

Sign Language Interpreter Data Report for Iowa

Initial Report

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Iowa Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

This is a report on the Sign Language Interpreting profession in the state of Iowa, using data from the public list of licensed interpreters from July 2024 and July 2025.

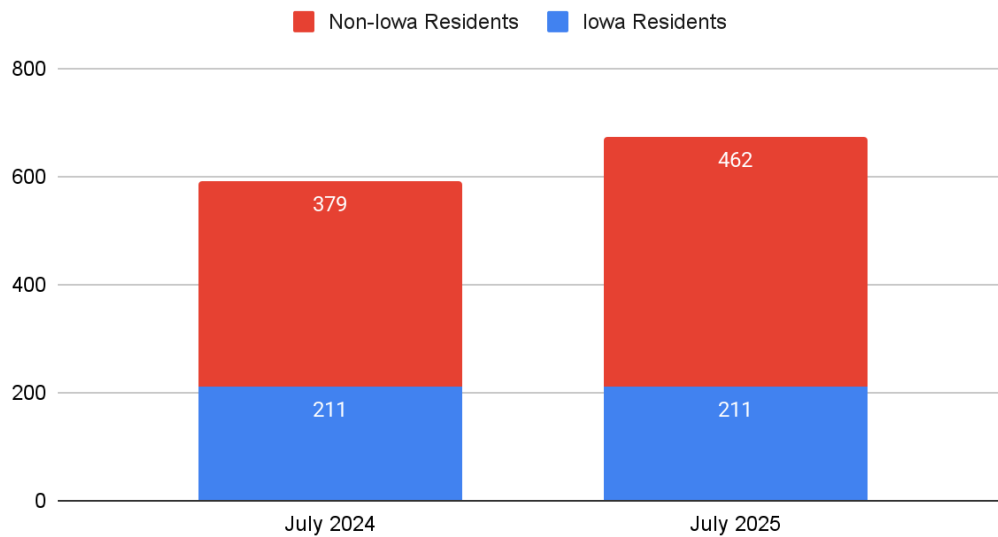
Sign Language Interpreter/Transliterator licenses were first issued July 1, 2005. Since that time, interpreters who provide services in Iowa, either onsite or virtually, must hold an active license. Licenses for Sign Language Interpreters/Translilitators are currently issued through Iowa's Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing. Licenses are issued in two-year renewal cycles at two different levels: provisional, and "licensed by examination". Interpreters who have certain credentials qualify for licensure by examination, also referred to as "full licensure". Interpreters who have not yet obtained the qualifying credentials can get a provisional license for up to two cycles, or four years total. Interpreters must maintain licensure by completing 40 hours of professional development per cycle. Interpreters with a provisional license must also work with a supervising interpreter who is licensed by examination for the duration of their licensure cycle, or until they obtain one of the approved credentials.

As of July 2025, there are 673 interpreters who have valid, active Sign Language Interpreter/Transliterator licenses in Iowa. This is an increase from 590 licensed interpreters in July 2024. However, only 31%, or 211 interpreters, reside in Iowa, while 69% reside in other states. While there has been a net increase, the number of fully licensed interpreters residing in Iowa has remained at 211 across those two years. This contributes to difficulty with obtaining in-person, onsite interpreting services across the state. The rest of this report will focus on the 211 interpreters who reside in Iowa and have active Sign Language Interpreter/Transliterator licenses. (Fig. 1)

Note that this data indicates only that the interpreter holds an active interpreting license, and does not indicate the amount of interpreting services they are providing to Iowans. Some licensees may only be interpreting part time, some may be teaching or working primarily in other roles, and some may only be providing remote interpreting for clients in other states. Additionally, some licensees may have moved out of state, retired, or passed away since the data was accessed for the purposes of this report.

Figure 1

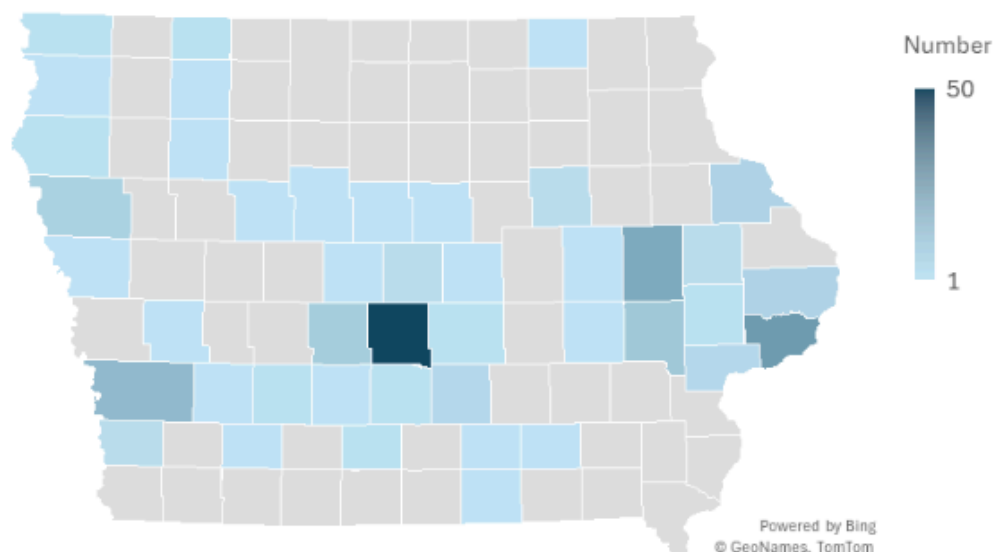
Total Licensed Interpreters by residence



Geographically, interpreters reside mostly in the counties with metro areas, such as Polk, Linn, Johnson, and Scott. There are also a larger number in Pottawattamie county due to the Iowa School for the Deaf and the proximity to Omaha, Nebraska. In 56 of Iowa's 99 counties, there are zero interpreters. In 20 counties, there is only 1 licensed interpreter. (Fig. 2)

Figure 2

Licensed Interpreters by county (July 2025)

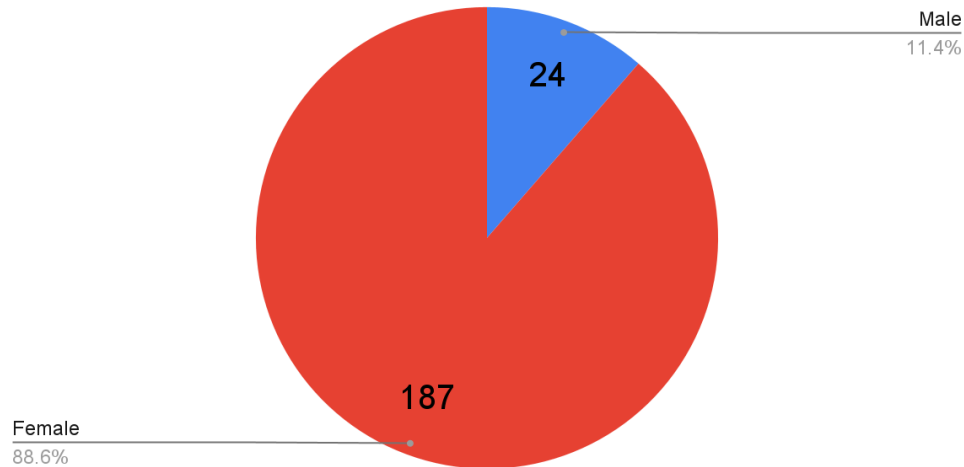


In July 2025, there were 24 male interpreters and 187 female interpreters residing in Iowa. These percentages resemble the national data collected by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, whose membership is 13.9% male (Iowa is 11.4%), and 84.6% female (Iowa is 88.6%). (Fig. 3)

Figure 3

Iowa residing interpreters by gender

July 9, 2025

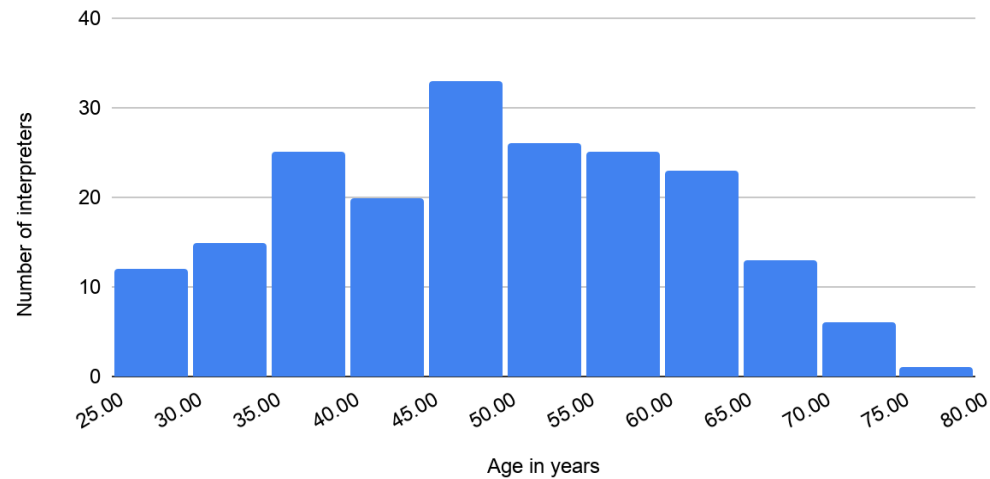


Interpreters residing in Iowa range in age from 26 to 76 years old, with 21.6% of the group being 60 years of age or older. Following the United States retirement age of 62 for early retirement, this indicates that approximately one fifth of the licensed interpreting pool are eligible to retire at any time. Additionally, 39.8% of the licensed interpreters residing in Iowa are 52 or older as of July 2025, which means nearly 40% of the available interpreting pool will be eligible for retirement in the next decade. (Fig. 4)

Figure 4

Age of licensed Iowa residing interpreters

As of July 29, 2025

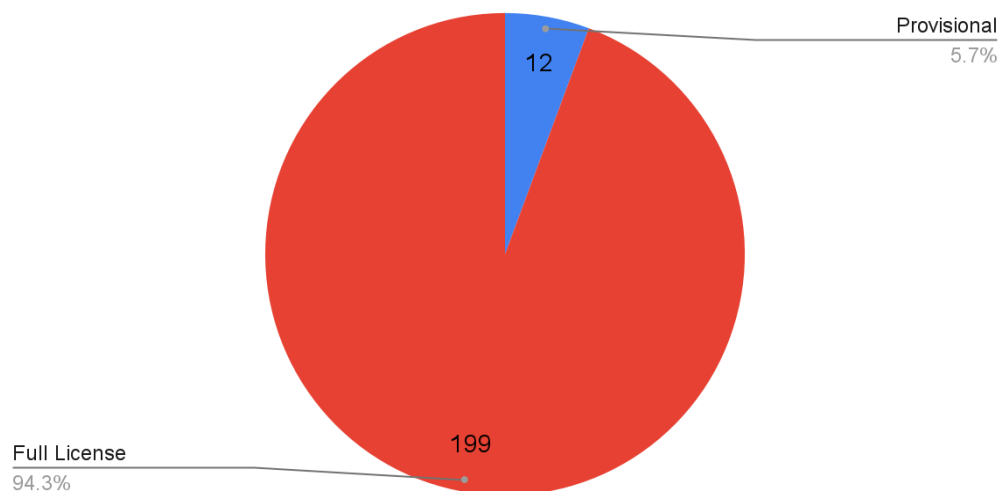


As of July 2025, 12 of the 211 interpreters residing in Iowa have provisional licenses, which means they are new to the profession and have less than 4 years of experience. These interpreters would ideally be providing services in settings that are considered entry level, although Iowa law does not place restrictions on setting or type of work for provisionally or fully licensed interpreters except for some legal settings, such as court hearings and trials. (Fig. 5)

Figure 5

Licensure types held by Iowa residing interpreters July 2025

Total = 211

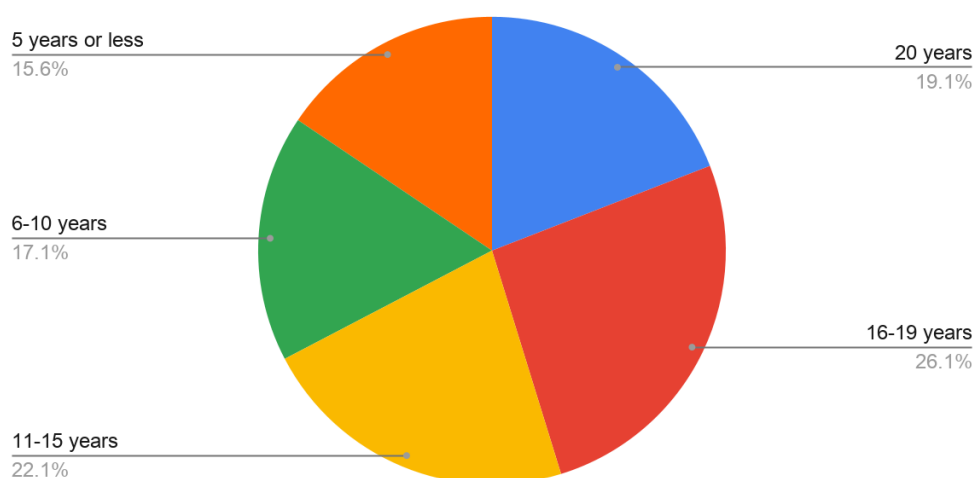


The average length of an active license in Iowa is 12.5 years. 16% of active licensed interpreters who reside in Iowa have been licensed for less than 5 years, and 17% have been licensed for 6-10 years. 22% have been licensed for 11-15 years, 26% for 16-19 years, and 19% have been licensed since licensure began in 2005. It is important to note that this does not necessarily represent the number of years of experience in the profession that an interpreter may have. An interpreter may have begun their career in another state and relocated to Iowa after having multiple years in the field, or an interpreter may have been working in the profession in Iowa prior to the implementation of licensure in 2005. (Fig. 6)

Figure 6

Years of Licensure for Iowa Residing Interpreters, July 2025

Average = 12.5 years



In the last 5 years, there have been a total of 53 new licenses issued to interpreters in Iowa: 41 full and 12 conditional. The 41 full licenses represent both interpreters whose initial license was by examination and those who previously held provisional licensure and obtained a qualifying credential for a full license. There is currently no way to tell which provisional licenses converted to full licenses on the public database; therefore, it is not possible to determine what percentage of the 41 full licenses had originally been issued as provisional, nor is it possible to see the length of provisional licensure before conversion to full licensure.

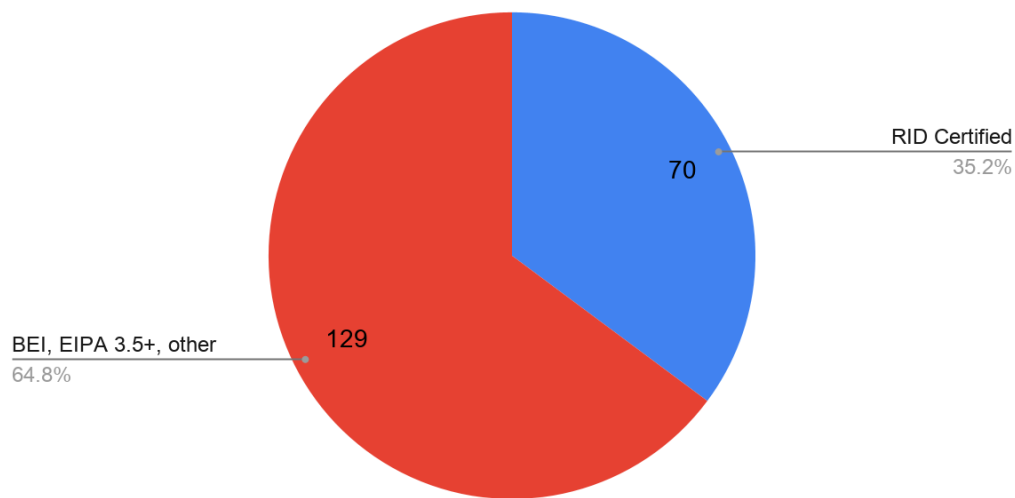
By contrast, an average of 16.8 licenses per year became inactive between 2020-2025, a total of 84. This indicates a replacement rate of 43% over the last 5 years. The average length of the licenses that became inactive during that timeframe is 6.75 years, with 62% being 4 years or less. This indicates that 62% of interpreters do not advance from provisional licensure to full licensure, either due to not obtaining one of the recognized credentials, choosing to leave the profession for other reasons, or relocating to another state and choosing not to maintain licensure in Iowa.

There are multiple credentials that interpreters can possess to receive full licensure, but currently only three are still available for interpreters to obtain: Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) certification, Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Advanced or Master certification, or the Educational Interpreters Performance Assessment (EIPA) with a score of 3.5 or higher. There have been multiple other exams and certifications that have been sunset, but are still recognized and accepted in Iowa for full licensure for interpreters who have obtained those credentials in the past. As of July 2025, 70 interpreters residing in Iowa held RID certification. There is no public record of the other types of credentials, so the other 129 fully licensed interpreters have either a BEI or an EIPA 3.5+. (Fig. 7)

Figure 7

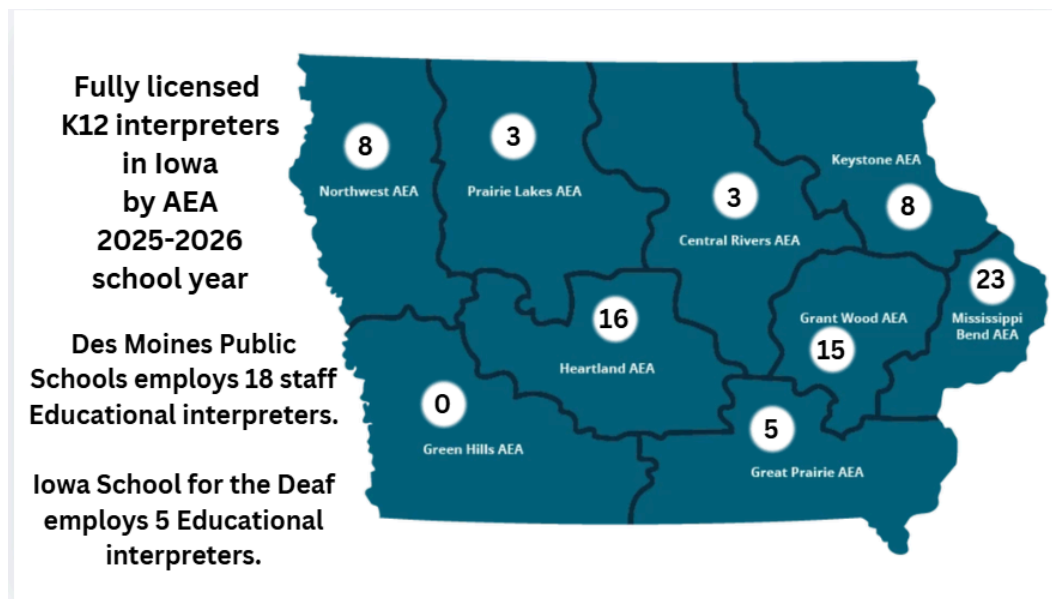
Types of exams of fully licensed Iowa residing interpreters

July 2025



It is difficult to determine the settings in which interpreters are working; however, there is record of how many interpreters are employed in educational classrooms across Iowa's Area Education Agencies, Des Moines Public Schools, and Iowa School for the Deaf. During the 2025-2026 school year, there were a total of 104 interpreters working in classrooms across Iowa. This indicates that there are 107 licensed interpreters who are working in other settings such as Video Relay Service, Video Remote Interpreting, or community settings. (Fig. 8)

Figure 8



Currently there is no publicly available way to tell which types of credentials, other than RID certification, are held by interpreters. Also, there is no public data indicating settings where interpreters typically work, how many hours per week interpreters are providing services to Iowans, how long interpreters typically hold provisional licenses until obtaining a full license, or whether or not an interpreter is hearing or Deaf. Additionally, it would be helpful to have a census of sign language users in Iowa to determine the ratio of consumers to interpreters, which would be beneficial in determining capacity for provision of service. These and other data points can be explored in the future via surveys and other methods.

References:

- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Annual Report, 2023
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1eI7iCfHRmmQXfAyoXiRb5wQ5Jb4CfXCp>
- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf registry search
<https://myaccount.rid.org/Public/Search/Member.aspx>
- Sign Language Interpreters & Transliterations | Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing <https://dial.iowa.gov/licenses/other-professional-licensure/sign-language>
- Statewide Directory of Educational Interpreter positions in Iowa