

Basics for Working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

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First, when beginning to work with those from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) community, make sure that you, as an instructor, are aware of the resources in your local community that help support Deaf and HOH individuals. Some local resources to check for include schools for the Deaf and interpretation services. Also, make sure your event is posted early enough that you have time to make accommodations for your participants. Accommodations may include an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, monitors to project people/images or documents, and closed captioning just to name a few.



To start a conversation with a Deaf person, tap them lightly on the shoulder or hand to get their attention. When using an ASL interpreter, be sure to make eye contact with the Deaf person and not the ASL interpreter. Deaf and HOH individuals can choose to communicate in a variety of ways. Some may choose to use ASL, speak, use paper and pencil, read lips, or use technology like videophones and tablets.

Keep in mind that ASL is different from English. Not every word in English has a sign in ASL. Words often need to be spelled out in ASL. If you are normally a person that speaks quickly, you may want to practice slowing down to ensure your ideas and thoughts are being fully expressed and received.