A Toolkit for Working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

Made possible by Access and Disability Services, Harper College and DeafTEC.

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About Harper College, Access and Disability Services

Access and Disability Services (ADS) works to provide the highest level of access and services, ensuring all students can equally participate in the great opportunities available at Harper College. ADS’ staff of seasoned professionals actively engages in opportunities to increase access, improve services to students, collaborate with faculty and staff, and coordinate multiple educational and social events throughout the year.

For any questions about Harper College’s Access and Disability Services, contact Jason Altmann at jaltmann@harpercollege.edu or visit http://goforward.harpercollege.edu/services/ads/.

About DeafTEC

The National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education program has provided funding to establish DeafTEC: Technological Education Center for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students. DeafTEC is located at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, one of nine colleges of Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, and serves as a resource for high schools and community colleges that educate deaf and hard-of-hearing students in STEM-related programs and for employers hiring deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.
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Introduction

Harper College’s Access and Disability Services’ Toolkit for Working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals is designed to help employers stay compliant, reduce risk and improve the overall experiences of Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees.

General Information: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Statistics

According to Johns Hopkins, there are 48 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in the United States of America. In the state of Illinois, there are an estimated 2 million people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; approximately half are located in the Chicago metropolitan area.\(^1\)

Community and Culture

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing community is diverse. There are variations in how a person becomes Deaf or Hard of Hearing, level of hearing, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and cultural identity.\(^2\)

Categorical labeling of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals is not recommended, especially as self-identification, or labeling, is a personal decision. This decision may reflect identification with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset.

Some individuals may identify as “late deafened,” indicating they became Deaf later in life. Others may identify as “DeafBlind,” which usually indicate they are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and have, at a minimum, some degree of limitations accessing visual information. Some people may use the term “hearing loss,” while this seems to be an all-inclusive and comprehensive term, some do not identify with this as they may have been born Deaf or Hard of Hearing and did not “lose” their hearing over time.

Over the years, the most commonly accepted terms have come to be “Deaf” and “Hard of Hearing.” However, the terms “deaf-mute,” “deaf and dumb,” and “hearing-impaired” continue to be used to describe Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Oftentimes, the use of these alternative terms is not by

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\(^1\) Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission: [https://www2.illinois.gov/idhhc/resources/Pages/HearingLossDemographics.aspx](https://www2.illinois.gov/idhhc/resources/Pages/HearingLossDemographics.aspx)

choice. Members of the community generally do not accept or use these terms to describe themselves. It is recommended to refrain from using these terms.

**Legal Responsibilities as an Employer**

As an employer, it is your legal responsibility to provide reasonable workplace accommodations for individuals with disabilities, including current and prospective deaf and hard of hearing employees.

Specifically, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits private employers, State and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. The ADA covers employers with 15 or more employees, including State and local governments.³

Collectively, employers are responsible to provide Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals with resources and accommodations to ensure effective communication occurs in the workplace.

**Mandate for Private Businesses Contracting with the Federal Government:**

Companies that contract with the Federal Government need to ensure that 7% of their national workforce is individuals with disabilities, pursuant to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.⁴

Hiring Deaf and Hard of Hearing people qualified for needed positions help such contracting companies fulfill the 7% mandate of Section 503 while ensuring that the work is done with the right skills.⁵

**Mandate for Federal Government Agencies:**

Pursuant to Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, all agencies of the Federal Government need to ensure that 12% of their national workforce is an individual with disabilities and 2% must be individuals with “targeted disabilities.” According to the EEOC, the definition of “targeted disabilities” includes “deafness or serious difficulty hearing.” Hiring qualified Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals would count toward the Section 501 mandates.⁶

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³ United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division: [https://www.ada.gov/ada_title_I.htm](https://www.ada.gov/ada_title_I.htm)

⁴ United States Department of Labor: [https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm](https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm)

⁵ United States Department of Labor: [https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm](https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm)

Financial Incentives for Hiring Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

Federal and state programs provide a business with either tax credits or other incentives to hire/retain individuals from specific target groups, including individuals with disabilities.

Federal

Employers who hire Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals can take advantage of several federal tax credits or deductions such as the Disabled Access Credit, Barrier Removal Tax Deduction, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

The United States Internal Revenue Service’s website has information about these benefits: https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/tax-benefits-for-businesses-who-have-employees-with-disabilities.

State

Additionally, there are several financial incentives the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) makes available to businesses that hire individuals with disabilities, including:

- DRS will provide sign language interpreters for interviews and up to the first 90 days of DRS' clients' employment.
- On the Job Evaluations (OJE) where wages are reimbursed to the employer for evaluating if an individual with a disability can perform the duties of a certain job.
- On the Job Training (OJT) where an employer is reimbursed a negotiated wage if an individual with a disability that they hire needs certain kinds of training.7

DRS' office locator can be found at http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12.

7 Illinois Department of Human Services: http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=52224
Recruiting Prospective Employees

Best Practices

Following are best practices to consider with improving recruiting efforts:

• Job postings and company’s website shall provide a way for Deaf and Hard of Hearing applicants to request communication accommodations for interviews.
• Make sure your environment is accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees. This includes making sure receptionists/security guards are aware Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals may be visiting the premises for an interview, etc., as well as making sure televisions and other devices displaying video content have captions turned on. If you are displaying your own video content, make sure these videos are captioned.
• Include people with disabilities in developing diversity recruitment goals and action plans, as well as partner with disability-related advocacy organizations.
• Establish internship opportunities and mentoring programs targeted at youth with disabilities, including those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
• Create VLOGs highlighting your current Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees and disseminate via social media channels frequented by Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.
• Collaborate with career centers at colleges and universities that have significant Deaf and Hard of Hearing populations (e.g., National Technical Institute of the Deaf, Gallaudet University, California State University, Northridge and Harper College).
• Diversify sourcing efforts to include hosting tables/booths at disability-related job fairs, sponsoring events or hosting learning opportunities to target audiences of the type(s) of candidates you’re actively seeking.
• To benefit DeafBlind candidates, eliminate having a driver’s license as a job requirement if driving is not an essential requirement of the job and accommodations can be provided if intermittent travel is needed or required.
• Make websites, including pages where individuals apply for jobs, accessible to DeafBlind individuals by making HTML accessible and adhering to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Organizational Resources

Following is a list of various organizations providing employees and employers with resources and support in recruiting efforts:

Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services
DRS seek to place Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, among other individuals with disabilities, in places of employment. DRS provides employees and employers with resources and support, including:

- **Interpreter Services** – DRS will provide sign language interpreters for interviews and up to the first 90 days of DRS’ clients’ employment.
- **Job Analysis** – DRS staff can work with you to assess the requirements of your jobs and match them to the skills of candidates. DRS can help identify appropriate accommodations and assistive technologies to "bridge the gap" between job needs and employee abilities.
- **Job Coaches** – DRS can provide job coaches to assist qualified individuals with disabilities in learning or re-learning how to perform their job.
- **Training** – DRS Rehabilitation Staff can provide trainings to employers on a local or statewide level, including topics related to disability awareness and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

More information can be found at [http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=52224](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=52224).

**JVS Chicago**

JVS Chicago serves more than 8,000 job seekers, employers and entrepreneurs annually. JVS Chicago supports employers by discovering qualified candidates, including those who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and providing a wide range of employer resources.

More information can be found at [https://www.jcfs.org/jvs](https://www.jcfs.org/jvs).

**Goodwill Industries**

Goodwill provides a number of programs to people with disabilities, including job placement and support services.

More information can be found at [http://www.goodwill.org/find-jobs-and-services](http://www.goodwill.org/find-jobs-and-services).

**Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL)**

Illinois is home to 22 Centers for Independent Living and 17 Center for Independent Living (CIL) satellite offices. As part of their work, CILs provide resources to advance employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

More information can be found at [http://www.incil.org](http://www.incil.org).
CSD Works Career Center

The CSD Works Career Center creates resources to help employers recruit, hire, and support Deaf employees, and provides Deaf job seekers with resources and support to find successful employment. The CSD Works Career Center is a hub that connects businesses, job seekers, and community organizations to advance employment outcomes for Deaf individuals.

More information can be found at https://www.csdworks.com.

Getting Hired

Getting Hired is a recruitment solution dedicated to helping inclusive employers hire professional individuals and veterans with disabilities.

More information can be found at https://www.gettinghired.com.

Bender Consulting Services, Inc.

Bender Consulting works with private sector and government employers to recruit, screen and hire people with disabilities for professional positions, such as business, accounting, IT, engineering, science, health care and many others.

More information can be found at https://www.benderconsult.com.

Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

There is no “one size fits all” approach to communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Each individual is unique and has their own set of communication needs and preferences. Oftentimes, these needs and preferences are based upon who is involved with communication, the setting of the interaction and the purpose of the interaction.

Determining effective communication needs to be a joint effort shared by the Deaf/Hard of Hearing individual and the hearing individual(s). It is critical assumptions not be made as to what the needs and preferences are; instead, it is a best practice to inquire directly with the Deaf/Hard of Hearing individual about their respective needs and preferences.

Common Myths and Misunderstandings

Myth: Hearing aids and cochlear implants will restore hearing to “normal.”
Fact: Each individual benefits differently from assistive devices. Some individuals can benefit from hearing aids and assistive devices that improve hearing and listening abilities. While some users are able to use a telephone or recognize music, others are only able to pick up on environmental sounds. In some cases, a hearing aid may not enable an individual to discriminate environmental sounds or clearly understand speech. It is important to remember that these devices do not enable a deaf individual to hear at “normal” hearing levels.

Myth: All Deaf and Hard of Hearing people can lip-read.

Fact: Only about 30% of English speech sounds are visible on the mouth under the best of conditions. Some of the factors that can go into lip-reading include residual hearing, watching body language and facial expressions, distance from the speaker and being aware of the topic under discussion. Communication or conversations may be easier one-on-one in a quiet setting, but more difficult in a group or in a noisy environment.

Myth: When an interpreter asks for clarification, it means the Deaf or Hard of Hearing person did not understand.

Fact: There are occasions where interpreters ask for clarification to help ensure they convey the message correctly. Sometimes interpreters will not disclose it is them who is asking for clarification, not the Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual. Thus, do not automatically conclude it is the Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual that does not understand what you shared.

General Tips for Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

Following are general tips to consider during interactions with Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals:

- It is important to discuss each individual’s communication needs and preferences to understand how to best support communication accessibility.
- Get the attention of the deaf individual before speaking. If the individual does not respond to the spoken name, a tap on shoulder or another visual signal is appropriate.
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace; do not yell or over enunciate.
- Look directly at the individual while speaking.
- Do not cover your mouth or look around while speaking.
- Avoid standing in front of a light source, which can make it difficult to see your face clearly.
• If you need to repeat, rephrase the thought. Some words are harder to understand than others; rephrasing allows for opportunities to understand what was previously missed.
• Use visual aids, gestures, and body language when appropriate.
• Do not be afraid to use pen and pencil or texting as a tool.
• Use open-ended questions to allow for more opportunities for both parties to check each other’s understanding of a topic.
• Don’t use Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual’s coworkers as interpreters.
• Make all notifications accessible by using email, texts, or instant messenger or another mode of accessible communication, as written forms of communication may not be accessible to DeafBlind individuals.
• To benefit DeafBlind individuals, printed communication shall utilize a clear ‘sans serif’ font, such as Arial, and in point 14 font-size or larger (may be contingent on individual’s needs and preferences).  

Tips and Strategies to Consider for Various Situations

Following are specific tips and strategies to consider in various situations:

Interviews

• Ask the candidate how they prefer to communicate during the interview.
• If requested, arrange for an interpreter or transcriber for the interview.
• Be aware that the candidate may speak for himself or herself, or the interpreter may voice what the candidate signs.
• During the interview, make eye contact with the candidate.
• Address your questions directly to the candidate, not the interpreter.
• Encourage the candidate to let you know if your communication is unclear and be prepared to rephrase if necessary.

Corporate & Company-Wide Communications

• Provide communication in accessible formats, including text and captioned/subtitled videos.
• Designate individuals to inform Deaf and Hard of Hearing employee(s) of any audio announcements.

Trainings

• Provide captioning for all training videos; transcripts do not provide a fully equitable experience for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.
• If internal staff or contractors conduct training, provide sign language interpreter(s) and/or real-time captioning (e.g., CART). If training is done at

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an external location where a fee is required to attend, the conference and/or training provider is responsible to provide reasonable accommodations.

**Workspace & IT Setup**

- Discuss an employee’s workspace to determine needs for signaling systems, video phones, amplified phones, captioned phones and any other needed accommodations.
- Provide appropriate computer applications to allow for instantaneous communications (e.g., instant messenger).
- Install convex mirrors to allow pedestrians to see what's coming down hidden corridors.

**Colleague Communication & Department Awareness**

- Create an environment where the Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual can share their preferred communication method(s).
- Educate colleagues on cultural sensitivity, best practices for communication and proper etiquette to get a Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual’s attention.
- Offer sign language classes taught by fluent Deaf and Hard of Hearing signers.

**Meetings**

- Select a space that will provide the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing employee(s) with good visual access, with ample lighting and in direct line of sight if there is a primary speaker.
- Pursuant to the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing employee(s) communication preferences, provide sign language interpreter(s) and/or real-time captioning (e.g., CART).
- Establish ground rules for communication, including turn-taking rules and anyone talking should state their name before talking.
- Provide an agenda, presentation handouts and other written materials.
- Use round or oval tables for group discussions.

**Corporate/Department Events**

- Select a space that will provide the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing employee(s) with good visual access, with ample lighting and in direct line of sight if there is a primary speaker.
- On event communications/promotions, stipulate how accommodations can be requested.
- Automatically provide sign language interpreter(s) and real-time captioning to benefit all; if this is not done, these should be provided.
pursuant to the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing employee’s communication preferences.

• Provide captioning for all videos shown; transcripts do not provide a fully equitable experience for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.
• Provide nametags for group interactions with unfamiliar people.

**Emergencies**

• Implement appropriate signaling systems (e.g., flashing lights) that accompany any alarms that may sound.
• For emergency announcements made over a speaker or intercom, utilize a buddy system to ensure the employee gets the message.
• Utilize text and email emergency alerts.
• During orientation, advise new employees of evacuation plans and procedures in place.

**Personnel Management**

• Ensure open enrollment documents, outreach and media materials are accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.
• Provide sign language interpreters and/or real-time captioning during performance assessments (i.e. annual reviews) and open enrollment discussions.
• Provide equitable opportunities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals to advance within your organization. This includes sharing information about promotions, professional development and training opportunities in accessible formats to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

**Accommodations**

Pursuant to the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing employee(s) communication needs and preferences, a combination of the following accommodations should be offered to ensure effective communication in the workplace:

**Sign Language interpreters**

Pursuant to the Illinois Interpreter for the Deaf Act of 2007, sign language interpreters are required to have a license to provide services, unless an exemption applies.

Licenses are based on proficiency levels and determine which interpreting assignments an interpreter can accept.⁹

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⁹ Joint Committee on Administrative Rules: http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/068/068015150000900R.html
Provisional: Red

Provisional License Interpreters with a valid provisional license may appropriately interpret in the following employment settings:

- Job Coaching
- Employment Training/Workshops

General-Intermediate: Yellow

Interpreters with a valid license with an intermediate proficiency level may appropriately interpret in the following employment settings:

- Staff Meetings
- Training
- All settings appropriate to a provisional license

General-Advanced: Green

Advanced Proficiency Level Interpreters with a valid license with an advanced proficiency level are appropriate to interpret the following employment settings:

- Interviews
- Hiring
- Firing
- Performance Evaluations
- Discipline
- All settings appropriate for provisional licensees and licensees with intermediate proficiency levels.

General-Master: Silver

Master Proficiency Level Interpreters with a valid license with a master proficiency level may interpret in all settings appropriate for provisional licensees and licensees with intermediate and advanced proficiency levels.

Closed captioning

Closed captioning (CC) and subtitling are both processes of displaying text on a television, video screen, or other visual display to provide additional or interpretive information.

CART or real-time captioning

Communication access real-time translation (CART) is where a trained operator transcribes spoken speech into written text. Remote CART is done with the trained operator at a remote location where a voice connection such as a telephone, cellphone, or computer microphone is used to send the voice to the operator, and the real-time text is transmitted back over a modem, Internet, or
other data connection.

Induction Loop Systems

A hearing loop (sometimes called an audio induction loop) is a special type of sound system for use by people with hearing aids and cochlear implants (not all devices are compatible with hearing loops). This system consists of a loop wire that goes around the listening area and provides a magnetic, wireless signal that is picked up by a hearing aid or cochlear implant.

Alerting & Notification Systems

Signaling systems are devices designed to alert everyone - Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or hearing - of different events around the workplace. These devices include fire/smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, door and window signalers, telephone signalers and paging devices. Hearing people, as well as Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, can benefit from the flashing lights, loud alarms and/or vibration alarms.

Amplified Phones

Amplified phones are specifically designed for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, allowing you to turn up the volume as necessary to hear speech clearly.

Captioned Phones

Captioned telephones display spoken words as text, usually via recognition technology. Services are funded through a federal program and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) oversees the program.

Relay Conference Captioning (RCC)

RCC is a service that provides functional equivalency to Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants in conference calls and/or multi-party calls. The service uses captioners that deliver real-time text streamed to an Internet-connected computer. During captioned conference calls, participants can follow along with the dialogue by reading real-time captions.

Video Relay Service (VRS)

VRS enables Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment, rather than through typed text. Video relay calls are made using a
high-speed or broadband Internet connection (i.e., DSL, cable, or T1 line) and a videophone connected to a TV, or through a personal computer equipped with a Web camera and video relay software. The person who is deaf signs to a video interpreter who then communicates with a hearing person via a standard phone line by relaying the conversation between the two parties. Services are funded through a federal program and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) oversees the program.

Video Remote Interpreter/Interpreting Services (VRI)

Video interpreting is a service that uses web-based technology for on-demand access to remote sign language interpreting services. Using video interpreting, an individual who signs can access remote interpreting services using a computer, webcam, and a high-speed broadband connection. The employer is responsible to pay for VRI services. Some consumers have had adverse experiences with this technology; it is critical to note that discretion to use VRI shall be given to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

Voice Carry Over (VCO)

VCO allows Deaf or Hard of Hearing users to speak directly to hearing people. Contingent on the device used to make the phone call, a relay operator or sign language interpreter will translate what the hearing person is saying to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing caller. The operator or interpreter’s presence is generally unknown to the hearing caller. Services are funded through a federal program and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) oversees the program.

Alerting Device

An alerting device can be used to notify a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person about sounds in the environment. An individual can be alerted to sounds like a telephone ringing, a doorbell or an emergency alarm, through vibration or a light signal. A transmitter detects certain sounds and then sends a signal to a receiver that vibrates or blinks a light.

Assistive Listening Device or System (ALD/S)

An ALD is a type of assistive technology that enables an individual who benefits from amplification to focus directly on the sound source, reducing distractions from background noises that can make it difficult to concentrate during a conversation. ALD types include personal assistive listening devices, small and large area FM systems, infrared, and induction loop technologies.
Directional Worker Alert System

A directional worker alert system alerts pedestrians and other drivers that a forklift is coming. This wall mounted device employs a photo-sensor that sends out a red light beam to detect a reflective strip mounted on the forklift. The warning is activated when a forklift or other vehicle passes the alert system.

Screen Magnifier

DeafBlind individuals may benefit from a screen magnifier, a software application that can magnify all items on a screen, including the mouse pointer, text cursor, icons, buttons, and title bars.

Screen Readers

Dependent on residual hearing and ability to clearly understand speech, DeafBlind individuals may benefit from screen readers. These devices speak letters, words, numbers, punctuation, and elements aloud, sending the voice output to computer speakers or connected headphones.

Refreshable Braille Display

DeafBlind individuals may benefit from having refreshable braille display, a tactile device that electronically raises and lowers pins in different combinations to display braille characters. A refreshable braille display (RBD) is wirelessly paired with a computer, tablet or smart phone to provide braille access to text that is being displayed on a screen.

Agency Contacts

Sign Language Interpreting Agencies

Local sign language interpreting agencies (listed alphabetically) are as follows:

CAIRS
4801 Southwick Drive, Suite 610
Matteson, IL 60443
Phone: (312) 895-4300
Website: http://www.cairs.net

Center For Sight & Hearing
8038 MacInosh Ln
Rockford, IL 61107
Website: https://cshni.org

Chicago Hearing Society
1444 W Willow St
Chicago, IL 60642
Phone: (773) 248-9121
Website: http://www.chicagohearingsociety.org

Professional Interpreting Enterprise (PIE)
6510 W Layton Ave # 2
Greenfield, WI 53220
Phone: (414) 282-8115
Website: http://pieinc-wi.com
You can also contract interpreters direct. A list of Illinois licensed interpreters and contact information is on Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission’s website: https://www.illinois.gov/idhhc/licensure/pages/directoryhome.aspx.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Providers

Current VRI providers (listed alphabetically) include:

- **CODA Brothers Interpreting**
  880 Blue Gentian Rd STE 250
  Eagan, MN 55121
  Phone Number: (612) 424-2751
  E-mail: info@codabrothers.com
  Website: http://codabrothers.com

- **Deaf Link**
  14400 Northbrook Dr. Ste. 200
  San Antonio, TX 78232
  Phone Number: (210) 590-7446
  Email: info@deaflink.com
  Website: http://www.deaflink.com

- **Partners Interpreting**
  60 Man-Mar Drive #5
  Plainville, MA 02762
  Phone Number: (508) 699-1477
  E-mail: services@partnersinterpreting.com
  Website: www.partnersinterpreting.com

- **Purple Communications, Inc.**
  595 Menlo Drive
  Rocklin, CA 95765
  Phone Number: (800) 618-2418
  Website: https://purplevrs.com

- **Stratus Video**
  33 N. Garden Ave Suite 1000
  Clearwater, FL 33755
  Phone Number (727) 451-9766
  E-mail: ContactUs@stratusvideo.com
  Website: https://www.stratusvideo.com/

Video Relay Service (VRS) Providers

Current VRS providers (listed alphabetically) are as follows:

- **Convo Communications, LLC**
  3815 S Capital of Texas Hwy
  Austin, TX 78704
  E-mail: support@convorelay.com
  Phone Number: (510) 629-5622
  Website: https://www.convorelay.com

- **Global VRS**
  3700 Commerce Blvd
  Kissimmee, FL 34741
  Voice: (877) 326-3877
  Email: help@globalvrs.com
  Website: https://globalvrs.com
Purple Communications, Inc.
595 Menlo Drive
Rocklin, CA 95765
Phone Number: (877) 885-3172
Website: https://purplevrs.com/

Sorenson Communications, Inc.
4192 South Riverboat Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84123
Phone Number: (801) 287-9461
Websites: https://www.sorenson.com

ZVRS (CSDVRS)
595 Menlo Drive
Rocklin, CA 95765
Phone Number: (916) 663-6914
Website: https://www.zvrs.com/

Captioning Agencies

Local captioning agencies (listed alphabetically) are as follows:

Alternative Communication Services LLC
P.O. Box 278
Lombard, IL 60148
Phone: 800-335-0911
E-mail: info@acscaptions.com
Website: http://www.acscaptions.com/

Caption Access
2707 Three Oaks,
#942, Cary, IL 60013
Phone: 847.829.4423
E-mail: contact@captionaccess.com
Website: www.captionaccess.com

Caption Consulting
Phone: (312) 725-3586
Mobile: (847) 609-6815
E-mail: dawn@captionconsulting.com
Website: http://www.captionconsulting.com

Telephone Captioning Providers

Current telephone captioning providers (listed alphabetically) are as follows:

ClearCaptions, LLC
3001 Lava Ridge Court Suite 100
Roseville, CA 95661
Phone Number: (916) 274-8429
Website: http://www.clearcaptions.com

Hamilton Relay, Inc.
1006 12th Street
Aurora, NE 68818
Phone Number: (402) 694-5101
Website: https://www.hamiltonrelay.com

InnoCaption
2913-C Saturn Street
Brea, California 92821
Telephone Number: 703-865-5553
Email: cristinaduarte@innocaption.com
Website: https://www.innocaption.com

Sprint
P.O. Box 29230
Shawnee Mission, KS 66201
Phone Number: 913-315-8521
Email: sprint.trscustserv@sprint.com
Website: https://www.sprintrelay.com
Aligning Your Organization to Support Needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

Setting up the right framework

Supporting the needs of all people with disabilities, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, requires setting up the correct framework to embrace diversity and inclusion as an organizational standard. As part, all businesses should have policies and procedures to inform staff, management, customers and service providers on how the business shall be run.

Specifically, businesses shall:

- Commit to uphold equal employment legislation, anti-discrimination policies, diversity and inclusion programs and training.
- Create an environment to eliminate Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees’ communication challenges in the workplace – this includes establishing the expectation that communication accessibility for all should be the standard and appropriate action will be taken to address challenges.
- Establish a daily bulletin in email or blog format to ensure Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals are not missing out on pertinent information being discussed.
- Regularly review recruitment procedures to ensure hiring, advancement and employment policies and procedures are equitable, up-to-date and inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Provide employees with specific information via accessible formats (e.g., text and/or video with captions/subtitles) pertaining to legislation, company policies and procedures, and relevant contact details if employees have questions.
- Incorporate disability awareness as a part of Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.
- Consider implementing a centralized accommodations funding mechanism to pay for accommodations as opposed to forcing a division of the business to absorb these costs.

Assessing the Current Workforce

Before you can develop action plans to implement change, you need to proactively understand and capture Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees’ needs, experiences and challenges.
This includes working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing communication access expert(s) to conduct stakeholder assessments and review of existing policies and procedures.

Stakeholder assessments may include focus groups and 1:1 interviews designed to gauge Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees’ satisfaction and experiences at your organization. This should include all facets of the employment process, including their onboarding experience.

A regular review of existing policies of procedures, including communication access policies, is critical to ensure your organization stays compliant, reduces risk and improves the overall experiences of Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients and companions.

Implementing Structure

After conducting the internal assessments, the communication access expert should develop comprehensive recommendations for changes with existing policies and procedures, strategic initiatives to consider (i.e., affinity group strategic planning and development) and implementation of accommodations to ensure communication accessibility and inclusion are standards at your company.

Organizations are impacted every day by the need to be accessible to and inclusive of people with disabilities, including those who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Taking a proactive approach in implementing structure that addresses potential issues before they appear is a favorable approach. Collectively, this approach will further demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion and accessibility for all. These help make your organization a better place to work and increase employee productivity while achieving compliance and reducing risk, as well as increasing the bottom line.

Training

Research has shown inclusive and diverse teams fuel organizational growth and organizations that do not promote and embrace diversity fall out of favor with potential clients and customers.

While organizations claim to value diversity, the conflicts between aspirations and reality are prevalent with values pertaining to inclusiveness. A New York Times study revealed a significant gap between disabled and non-disabled candidates, with employers being 34 percent less likely to hire an experienced job candidate with a disability.¹⁰

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This study suggests what Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals have experienced firsthand and suggests the prevalent need to address the numerous benefits associated with employing and appropriately accommodating Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

Training is an essential part of ensuring your organization is prepared to hire and employ people with all types of disabilities. Training allows you to reinforce and supplement efforts to embrace diversity and inclusion and promote the need for creating accessible environments for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, as well as all people with disabilities. Various learning opportunities allow people to learn about disabilities and debunk myths, and shall include Deaf awareness and cultural trainings, anti-bias trainings and promote disability awareness as a component of diversity and inclusion efforts. Collectively, these will lead to a more cohesive and productive workplace where employees of all abilities are comfortable working with each other.

**Additional Resources**

There are many elements to promoting workplace accessibility and inclusion for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, as well as people with disabilities. Following are useful websites for employers:

**Deaf and Hard of Hearing Related**

**DeafTEC**

DeafTEC provides information for employers to help create an accessible workplace for deaf and hard-of-hearing workers. Resources include strategies for recruiting, interviewing, training, and retaining technically skilled deaf and hard-of-hearing employees.

More information can be found at [http://deaftec.org/employers](http://deaftec.org/employers).

DeafTEC’s free online course providing employers with valuable information on how to interact with people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing can be found at [http://workingtogether.deaftec.org](http://workingtogether.deaftec.org).

**DeafBlind Related**

**Helen Keller National Center**

Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) provides training and resources exclusively to people age 16 and over who have combined vision and hearing loss; Students across the country travel to the headquarter in New York for an on-campus training in assistive technology, vocational services, orientation and
mobility, communication and independent living; regional offices are also located around the country to bring HKNC resources to communities.

More information can be found at [https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc](https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc).

**Chicago Lighthouse**

Chicago Lighthouse (CLH) is a not-for-profit agency providing educational, clinical, vocational and rehabilitation services for children, youth and adults who are blind or visually impaired, including deaf-blind and multi-disabled.

More information can be found at [https://chicagolighthouse.org/](https://chicagolighthouse.org/).

**iCanConnect**

iCanConnect, also known as the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, is a federal program administered at local levels in the United States. In Illinois, this program is administered by the CLH, and provides individuals with combined hearing and vision loss with access to telephone, advanced communications and information services.

More information can be found at [http://icanconnect.org](http://icanconnect.org).

**Chicagoland DeafBlind Alliance**

The Chicago DeafBlind Alliance shares various resources for Chicago’s DeafBlind community and regularly distributes emails to subscribers.

More information can be found at [http://chicagodeafblind.org](http://chicagodeafblind.org).

**General**

**ADA.gov**

The ADA website provides access to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations for businesses and State and local governments, technical assistance materials, ADA Standards for Accessible Design, links to Federal agencies with ADA responsibilities and information, updates on new ADA requirements, streaming video, information about Department of Justice ADA settlement agreements, consent decrees and enforcement activities.

More information can be found at [https://www.ada.gov](https://www.ada.gov).

**The ADA National Network**

The ADA National Network provides information, guidance and training on how to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in order to support the
mission of the ADA to “assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.” Funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), the network consists of 10 Regional ADA Centers located throughout the United States and an ADA Knowledge Translation Center (ADAKTC).

More information can be found at https://adata.org.

Department of Justice

The Department of Justice provides specific information about ADA requirements affecting public accommodations and State and local government services contact.

More information can be found at https://www.justice.gov/.

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)

The US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, offers EARN to help employers recruit, hire, retain and advance people with disabilities. The website also offers a variety of resources to assist state and federal government agencies in making their workforces more inclusive and reflective of the citizens they serve.

More information can be found at https://www.dol.gov/odep/resources/EARN.htm.

Employer Hiring Credits

The Illinois workNet Center website shares information about financial incentives available to small and medium-sized businesses in Illinois that can help employers cover accommodation costs for employees or customers with disabilities.

More information can be found at https://www.illinoisworknet.com/Jobs/Pages/HiringCredits.aspx.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) outlines guidance and general information regarding Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, disclosing and handling medical information, and accommodations.
Federal Communications Commission

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provides specific information about ADA requirements for telecommunications.

More information can be found at https://www.fcc.gov.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.

More information can be found at https://askjan.org.

U.S. Business Leadership Network

USBLN (U.S. Business Leadership Network) unites business around disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace. USBLN has more than 130 corporate partners spanning the technology, healthcare, financial, transportation, entertainment, and retail industries. USBLN serves as a collective voice of nearly 50 Business Leadership Network Affiliates across the United States, representing over 5,000 businesses. USBLN has various nationally recognized tools and programs, such as the Disability Equality Index and the leading disability-owned business enterprise (DOBE) certification program, to bridge inclusive companies with people and organizations within the disability community.

More information can be found at http://www.usbln.org.

Veterans’ Employment & Training Service

There are numerous resources available to help employers in their Veterans hiring efforts, but not all employers know where to find them and whether they are reputable. In response, the U.S. Department of Labor has compiled the following list of free, vetted tools and resources to keep at your fingertips.

More information can be found at https://www.dol.gov/vets/ahaw/Resources.htm#Resources.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines is developed through the W3C process in cooperation with individuals and organizations around the world, with a goal of providing a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organizations, and governments internationally.

More information can be found at https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/.

Talent Acquisition Portal (TAPability)

The Talent Acquisition Portal® (TAP) is led by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and The National Employment Team (NET) in partnership with disABLEDperson, Inc. TAP is an online system which includes both a national talent pool of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) candidates looking for employment and a job posting system for businesses looking to hire individuals with disabilities.

More information can be found at http://www.tapability.org.

University of Washington

This website offers various videos and tutorials sharing best practices for how to interact with different types of disabilities.

More information can be found at https://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/faculty/faculty-resources/tips-for-working-with-different-disabilities.