

CODA CAREERS TOOLKIT

For CODAS considering roles within the Deaf world

This toolkit was created with the insight of workshop participants at the CODALOVE 2019 Conference. Participants were from Germany, UK, USA, Canada, Italy and South Africa and represented a range of careers. The aim of this toolkit is to support younger CODAs, CODAs thinking of transitioning into working within the Deaf world, those already engaged in these careers who may experience isolation within their professional network and may be seeking out support from others in the profession. In the session we discussed the following areas and responses will be summarised below. To end, we asked CODAs what they wished they knew before embarking on their career and to write “a letter to their younger self”, some of the quotes from these have been shared below.

1. CODA roles working with the Deaf community
2. Cultural awareness and skills CODAs may bring to these roles
3. Suggested strategies to support cultural cohesion
4. Some challenges CODAs may face in the Deaf workplace

CODA roles within the Deaf community

- Interpreter
- Teacher of the Deaf/Teaching assistant/Communication support worker
- Deaf counsellor
- Advocate
- Event planners
- Working within a Deaf charity
- Psychologist
- Modifier/Translator
- Researchers
- Lecturers
- Social Workers
- CODA Counsellor (camp)
- Charity worker
- Engagement Officer
- Medical Professionals (doctor/nurse/midwife)
- Entertainment professionals (film/TV/singers/writers/etc)
- Entrepreneur/Director
- Other roles in Deaf schools (residential workers, administrators, caretakers etc)
- Technology/Human centred design

Cultural awareness and skills CODAs may bring to these roles

(NB: these may be useful to refer to during job/university applications or resumes where applicable!)

- Sign language ability/other communication skills
- Empathy
- Cultural awareness - bridging two worlds
- Collaboration skills
- Sensibility and maturity
- Leadership skills
- Diplomacy/mediation skills
- Understanding of others with additional needs/diversity
- Trust
- Planning skills
- Flexibility
- Observational skills
- Deaf awareness
- Non verbal communication/ability to read body language
- Cultural brokerage
- Desire and willingness to advocate for Deaf people and knowing how to “play the game”
- Attuned to oppression
- Can use experiences to explain oppression to those who may not understand

Some challenges CODAs may face in the Deaf workplace

- Professional and social boundaries
- Acceptance in the Deaf community
- Supporting the inclusion of the Deaf community - raising deaf awareness and beyond amongst hearing colleagues
- Freedom of expression
- Fragility of CODA's status (shift from ally to “one of the hearing”)
- Perception that CODAs “take over” - this can lead to control issues
- Hearing attitudes
- Funding cuts within the Deaf community
- Having to justify needs
- Fear that promotion means taking a “Deaf person's job”
- Pressure to meet high expectations of CODAs/assumed knowledge
- Patience - some careers take a long time to fully qualify
- Working in the deaf world with family in the deaf world - some may find this challenging to “switch off”
- Problems of confidentiality - may lead to a lack of trust on both sides
- Having to proceed through sign language levels - cost implications and having to do initial levels may feel boring/frustrating
- Vicarious trauma - seeing deaf people oppressed or having to advise and remain impartial could be emotionally challenging

Suggested strategies

- Network building
- Sharing Deaf awareness knowledge with colleagues using multimedia strategies - cultural brokerage
- Citing specific research
- Leveraging Deaf or CODA role models/mentors/peers
- Stand up for yourself and what you believe in, if there are extreme challenges know your rights and consult your union if needed
- Gain a variety of experience
- Be realistic about what you can do with your time and make time for yourself
- Enabling peer support and co-production
- Develop, share and use social media
- Educate other CODAs that they don't have to be interpreters or work in the deaf world and give them networks and advice if they wish to
- Collate ideas
- Encouraging and facilitating a bilingual bicultural environment
- Be aware of different learning styles and personality styles to get the most out of interpersonal relationships
- Peer support networks/supervision
- Attend CODA events (camps, workshops, conferences, region meetings or socials) and Deaf events or engage in social media or messaging CODAs for advice
- Reflect and learn from experiences
- Know what is best for your clients/students
- Pass on your knowledge and expertise

CODA CAREER CONNECTIONS

If you are considering a career in any of these fields and are seeking further advice please feel free to contact these emails or join these groups:

Teaching: CODA TODs (Teachers of the Deaf)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/560275337799232/?ref=share> or Amy Claridge (Teacher of the Deaf, UK) amy@codaukireland.co.uk

General route: Bachelors degree (degrees like Deaf Studies or Education may suit well) > Teaching degree > (recommended mainstream teaching experience though requirements vary per country) > TOD qualification (MA or Postgraduate Diploma)

Counselling: Matt Shrine (Counsellor, UK) Matt@codaukireland.co.uk

General route: [to be added by Matt]

Interpreting: “CODA INTERPRETER CORNER” Facebook group

General route: Bachelors degree or proceeding through the sign language “levels” to 6 > interpreting course (level 6 interpreting) > junior trainee interpreter > trainee interpreter > registered qualified interpreter (UK)

General groups for advice/resources:

<http://codaukireland.co.uk>

<https://www.coda-international.org>

CODA Groups on facebook:

“CODA”, “CODA International”, “CODA UK & Ireland Social”. Or search for CODA + your country/region to see if you have a specific regional group who you can consult with. You are not alone!

A letter to my younger self

“You don’t have to choose whatever career makes your parents proud, because they will always be proud of you whatever profession you choose because you’re proud of yourself.”

“Take your time and do not rush into your education and career. You have time. Ask a CODA - don’t feel pressured to fit into the Deaf mould. You can embrace deafness in your own way and through your own experiences. Open yourself up to opportunities outside of the Deaf world to grow and to help others to grow. Deafness is a part of who you are, not all of you. Take time to explore who you are within and outside of the Deaf/CODA world.”

“Dear fellow CODAs,

Follow your passion. Realise your CODA background is a unique opportunity. You don’t have to be an interpreter as there are jobs out there where your CODA skills and culture awareness (including your maturity and exposure to responsibility) can catapult you into good influential roles. Be proud and be confident! You may start in a career in a job unrelated but if you rise within these roles you can use your influence to affect change for millions of people. CODAs have the empowerment to really make a difference to real social problems.”

“Dear former me,

First off, you are a wonderful KODA/CODA no matter what your dream is. It may feel stressful to feel like you need to work in the Deaf world but this is not true. Take a break from the community if you need it. It’s **okay!** You will then have the time to reflect and find your passion whether that’s in the Deaf world or not. Don’t feel guilty if you decide not to, there will be plenty

of opportunities to get involved that doesn't have to be work related. Remember you are still a CODA no matter what.

Love,
Older me."

"You don't have to take on everyone else's problems. You are not responsible for your parents communication needs. You don't have to be an interpreter. You don't need to feel guilty for having a life separate from the deaf world."

"1. Signing is a tool, do whatever you want but ASL is something you can use while you work for where you want to go.

2. Check in with your connections on social media, regional break outs and international conference.

3. There are always holes between the deaf world and hearing and you can help fill them.

4. Find peers and mentors."

"Go with the flow. Life will challenge you in ways you will not expect and cannot plan for. It's good to have goals and plans, but it's important to accept plans can change too and that's ok too."

"Just choose:

- what are your interests, find out about these and analyse
- Is it important to you to earn a lot of money or is it more important to you to feel happy and satisfied with your job
- think about job shadowing, story telling, volunteering or working over summer holidays"

"You are allowed to be who you want to be. Love yourself and enjoy growing up. Respect your parents and you don't have to compare yourself to your siblings."

"The journey is never straightforward. Look after yourself first. Aim, don't expect. It's ok to change your mind. Don't be afraid to **not** be responsible for others like Deaf parents."

"Work with Deaf mentors who are successful and passionate about what they do. Make time to celebrate your career achievements to boost your self esteem and confidence."

"Know that whatever job you choose, sign language could be part of your role."

"Make full use and take advantage of technology to support your chosen profession"

"Choose a job you really like - Deaf people are everywhere!"

Please note that the views represented in this document represent the informal views of a range of people and not the specific views of any particular CODA organisation.