Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 481—961.6(17A,147,272C)
"Licensure of Sign Language Interpreters and Transliterators"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 147.36, 154E.3, 272C.3, 272C.4, and 272C.10

State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code chapter 154E and section 272C.2

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

August 12, 2025	6200 Park Avenue
9 a.m.	Des Moines, Iowa

Information on virtual participation will be available on the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing website prior to the hearing.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

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Purpose and Summary

These proposed rules set minimum standards for entry into the sign language interpreter and transliterator profession. Iowa residents, licensees and employers benefit from the rules because the rules articulate the processes by which individuals apply for licensure as a sign language interpreter or transliterator in the State of Iowa, as directed in statute. This includes the process for initial licensure, renewal, and reinstatement. These requirements ensure public safety by ensuring that any individual entering the profession has minimum competency. Requirements include the application process and examinations.

Analysis of Impact

1. **Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:**

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

There is no direct cost to the general public, but there is a cost to the applicant because complying with the minimum requirements to enter into the professions is at the expense of the licensee.

There are no educational requirements to become an Iowa sign language interpreter or transliterator, but applicants must pay applicable fees and pass an examination in order to obtain a license. The examination fees are approximately $250 to $500, depending on the type of examination.

The application fee is $120, and the renewal fee is $120. These costs are comparable to, or less than, surrounding states. Nebraska requires a high school or college diploma. In Nebraska, applicants must pay $250 to $500 for the examination and an application fee of $150. Minnesota requires an interpreter training program for its educational interpreters. In addition, applicants must complete an examination that costs $250 to $500 and pay an application fee.

Department staff review applications for initial and renewal licenses and for licensure reinstatement. Department staff also answer inquiries on licensing and field phone calls. Staff salaries to support the work of the Board of Sign Language Interpreters and Transliterators are covered by the Licensing and Regulation Fund established in 2023 Iowa Acts, Senate File 557. It takes roughly 0.35 full-time equivalent (FTE) position to review application materials. Licensing fees go to the fund to cover the operations of the regulated professional licensing boards.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

The public and professionals benefit from the proposed rule. Establishing minimum licensing requirements ensures that practitioners are competent to practice. Without having an established threshold for entry into the profession, individuals who are not appropriately trained could harm the public. The Board believes the cost to license this profession justifies the benefits achieved because it ensures that Iowans are treated with competent and qualified practitioners.

2. **Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:**

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

The costs for the required examination are $250 to $500, depending on which examination the applicant takes. Licensing fees are $120 for an initial license and $120 for each renewal period.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

Establishing minimum licensing requirements ensures that practitioners are competent to practice. Without having an established threshold for entry into the profession, individuals who are not appropriately trained could harm the public. The Board believes the cost to license this profession justifies the benefits achieved because it ensures that Iowans are treated with competent and qualified practitioners. Licensing requirements in Iowa are very similar to those in surrounding states.

3. **Costs to the State:**

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

Costs to the Department are for the staff time needed to manage Board activities, which include managing applications for initial licenses, renewals, reactivations and reinstatements. Staff salaries to support the work of the Board are covered by the Licensing and Regulation Fund established in 2023 Iowa Acts, Senate File 557. It takes roughly 0.35 FTE position to review application materials. Licensing fees go to the fund to cover the operations of the regulated professional licensing boards.

- **Anticipated effect on State revenues:**

Costs associated with implementing this proposed rule are paid by individual licensees, not the State. This rule has no anticipated impact on State revenues.

Staff salaries to support the work of the Board are covered by the Licensing and Regulation Fund established in 2023 Iowa Acts, Senate File 557. Licensing fees go to the fund to cover the operations of the regulated professional licensing boards.

4. **Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:**

Licensing is the highest form of regulation. Lower forms of regulation such as registration could be viable. As of 2022, there are 22 states that do not license sign language interpreters, although some have other regulations. The Board believes all current requirements ensure public safety and ensure a minimum competency of care is provided to Iowans. Licensure requirements could be reduced or eliminated for the purpose of lowering the bar of entry into the profession, but the Board would be concerned about the public safety of Iowans in that scenario. In addition, the proposed rule provides consistency related to the licensure of sign language interpreters and transliterators in other states,

which makes obtaining licensure in multiple states simpler for applicants. The costs to licensees in the State of Iowa are similar to those of surrounding states that license interpreters and transliterators.

5. **Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:**

The Board has not identified a more cost-effective alternative to the licensure of sign language interpreters and transliterators. The Board believes all current requirements ensure public safety and ensure a minimum competency of care is provided to Iowans. Licensure requirements could be reduced or eliminated for the purpose of lowering the bar of entry into the profession, but the Board would be concerned about the public safety of Iowans in that scenario. In addition, the proposed rule provides consistency related to the licensure of sign language interpreters or transliterators in other states, which makes obtaining licensure in multiple states simpler for applicants.

Due to State government alignment, this Board is now part of the Department. The Department's Licensing Division continues to assess and implement opportunities to increase efficiencies and standardize board processes across all professional licensing boards. This rule supports this effort. The Department is actively pursuing a single licensing platform to assist in standardizing licensing.

6. **Alternative methods considered by the agency:**

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

The Board has not identified a more cost-effective alternative to the licensure of sign language interpreters or transliterators. The Board believes all current requirements ensure public safety and ensure a minimum competency of care is provided to Iowans. Licensure requirements could be reduced or eliminated for the purpose of lowering the bar of entry into the profession, but the Board would be concerned about the public safety of Iowans in that scenario. In addition, this proposed rule provides consistency related to the licensure of sign language interpreters or transliterators in other states, which makes obtaining licensure in multiple states simpler for applicants.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

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Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

The proposed rule relates to high-stakes public safety concerns that are present whether the business is a small business or a large organization. This rule is meant to ensure public safety in terms of licensing requirements for sign language interpreters and transliterators. While some interpreters are running a small business of their own, some also work for larger businesses or school systems. To exempt small businesses from adhering to this rule would jeopardize any member of the public who sought services from that small business. The risk to the public is greater than the potential harm or cost to the small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Rescind rule 481—961.6(17A,147,272C) and adopt the following **new** rule in lieu thereof:

481—961.6(17A,147,272C) License reactivation. To apply for reactivation of an inactive license, a licensee needs to:

961.6(1) Submit a completed online reactivation application and pay the nonrefundable fee.

961.6(2) If licensed in another jurisdiction, submit a license verification from the jurisdiction in which the applicant has been most recently licensed and has been practicing during the time period in which the Iowa license was inactive sent directly from the jurisdiction to the board office. Web-based verification may be substituted for verification from a jurisdiction's board office if the verification includes:

a. The licensee's name;

b. The date of initial licensure;

c. Current licensure status; and

d. Any disciplinary action taken against the license.

961.6(3) Provide verification of current competence to practice sign language interpreting or transliterating by satisfying one of the following criteria:

a. If the license has been on inactive status for five years or less, or the licensee is actively practicing in another jurisdiction:

(1) Verification of a current certification as identified in subrule 961.2(1) or of passing an examination identified in subrule 961.2(1) after the license became inactive; or

(2) Verification of active practice, consisting of a minimum of 2,080 hours, in another state or jurisdiction during the two years preceding an application for reactivation; and

(3) Verification of completing 40 hours of continuing education within two years of the application for reactivation.

b. If the license has been on inactive status for more than five years and the licensee is not currently practicing in another jurisdiction:

(1) Verification of completing 80 hours of continuing education within two years of the application for reactivation; or

(2) Verification of passing an examination identified in subrule 961.2(1) after the license became inactive.