

ABOUT HEARING DISABILITIES

No two people with a hearing loss experience the loss in exactly the same way. There are several types of hearing loss and various factors that determine the impact that the hearing loss has on language development. A person may be born deaf or become deaf due to an accident or illness later in life. If the age of onset occurs before the acquisition of language and the development of speech (by roughly two years of age), the individual may have language-based deficiencies that interfere with language syntax and vocabulary that is auditory-based. Because the usual way of acquiring language through auditory means is affected by hearing loss, visual learning of language takes the place of auditory learning. Deaf people vary widely in their hearing and language abilities. Understanding the nature and extent of the hearing loss and how it affects the student is imperative in providing appropriate accommodations. Often the best source of learning what accommodations are needed is to ask the student or contact OFFICE. Although the staff will not be able to disclose information related to the student, they can discuss types of hearing loss and how it may impact some students.

People who are culturally Deaf are members of a distinct linguistic and cultural minority. The members of this cultural group use American Sign Language (ASL) as their first language. Therefore, members of this cultural group are bilingual, and English is their second language. As with any cultural group, Deaf people have their own values, social norms, and traditions. Be sensitive and attentive to cross-cultural information in the mainstreamed classroom setting. Culturally Deaf students may use American Sign Language interpreters in the classroom setting.

SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASL AND ENGLISH

There are many linguistic differences between English and American Sign Language (ASL). As you evaluate your student's work, keep in mind that students whose primary language is ASL may unwittingly follow some of the linguistic characteristics of that language when writing in English. Some examples of the linguistic differences between English and ASL include:

Plurals are signified in a variety of ways in ASL, whereas English adds an "s" on nouns and verbs.

In ASL, the adjective is usually after the noun, whereas in English, the reverse is true.

In English, verbs can indicate past, present or future. In ASL, only one form of verbs is used by establishing the timeframe first, and then all verbs will remain in that tense until the signer changes the timeframe.

One sign in ASL can have several different meanings in English, just as one word in English can be translated into several different ASL signs.

ASL does not have the verb "to be," but indicates this information in other ways, by use of non-manual markers.

COMMUNICATING WITH DEAF STUDENTS

Deaf students use a variety of techniques when communicating with others. For example, some students may wear hearing aids and use them in combination with their speechreading skills to access information. It is important to note that even the most highly skilled speech readers usually comprehend only 30% of what is said, and fill in the rest with contextual cues. Students who rely on speechreading frequently miss comments from other class members and have difficulty understanding instructors who cover their lips, face the chalkboard, move around the classroom, or have facial hair.

People who use hearing aids usually do not hear sounds as others do. Hearing aids amplify all sounds including background noises such as loud air conditioners, hissing fluorescent light fixtures, and traffic noise. This can be overwhelming to the hearing aid user. Sometimes people use hearing aids only to detect environmental cues because speech is perceived as jumbled and disjointed.

A cochlear implant is very different from a hearing aid. A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device that is surgically implanted to provide a sense of sounds to a person with a hearing loss. Cochlear implants bypass damaged portions of the ear and directly stimulate the auditory nerve. Signals generated by the implant are sent by way of the auditory nerve to the brain, which recognizes the signals as sound. The implant consists of an external portion that sits behind the ear and a second portion that is surgically placed under the skin. Hearing through a cochlear implant is different from normal hearing and takes time to learn or relearn. However, it allows many people to recognize warning signals or understand other sounds in the environment, and can sometimes assist in understanding conversations with others.

Often deaf students require assistance in order to communicate effectively with faculty. For students who utilize sign language as a means to communicate, an interpreter may be necessary to convey spoken speech to the deaf student. Some students, primarily those who do not use sign language, will use speech-to-text services to display the spoken words in text format. These services include C-Print®, TypeWell®, and communication access real-time translation (CART) or similar systems. With the advent of new technology, some postsecondary institutions are turning to remote services to save on costs or even find a service provider for rural areas which may not always have them readily available.

In addition, there are other options students may use such as Cued Speech or oral Interpreting. Cued Speech is a visual mode of communication that uses different handshapes and placements in combination with the mouth movements to make the phonemes of language look different from each other. Oral interpreters facilitate spoken communication and use speech and speechreading as their primary mode of communication. The oral interpreter silently mouths

sentences to the deaf person and may change words or phrases, as needed, to ones that are easier to speechread.

During lectures, some deaf students may need to have the instructor's speech amplified by an assistive listening device (ALD). This requires the instructor to wear a small wireless microphone that is compatible with the student's hearing aids. The assistive listening device is usually provided to the student through OFFICE. Other students may need to audiotape lectures so that they can play the tape back at a higher volume. Most deaf students will likely need note-taking services as it is difficult to focus on the interpreter and/or the instructor while simultaneously taking notes. Deaf students may receive information using a combination of methods, such as through an assistive listening device and speech-to-text transcription, or through an interpreter and a classroom note taker.

Telephone communication for deaf students is no longer an obstacle. Most deaf individuals have access to a video phone which allows them to utilize a Video Relay System (VRS) to make calls. Video relay calls are placed over a high-speed internet connection through a videophone connected to a TV monitor or through a personal computer with a web camera. The deaf user sees an ASL interpreter on the monitor and signs to the interpreter, who then calls the hearing user via a standard phone line and relays the conversation between them. Hearing callers also may initiate a VRS call by calling the student's 10-digit number. The Video Interpreter (VI) will answer and inform you of their number and then place the call for you. Training for those who are interested in using VRS is available through OFFICE.

Telecommunications Relay Service, also known as TRS, Relay Service, or IP-Relay is an operator service that allows deaf people to place calls to standard telephone users via a keyboard or assistive device. Originally, relay services were designed to be connected through a TTY (TDD) or another assistive telephone device. Services have gradually expanded to include almost any generic connected device such as a personal computer, laptop, mobile phone, PDA, or other devices. Voice callers can now access the service with a universal number: 711. After dialing 711, the caller will hear instructions necessary to reach a deaf caller.

Training using relay is available through OFFICE. When contacting deaf students, faculty may choose to use either a relay or a video relay service. Both make it possible for instructors in postsecondary settings to contact deaf students regarding any class changes or cancellations. These students also can use the service to contact instructors when necessary. Email is also an effective way to communicate with deaf students, as is instant messaging.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACULTY

Cooperate with Access Services to provide authorized accommodations and support services in a fair and timely manner.

Meet with the deaf student, when necessary, to discuss access services and accommodations. If needed, contact Access Services to arrange for an interpreter prior to conferencing with the student.

Provide reasonable accommodations based on authorized recommendations by Access Services.

The student's documentation of his or her disability is confidential information, so it cannot be shared with anyone outside of Access Services, including faculty or other staff. It is permissible to ask the student how the learning process is occurring. Having the student describe how he or she learns best might be helpful.

Arrange with the student the needed accommodations in class.

Expect the student to be responsible for the same course content as all the other students in the class.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

Self-identify to Access Services and provide documentation of disability as early in the advisement period as possible.

Request accommodations for disability services.

Consult with Access Services to determine specific accommodation needs.

Meet with faculty member, when necessary, to discuss accommodations.

Maintain the same responsibility for academic standards, attendance, participation and behavior as is required of all students.

Give timely notification of any needs for reasonable accommodations, i.e.: interpreter or note taker, for special events such as field trips, extra class sessions.

Notify Access Services if expected to be absent from class or when schedule changes are announced. The interpreter, note taker, and speech-to-text provider are not a substitute for class attendance, nor are they responsible for student's missed classroom time.

(Add specific policies from INSTITUTION that affect a student's attendance and punctuality when using these accommodations.)

Self-advocate appropriately through Access Services for classroom/campus support.

CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Sign language interpreters and speech-to-text providers are essential components of communication access in a classroom. Although there are some strategies that are unique to each profession, the guidelines listed below can promote effective communication, no matter what service is provided.

Remember to communicate directly with the deaf student.

When using a demonstration and visual aids, hearing students are not able to listen to the instructor and, at the same time, watch what is being explained. Brief but frequent pauses while using visual aids and demonstration are appreciated by the service provider and the deaf student. Doing this will allow the student time to see what is being said and then watch the demonstration. Most likely students in the classroom who are trying to take notes also will appreciate these pauses.

It always helps to write general class announcements on the board to make sure all involved are aware of the change.

Writing new vocabulary words on the board or overhead, or sharing notes with the interpreter prior to the class is helpful.

Question and answer periods may create challenges for effective communication. Allowing one person to talk at a time enables the service provider to identify who is talking.

It is useful for the service provider and the instructor to become acquainted at the beginning of a course. At that time, questions involving these guidelines and other points may be discussed.

Remember, service providers are ethically bound to convey everything you and the other students say. The deaf student has the right to hear everything, just as hearing students do.

The service provider is there to facilitate communication, not evaluate the teacher or the student.

Disagreements with service providers, if they occur, should be discussed in private away from the student and if not resolved, brought to the attention of Access Services.

Working with an Interpreter

An interpreter's role is to provide communication access between a deaf student and hearing persons who do not use sign language. The interpreter signs what is being spoken, and voices what is being signed. As an instructor working with deaf students, you may have the new experience of teaching with an interpreter at your side. In the beginning, this new experience may seem a bit strange, but adjustment to the situation will be easier if you bear in mind the following guidelines:

Generally, the interpreter will stand beside you or sit at the front of the classroom. This enables the student to maintain eye contact with both you and the interpreter. This is important for good student/instructor rapport.

Wherever the interpreter stands or sits, there must be good lighting.

The interpreter will sometimes need to adjust to your pace, and sometimes it will be necessary for you to adjust to the pace of the interpreter. This is to ensure that the student receives your message in full. The interpreter will let you know if you need to modify your pace.

For classes with small groups of students, arranging the chairs in a semi-circle allows students to see each other, which may have a positive impact on student involvement in class discussions.

Please inform the interpreter when an off-campus activity such as a field trip or a class meeting will occur so that s/he can make sure that OFFICE is aware of the plan. Students are responsible for requesting a service provider (interpreter or speech-to-text provider), if needed. However, often times, students are not aware of specifics/details related to trips and/or changes in the regular class meetings which will require information from the instructor.

When using a projector, videos, slides, or films, it is sometimes necessary to reduce or turn off classroom lights. Please advise the interpreter beforehand so s/he can bring a small lamp for better illumination and visibility.

Sign language does not contain signs for every word in the English language, especially specialized jargon. Usually the interpreter will have to fingerspell such words using the manual alphabet.

Because they need to focus on the interpreter, deaf students may have difficulty taking their own notes in class. Another student in the class may volunteer or be hired as a note taker for the deaf student. It also might be helpful to share a copy of your notes or lecture outline with the student.

The interpreter will interpret faithfully, conveying the content and spirit of the teacher. He or she will not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions. Interpreters follow a "Code of Professional Conduct" which involves a strict confidentiality policy.

The interpreter works with the instructor, but it is not his/her responsibility to teach, take roll, discipline, keep records, or see that the student is in class or lab.

It is the student's responsibility to pay attention to the teacher and the interpreter.

Working with a Speech-to-Text Provider

A speech-to-text provider's role is to provide communication access between a deaf student and hearing persons via the typed word using a computerized abbreviation system.

Speech-to-text providers cannot honor requests to refrain from captioning/transcribing parts of lectures, conversations, or instructions.

The speech-to-text provider occupies the space of one (1) person and may need access to an electrical outlet. In some classes, there may be two (2) speech-to-text providers assigned due to the duration of the class or the difficulty of the lecture.

The speech-to-text provider is not a student of the class and should not participate in the class activities or discussions.

The speech-to-text provider does not tutor the student and is not permitted to discuss anything about the student with the instructor or other students in the class.

If the student fails to show up for class 10 minutes after the class has begun, the speech-to-text provider will discretely leave the classroom.

The speech-to-text provider should be provided with a copy of the course syllabus and any course handouts throughout the semester. This will enable them to be familiar with vocabulary related to the course.

Speech-to-text providers are generally quiet and cause little distraction. However, any distractions caused by the novelty of having a service provider in the class will quickly wear off.

Speech-to-text providers follow a “Code of Ethics” which involves a strict confidentiality policy.

Working with a Remote Interpreter

There is a critical shortage of sign language interpreters across the nation. Postsecondary institutions may utilize remote services in order to fill the institutional need. Video remote interpreting (VRI) is a strategy for providing sign language interpreting via videoconferencing technology instead of on-site interpreting. VRI works by using videoconferencing equipment in the classroom as well as where the interpreter is located. The interpreter uses a headset to hear what the professor says. As the professor speaks, the interpreter signs everything said to a web camera. When the deaf person replies via their web camera, the interpreter sees and voices the interpretation. The deaf person and the hearing person can talk back and forth, just as if the interpreter was in the same room. For more information about VRI or to see if it is offered at contact Access Services.

Working with a Remote Speech-to-Text Service Provider

The use of remote speech-to-text services is increasing in use by postsecondary institutions. Remote services allow campuses without access to local service providers to better meet the needs of students. Many students prefer the feeling of independence and the provider can be located far away from the lecture site, even in another state. The lecturer wears a microphone and the speech is sent over the internet to the transcriber. The transcriber's transcript is sent back over the internet to the reader at the lecture site.