

Resources for Supporting Individuals who identify as Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind

Face masks and physical distancing during the COVID-19 response have added to existing barriers that individuals who identify as deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing face when accessing public services. This document provides tips, general resources and COVID-19-related resources to help providers support deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing individuals.

Providing a reasonable accommodation

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) requires that state and local governments and organizations providing services to the public provide reasonable accommodations to people with communication disabilities (people who have vision, hearing and speech disabilities) to ensure equally effective communication among people of all abilities. Under the ADA, a covered organization that offers any goods, services or opportunities to the public must provide reasonable accommodations to make such goods or services accessible to all individuals. A reasonable accommodation for an individual who identifies as deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing may include sign language interpretation or an assistive listening technology to enable effective communication between the individual seeking services and the provider. It is important to determine which type of accommodation will best support the needs of the individual because one size does **not** fit all. Ask the individual which type of accommodation they would prefer. Types of reasonable accommodations for individuals who identify as deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing may include:

- [American Sign Language \(ASL\)](#): ASL is the most widely used language by individuals who identify as Deaf in North America. ASL is communicated through body, face and hand movements. ASL has similar linguistic properties as other spoken languages; however, ASL grammar differs from English grammar.
- [Communication Access Realtime Translation \(CART\)](#): A form of translation that transcribes and translates text that is spoken and sound into words. The text will appear as the words are spoken or played onto the screen of a mobile device or laptop.
- [Induction Loop](#): A special type of sound system installed in public spaces, also called a hearing loop, which amplifies the spoken word and cuts out unwanted background noise for use by people with hearing aids.
- [Open and Closed Captioning](#): Captions are words displayed on a television, computer, mobile device, or movie screen, providing the speech or sound portion of a program or video via text. Open captions are always in view and cannot be turned off by the user, whereas closed captions can be turned on and off by the user.
- [Tactile Signing](#): Tactile signing is a means of communication for individuals who are deafblind. One form of tactile signing is hand-over-hand or hands-on signing, in which the receiver's hand(s) are placed lightly upon the back of the hands of the signer to read the signs through touch and movement.

Tips for effective communication

- A person with hearing loss may refer to themselves as Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind or Deafblind or may not associate themselves with any label. Always ask an individual how they would prefer to communicate.
- Offensive terminology can include “hearing impaired,” “deaf and dumb” and “mute.” Note that “mute” refers to the ability to produce speech and does not describe hearing ability.
 - Put the person first:
 - **Do not say:** “handicapped,” “crippled,” “the blind,” “lame,” “suffers from hearing loss” or “mute”
 - **Do say:** “person with a disability,” “person with a physical disability,” “person who is hard of hearing,” “people with disabilities” or “individuals who identify as...”
- Understand that:
 - The experience of people who are deaf or hard of hearing is diverse and differs from person to person.
 - People are not simply either deaf or hearing — there are varying degrees in between.
 - When a deaf person is using sign language or otherwise communicating via gestures, they may or may not also use vocalizations.
 - Sign language has different grammar and syntax from spoken and written language.
 - ASL is not the only type of sign language. There are sign languages from other parts of the world (such as British Sign Language and Russian Sign Language), each with their own structure and customs.
 - A person’s comprehension of written English may be limited.
 - Lip reading enables a person to receive information from a speaker by watching the speaker’s face to identify their speech patterns, movements, gestures and expressions in context. This is a highly evolved process and the person will be focused on the mouth but take in a full face and upper body view. On average, only 30% of English is discernible through lip reading.
 - If a person is wearing a hearing aid or a cochlear implant, do not assume the individual can fully hear you.

New York City (NYC) resources

- [NYC Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities \(MOPD\)](#): MOPD offers resources for providers and individuals who identify as deaf and hard of hearing including [NYC locations with assistive listening systems](#) and [CART services](#).
 - MOPD conducts a Disability Etiquette Training. For more information, email the Disability Service Facilitator [here](#), voice call at 212-788-2964 or video call at 646-396-5830. To request a training for your staff, fill out the NYC: ATWORK [Contact Form](#).

- [ASL Direct](#): A video calling system to provide an all-inclusive, accessible means to City services. Individuals who identify as deaf and hard of hearing can use this service to contact MOPD to get information and resources in ASL.
- [NYC locations with hearing loops](#): A list of NYC institutions with hearing loops, an assistive listening technology for individuals with reduced ranges of hearing. For information about hearing loops in NYC or to add a location, email info@hearinglossnyc.org.
- [NYC Black Deaf Advocates](#): A membership organization to promote the leadership development, economic and educational opportunities and social equality of individuals who identify as Black and deaf or hard of hearing.
- [Hearing Loss Association of America NYC Chapter](#): Information, education, support and advocacy for individuals living with hearing loss including discounts on hearing aids and cell phone data plans.
- [Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association](#): A Facebook group made up of individuals who identify as Asian and deaf or hard of hearing who organize events and share resources.

Other resources

- [National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes](#): Tailored resources, events and tips for individuals who are deaf and family members and professionals who support them.
- [National Association of the Deaf](#): ASL, mask communication, medical and employment needs related to COVID-19 as well as general resources.
- [Helen Keller National Center for Deafblind Youth and Adults \(HKNC\)](#): HKNC provides training and resources to people ages 16 and over who have combined vision and hearing loss.

Resources for learning ASL

- [ASL Classes - Sign Language Center](#): Online group classes for all levels of learning, one-on-one tutoring sessions, on-site sessions for corporations and large groups and a variety of workshops.
- [Learn ASL for Free](#): Online courses, video tutorials and apps for learning ASL at no cost.

Resources for technical assistance and training

- [Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre, Inc. - Training & Workshops](#): Training and on-site educational workshops to promote effective communication between individuals who are hearing and individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- The Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) offers a webinar (Disability Etiquette: Inclusive Workplace Strategies for People with Disabilities) for City employees to learn how to become more inclusive of colleagues with disabilities.
 - City Employees can email citywidetrainingcent@dcas.nyc.gov to sign up for an upcoming Disability Etiquette training or to request a training. To request a training for your staff, fill out the NYC: ATWORK [Contact Form](#).

- [New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative](#): Technical assistance and training for providers and family members of children and youth from newborn to age 21 who identify as deafblind.

COVID-19 and emergency-specific resources

- [Communications & Medical Access in the Hospital During Disasters: Temporary Recommendations for Hospitals and Medical Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#): Information for hospitals and health care facilities about maximizing communication and preserving autonomy in medical decision making during an emergency. This resource includes separate lists of technology tools for individuals who use sign language, who speak, listen and/or lip-read, or who identify as deafblind.

Appendix - Vendors that provide ASL translation services

Below is a list of vendors that provide ASL translation services. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is providing this information to assist congregate residential settings, providers, and other partners to locate services but does not make any representation or warranty concerning the quality or accuracy of the services provided by these identified establishments.

Company	Contact Information	Website
Sign Talk	718-382-2020 sign@signtalk.com	signtalk.org
All Hands in Motion	718-997-0472 interpreting@allhandsinmotion.com	allhandsinmotion.com
ASLI Interpreting Solutions	855-634-2754 interpreters@asli.com	asli.alliancebizsolutions.com
Lime Interpreting	877-709-5463 info@limeinterpreting.com	limeinterpreting.com
Sign Language Resources	888-964-5553 SLR@SLRconnect.com	slrconnect.com
SignNexus	917-210-5804 info@signnexus.com	signnexus.com
Silan	917-426-2404 info@silan.co	silan.co
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Interpreting Services, Inc	212-647-1092 info@dhisnyc.com	dhisnyc.com

Millneck Interpreting Services	516-922-4100 info@millneck.org	millneck.org
Choice Interpreters	646-254-4351 interpreters@choiceco.com	choiceinterpreters.com

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

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