered in person American Sign Language interpretation (hence the name) however, quickly SLUSA's founder realized the language needs of the limited English speaking community were under available and so Sign Language USA expanded beyond Sign Language interpretation. This is the reason we embrace our acronym of SLUSA. This helps to avoid confusion that we only provide sign language interpretation.

Currently, SLUSA provides approximately 300 spoken foreign languages in addition to American Sign Language (ASL). Furthermore, SLUSA provides written document translation and text captioning services.

While most interpreting agencies in the DC region cover government interpreting, SLUSA specializes in medical interpreting. Everything about SLUSA's business structure, policies, and procedures are aligned with the expectations and needs of the medical community. This includes choosing web hosting for SLUSA's website and electronic communication (E-mail) both with Atlantic.net. Atlantic.net is the country's leader in HIPAA compliance which includes third party audits. Furthermore, SLUSA's scheduling system, Go-Fluently, is designed specifically as a medical interpreting scheduling platform and is also fully HIPAA compliant. SLUSA's on-demand video and telephonic interpreting platform designed by BoostLingo is HIPAA compliant. SLUSA also schedules interpreting services through our HIPAA level Zoom account. Every interpreter must sign strict confidentiality and HIPAA compliance agreements as well as take HIPAA training along with 40 hours of medical interpreter training either through CCHI or Bridging the Gap. SLUSA's customize billing options are designed for patient privacy as well. Many customers have different preferences on how this information is delivered which may include multiple invoice copies with patient information removed for portions sent to Accounting specialists or password protected files.

Because of all this listed above, SLUSA is the most trusted interpreting agency and is the primary provider of interpreting services for some of the country's most recognized names. Johns Hopkins, Kaiser Permanente, Walter Reed, Children's National Medical Center, just to name a few. This is a small sample of the hundreds of medical customers who utilize SLUSA to provide interpreting services.



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References

Currently SLUSA is the primary contractor of interpreting services for hundreds of medical providers. Some with over 700 locations. SLUSA holds Federal, State, County, and local city or town government contracts. Many Department of Health and Human Services in addition to hospitals and medical offices.

The three references listed below are current SLUSA customers and each have been for over 3 years.

Reference 1: CCI Health

SLUSA provides on demand video and audio interpreting services for all 10 CCI health locations. CCI is the largest on demand video and audio medical interpreting customer of SLUSA's with over \$900,000 spend annually with an average of 1,200,000 minutes per yer.

CCI Contact: Michelle Preston or Selbourne Morgan

Michelle.preston@cciweb.org or selbourne.morgan@cciweb.org

202-916-9796 or 301-340-7525

8665 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring MD 20910

Reference 2: Johns Hopkins

Johns Hopkins is one of the largest and oldest medical providers in the region with several hospital campuses as well as around 700 community physician offices. SLUSA provides both in person and virtual interpreting services to Johns Hopkins

Johns Hopkins Contacts: Analy Pobiak or Susana Velarde

410-614-4685

Apobiak1@jhmi.edu or svelard1@jhmi.edu

550 N. Broadway Suite 101 Baltimore, MD 21205

Reference 3: State of Maine, Department of Health and Human Services

SLUSA holds a contract with the entire state of Maine including all state departments. The Department of Health and Human Services is one of the highest users of on demand telephonic interpreting services under the contract with over \$60,000 spend annually and approximately 6500 minutes per month.

State of Maine Contact: Andrea Ray-Bolduc

Andrea.ray-bolduc@maine.gov

207-822-2144



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Project Description

SLUSA shall provide language interpretation services in two modes.

- 1) On-Demand
- 2) Scheduled

On-Demand:

SLUSA has approximately 15,000 interpreters available in 300 languages on demand 24/7/365. Languages include all of those listed in the RFP requirement on page 2 as well as many more.

Although the RFP specifically states video interpreting, we offer both video and audio only options.

Both video and audio only interpreting are available via any computer or laptop web browser as well as an app available for mobile devices such as Ipad and all Android devices. Audio only service is also accessible from any regular telephone.

Columbus Public Health employees can use any of the devices listed above, log in, click the language desired, select either video or audio only. You can even choose the gender of the interpreter if that's important to you. The service will then connect you with an interpreter in that language. SLUSA's connection time averages between 10 – 30 seconds to connect. If using a regular telephone to connect, you will dial in, enter a pin number, and verbally tell the system what language you need. Regardless of what device you use, the interpreter will then interpret either between you and someone else in the same room or the interpreter can dial out and connect you to the limited English speaking person via 3 way conference call.

Scheduled:

If you'd like to schedule a virtual interpreter rather than using the on demand option above, you may do so by completing an easy online request form found at www.SLUSA.com/new-request. You can ask that the interpreter be assigned to join your own video conferencing platform such as Zoom, Webex, Google meets, telehealth platform, or any other video conferencing solution. You may also ask that SLUSA host the meeting via our own HIPAA compliant Zoom account. If you choose to allow SLUSA to host the appointment, we will provide you with a link for yourself and the limited English participant to join the interpreter online.



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Comparison between On-Demand and Scheduled:

There are pros and cons to both options. On-demand is charged per minute with no per call minimum charge and no rounding up. This makes the option more financially attractive. Also because no appointment is needed, unplanned conversations with limited English speaking participants is easy to accommodate. The scheduled option is perfect if you'd like to meet with the limited English speaking person outside of SLUSA's on-demand platform, or if you have multiple people attending the conversation. Furthermore, because it is scheduled, you are able to send us prep material so that the interpreter joining is fully ready and prepared for the conversation versus on-demand where the interpreter joins cold with no preknowledge of what will be discussed.

Interpreter Credentials:

Every interpreter working for SLUSA must present language proficiency scores of at least 3. Completion of interpreter training program, completion of 40 hour medical interpreter training program such as CCHI or Bridging the Gap. Interpreter must have documented 2 years professional experience interpreting in the genre in which they will be working (in this case medical).

Every interpreter working virtually both on-demand and scheduled must have a solid high speed internet connection, private office space free of noise from traffic, children, television, radio, pets, or any other people. All interpreters are logged into the platform from a laptop computer. Interpreters are never allowed to log in while away from a home office (such as car, store, or other public spaces). Interpreters are regularly audited to ensure their workspace and internet connection remains at acceptable standards. All of this is part of SLUSA's quality control guidelines.

Hardware/Software Requirements:

SLUSA's on demand application works on any computer or laptop web browser (Chrome is best). Simply visit the site, enter your login information, and you are ready to select your language and place the call.

If you choose to use a mobile device such as tablet or smartphone, you must download the application as the web browser on the mobile device will not work. SLUSA will work with your IT department if any firewalls are encountered. This is rare however, if there is a firewall within your organization blocking service, SLUSA will provide your IT team a list of IP addresses to unlock as well as Ports to switch open. This will allow service to function through the firewall.



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Cost, Pricing Structure, and Invoices

On-Demand Video Interpreting = \$1.30 per minute for all languages

Audio Only Interpreting = \$0.80 cents per minute for all languages

We do not round up, we do not bill any minimum call minutes. All costs equal the price per minute times the exact call time from moment of connection to the interpreter.

SLUSA has read the invoice requirements of the RFP and can confirm, we will invoice via Excel spreadsheet which will include a tab summarizing usage, minutes, charges for each Columbus health department/office (if you would like each office usage separate. If not, this tab will just be a simple summary of all minutes/charges). Each subsequent tab will be a call log showing usage for each location. Call log includes line by line account of every call including date/time, language, duration, queue time, from number (if applicable), call duration, and total call charge. SLUSA offers customizable billing options which will allow you to include (if desired) patient names, employee names, medical reference numbers, employee ID numbers, or any other information you want to see associated with each call. You must let us know preferences in advance so that we can program the system to collect this information at the time of each call.

Pricing structure for on-demand is very simple. You are charged per minute for every call made. Charges start from the moment you are connected to the interpreter and cease the moment you and the interpreter disconnect. We do not round up, we do not charge a per call minimum. We do not charge per license or location. We simply charge for each moment service is used regardless how many users are using the service. We also do not charge any monthly fees, no setup fees.

Pricing Structure for scheduled is also simple however the charge is per hour with a 1 hour minimum rather than per minute. This is because we must reserve a minimum of 1 hour of the interpreter's time. This is different than On-demand as those interpreters are taking call after call and paid per minute.

The only additional service we think Columbus Public Health may be interested in is written document translation services. These may apply to medical records, instructions, letters, or any other written communication that needs to be translated between English and a foreign language or vice versa.



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7. Describe how the bidder provides services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

This is at the heart of everything we do. Every language is attached to ethnic, religious, and nationalistic groups. Some languages are attached to more than one. SLUSA constantly recruits interpreters in each language across multiple sample groups to ensure full coverage and inclusiveness. Every interpreter must evaluate the situation to determine the most accepted path forward and will respect the ethnic and religious guidelines of the individual. Respect is the forefront of consideration for every interpreter. SLUSA also makes this easy with options like choosing the interpreter gender as well as choosing not only the language but in many cases specific dialects and/or regions where the individual may come from. This helps to ensure the call is routed to the most appropriate interpreter for this individual.

8. Describe the organization's ability and plan to collect accurate data and generate reports in a timely manner. How will data be collected, maintained, and reported back to Columbus Public Health?

All call metrics such as language selected, queue times, call durations, etc are automatically tracked in our interpreting platform. Reports are very easily pulled from the platform by simply entering the period and information needed. Furthermore, most reports are generated in Excel format which allows us to filter and re organize information in the most streamlined ways for viewing. Our team may also create pivot tables as tools to help in comparing and evaluating information. These reports may also be pulled by your team in real-time as desired as well but we find most customers would rather we pull them and supply reports typically on a monthly and/or annual basis.

9. Describe the overall management structure and responsibilities. Include an overview of how the management will provide oversight to the quality and timeliness of services. Provide an overview of policies and procedures that are in place to assure contract compliance and/or correct issues of noncompliance.

SLUSA's Director of Remote Interpreting oversees all aspects of the on-demand platform and its customer's needs. Director is available at any time for direct conversation regarding any concerns, disputes, or for whatever other reason customer would like to reach out and converse. The Director's team includes scheduling managers and assistants who monitor call volume in real time, report connection times, add in additional interpreters in times of high call volume, prepare, and review invoices. Whenever any new customer, especially a larger or more complex customer signs on for service, it is typically that we conduct a kickoff meeting in which we learn about any intricacies, expectations, and preferences that may not have been in



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the RFP. This is our chance to learn exactly how you'd like to see things, communication style, invoice preferences, etc. We program our system from that day with your preferences so that there is no deviation or unexpected differences in the future. Compliance is monitored by the Director. Any disputes or changes in desire may be brought to the Director's attention. These changes will be implemented at once. The same is true for any issues of non-compliance. When brought to our attention, the matter is resolved typically within 1 hour but no more than 24 hours.

10. Describe the plan to provide training to Columbus Public Health staff. Describe training that will assure an understanding of the purpose and role of interpreters. Propose the frequency of training.

Staff training needs are usually gauged at kickoff meetings so that we may learn the number of employees, specific needs for the organization, etc. SLUSA has several options which may include virtual group training, informational PDF files, one on one sessions, or more class like lecture style. SLUSA has several resources which include how to work with interpreters, setting expectations, do's and don'ts. Regarding training on how to use the platform and services specifically, SLUSA has very easy to understand PDF files explaining how to use the application and how pre-schedule requests. We also have contact sheets so that your team knows how to contact us and who does what.

11. Describe any web-based systems in existence to allow the client to review status of requests, billing, training, etc.

The same online platform to log in and access interpreting services has separate tiers we can activate for account management and allow your managers access to status, reports, real time monitoring of usage, etc.

12. Your bid should include responses to the following questions:

i. How do you address client complaints regarding the quality of calls and competence of the interpreters?

Firstly, both of these scenarios are very rare. We do quality checks constantly to ensure that call quality is never an issue. Every interpreter is rigorously vetted and I as the Director have 100% confidence in the competence of every interpreter we use however, when the issues do come up, you are able to submit detailed concerns via email or phone directly to the Director. Every single issue is investigated and resolved within 24 hours. Resolution can mean



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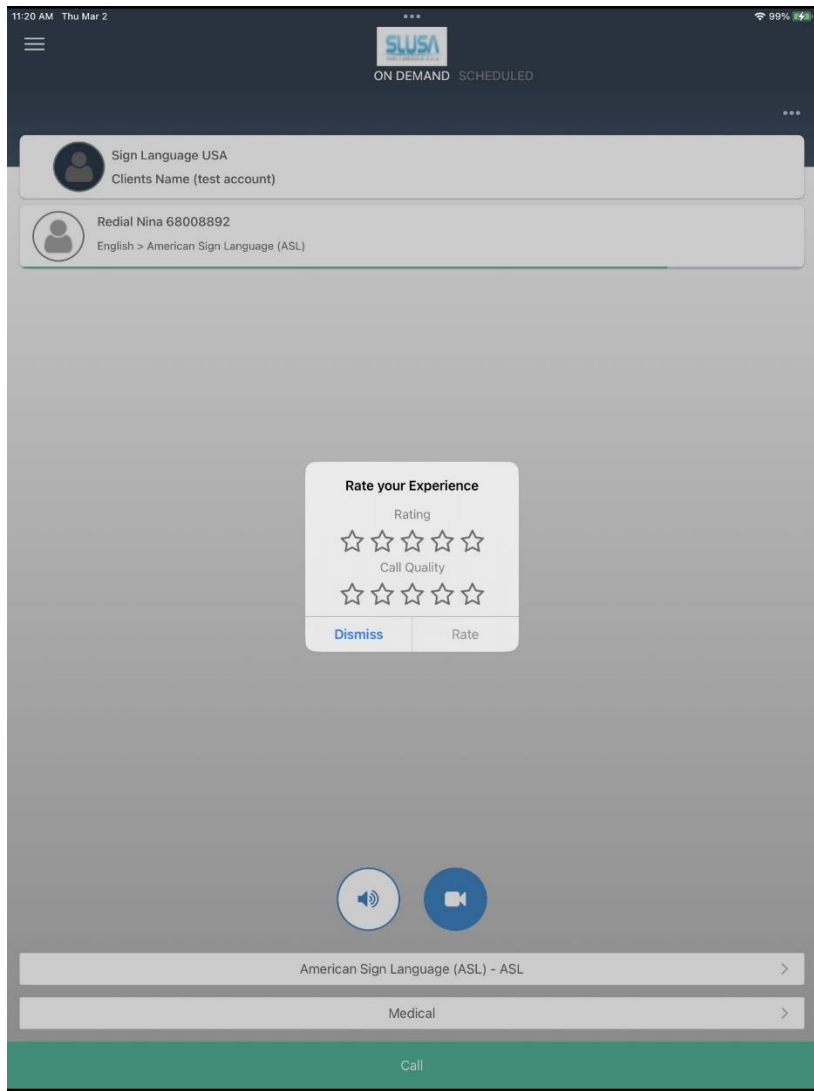
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anything from coaching the interpreter up to termination (depending on the seriousness of the offense). Furthermore, SLUSA has the ability to block specific interpreters from accounts. This means that for any reason at all, if your team does not want to be connected to a specific interpreter again, we can block them from your account, no questions asked.

II. If a call is dropped, how do you ensure the same interpreter can resume the conversation?

This is very easy, when a call is dropped or even when a call is just regularly disconnected, there is a prompt that appears on screen to ask if you'd like to be reconnected to that same interpreter. The screen shot below shows the after call screen. In this case the call was made using our test account, the interpreter was Nina. After the call, you see we have option to reconnect with her. Also this screen shows how after each call, there is the option to rate the interpreter. We use this to help with quality control as well. Any low ratings are investigated.





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III. What is your backup plan if a language is not available?

With 300 languages available 24/7/365 and with constant monitoring by our team for call volume, its very rare that a language would not be available however, in the event it isn't, your team may call us directly, we have the ability of reaching out to resources to either add them directly into the platform or to provide you with a link to join the interpreter via Zoom.

IV. What is your backup plan for a network outage?

SLUSA has several redundancies in place that prevent total system-wide outage. This includes regional servers so that if a catastrophic event were to occur in one location, it would not affect servers and interpreters outside of that region. In the event of total system failure, SLUSA would provide customers with a separate dial in number via Zoom in which we can add interpreters across 500 different channels if necessary simultaneously to interpret in the interim until main system were back on line. I have to say though that in 8 years, we have never experienced a total system outage.

1. If you use audio backup, please provide your pricing information.

As part of this RFP we are offering you access to audio only as well as video. Both our systems though use the same platform and so audio would not be the back up option. Our audio only pricing is listed in the price proposal. Our pricing to use backup Zoom system would be the same as your standard pricing.

2. If you use audio backup, please detail any contingency plans for audio backup outtages?

Since we have listed above the contingency plan which utilizes a completely separate platform, I believe that answer is sufficient.

V. How will Columbus Public Health be compensated for network outages?

There is no compensation arrangement in the event of outage. Like any other service, if there is an outage, you will be fully informed that back up protocols are in place and how to use them. Knock on wood though, since we have not had a full system outage in our history, lets hope we don't start now.

12. Provide any other additional information

We are out of our 10 page limit. There is so much more information we can provide if selected for interview or award. We would love to give you a full demo of our system so that you can see for yourselves how it works, ask any follow up questions, etc.