

Excellent Legal Information on Deafness

Lucas, C. (Ed.). (2003). *Language and the Law in Deaf Communities*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. 188 pages. Hardcover. \$55.00.

Language and the Law in Deaf Communities is an absolutely outstanding book that is must reading for all attorneys and judges involved with deaf individuals in cases concerned with criminal law, school law, and disability law. It is equally important for educators and administrators in schools attended by disabled children, especially those who are deaf. In addition, deaf adults and parents of deaf children would be greatly helped by the information the authors provide.

The book covers the legal issues of one of the most neglected segments of the deaf population, those who are caught up in the criminal justice system. These individuals are routinely denied their basic legal rights. Despite the fact that most have limited English skills, they are expected to contend with the complexities of legal language and a criminal justice system they do not understand. Authors of national stature from the fields of psycholinguistics and the law address the linguistic and interpreting issues these deaf individuals face. The information is presented in clear English, supplemented by vivid examples that make the text understandable not only to attorneys, but also to laypersons not educated in the law.

The other major issue addressed in this book is disability law or, more specifically, federal and state laws that apply to deaf people in particular. This

section is written by Sarah Geer, an attorney with over two decades of legal experience with the Law Center for the Deaf at Gallaudet University and other public interest legal organizations. Attorney Geer traces the history of the law's treatment of deaf and other disabled groups. The emphasis is on the huge changes of the last 50 years. She takes this complex topic and relates the information with such clarity that it is readily understood by those lacking formal legal training. She buttresses her writing with examples that convey in human terms what the impact of ADA and related legislation has been on people who are deaf. Attorney Geer documents what she writes about with footnotes that provide excellent references for legal scholars who want to delve more deeply into the subject.

If *Language and the Law in Deaf Communities* is read as widely as it should be, individuals who are deaf will benefit greatly when involved with the judicial system. They will be far more likely to obtain justice when confronted with the necessity to deal with the legal aspects of criminal offenses, school issues, employment, and medical issues than is now the case.

McCay Vernon, National Deaf Academy