



PROPOSED VALUES FOR COMMUNITY INTERPRETERS



ROBYN K DEAN



ABOUT ROBYN

Robyn has been a nationally certified signed language interpreter for over thirty years with particular service in the field of healthcare. Her scholarship in decision-making and ethics in community interpreting is recognized internationally. Robyn has over twenty publications, all of which focus on the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks used to advance the practice of community interpreting. Robyn is on the faculty at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she is the lead instructor on the institute's postgraduate degree program in healthcare interpretation.

PARADIGM SHIFT: A PRACTICE PROFESSION

Robyn, in her work with Bob Pollard, has advanced the idea that community interpreting (such as in medical, mental health, and educational settings) is best understood as a practice profession. A practice profession is a type of service-based profession where practitioners (for example, nurses, teachers, and therapists) must address and deal effectively with the complexities of the human condition, human communication, and human interaction. One aspect of a practice profession is its use of an outcomes-based approach to ethical reasoning. Rules-based ethics or a *one-size-fits-all* approach is not effective in light of the numerous, often unpredictable variables that influence decision-making. Community interpreters, like all practice professionals, need to be guided in their ethical decision-making through a series of values, not a list of rules. This document outlines values that emerge from various ethical sources already used in the field. Here, the values of community interpreting are presented in one practical document, intended to be applied to the varied contexts into which interpreters are called every day.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Interpreters who work in community settings face ethically complex situations every day. Unfortunately, the profession has not been consistent in how it guides and supports interpreters in making the right decision. Most ethical codes in the profession frame ethical ideals as, “interpreters always...” and “interpreters never...”. Yet, how often is the phrase, “it depends on the situation...” uttered by interpreters? To add to the confusion, interpreters hear from trainers and colleagues that interpreters are just, “conduits” or should be “invisible”. Or, interpreters hear the exact opposite: interpreters are “advocates” or they are “members of the team”.

This **list of values** below is proposed as a way of outlining how community interpreting should talk about the values that interpreters are responsible for in their work.

A values-based framework effectively captures the complex work that interpreters do in the same way that other practice professions do.

This document aids in shifting ethical thinking and discourse in community interpreting.

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