

Working with Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss varies from mildly hard of hearing to profoundly deaf.

The best way to understand an individual's needs is to engage in a private conversation with them.

Questions you might ask include:

- What barriers do you experience in a classroom?
- What are the accommodations that help you access the content, the class, the environment?
- How can we create an accessible experience for these elements of the class? (addressing the different types of experiences you create in your class- small groups, large groups, presentations, projects, tests/quizzes, papers, field trips, etc.)

Individuals who are D/deaf or hard of hearing have different accommodation preferences and needs. There are many ways of communicating and accessing information.

Communication may include, but is not limited to:

- Spoken language
- Sign language (ASL and signed English)
- Written language (Captioning, CART)

Accommodations may include, but are not limited to:

- Assistive Listening Devices (FM systems, microphones/receivers)
- Preferential seating
- Notetakers
- Captioning for videos
- Real time captioning for lectures and discussions (CART)
- Oral interpreter
- Sign language
 - o ASL- Linguistically, ASL is a separate language from English with its own syntax and grammar. It is similar to having a spoken foreign language translator in that it will not follow word for word.
 - o Signed English- This is more of a transliteration of spoken English into a manual form.
- Visual warning systems for emergencies

If you would like verification that a student has a disability, ask the student to provide you with a letter from the Disability Services Office (DSO). The DSO produces these letters only for students who are registered with the office and for whom documentation of the disability is on file. The DSO can send you this letter directly.

Best Practices

- **Use only captioned materials.** If your materials are not captioned, contact the DSO in advance to secure a captioned version of the material. Videos, DVDs and other visual material are normally marked with a "CC" logo if closed-captioned.
 - o It has been found that many students benefit from the use of captioning, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students with ADHD, students who use English as a second language, and more.

Assistive Listening Devices

An assistive listening device is a wireless microphone unit that is used by the professor (most often worn around the neck on a lanyard or on the lapel) transmitting a clear signal to the student's receiver so that he or she may hear the lecture without static or interference.

As a professor seeking to accommodate a student using an Assistive Listening Device, you are asked to:

- **Wear the receiver** whenever you are communicating class content to the students.
- Ensure that **one person speaks at a time** during class discussions. When a class member asks a question, repeat the question before answering.
- Be sure that the **students have visual contact with you** before you begin lecturing. Avoid giving information while handing out papers, writing on a whiteboard, or using an overhead projection system.
- Provide an **advance copy when reading directly from a text**, and pause slightly when interjecting information not in the text.
- Periodically **check in with the student** *privately* to make sure that all class content is being accessed.
- Don't hesitate to call the Disability Services Office (DSO) to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, a disability services personnel member, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.

Working with an Interpreter

A student's may use a sign language interpreter during classroom lectures/discussions. Interpreters are trained professionals, bound by a code of ethics, who facilitate communication between the professor/classmates and the deaf student.

Because of the specific nature of the interpreter's role, it is important not to ask the interpreter for his/her opinion or to perform any tasks other than interpreting.

It is also important to keep in mind that sometimes, depending on the length of the class, more than one interpreter will be present. Typically, any class over two hours requires the services of two interpreters who will take turns interpreting, usually at 20-minute intervals.

As a professor seeking to support a student using a sign language interpreter, you are asked to:

- **Always speak directly to the student**, not to the student's sign language interpreter. Use personal references such as "I" and "You" when communicating with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The interpreter will relay your exact words. Avoid speaking of the individual in the third person; phrases such as "ask her" or "tell him" can be confusing. You can speak as you normally would, without "over-enunciating" or speaking loudly. Should the lecture or discussion rate become too fast, the student or interpreter will advise you.
- Encourage **one person to speak at a time** during class discussions and ask that students raise their hands to request recognition. The interpreting process only allows one person to communicate at a time. When a class member asks a question, repeat the question before answering.
- It is customary for interpreters to sit at the side of the instructor. In advance of the first class, arrange for a discussion with the interpreter and the student regarding **seating positions that are convenient for all concerned**. (Notetakers are provided because it is difficult for a deaf student to watch an interpreter and take notes simultaneously.)
- **Consider classroom arrangement**. For interactive situations, circles or semi-circles work best for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Allow ample time for questions**. During class discussions or question/answer periods, give the deaf student an opportunity to raise his/her hand, be recognized, and ask questions through the interpreter.

Making time for questions allows the interpreter to finish interpreting for the current speaker and enables the student who is deaf to participate in class.

- **Provide the interpreter with copies of any handouts** (syllabus, vocabulary list, or other course materials) to assist interpreters in preparing for the course.
- If the classroom must be darkened, **ensure the student's interpreter is clearly visible**. Special lighting may be arranged through the DSO to illuminate the interpreter's hands and face.
- **When reading directly from text, provide an advance copy** and pause slightly when interjecting information not in the text.
- **When working with the chalkboard or an overhead projection system, pause briefly** so that the student may look first at the board/screen, and then at the interpreter, to see what is being said.
- Understand that focusing intently on an interpreter for up to an hour or more is extremely fatiguing. **Like other students**, deaf students may "zone out". If the student must leave class for a moment, the service provider will stop for that time. If a student fails to show up for class, service providers are instructed to wait for 10 to 15 minutes before leaving as discretely as possible.
- Periodically **check in with the student *privately*** to make sure that all class content is being accessed.
- Don't hesitate to call the Disability Services Office (DSO) to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, a disability services personnel member, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.

Working with CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) providers

CART is a speech-to-text process that brings communication access to deaf and hard of hearing people. Accurate and complete text representations of lectures or dialogue are simultaneously prepared and displayed to the student at natural language speeds.

The CART provider (captioner) can be onsite or operate remotely (where the audio can be clearly and accurately transmitted via phone or internet). He or she uses a stenography machine and laptop computer to key in all that is being said in class. The student views the text through a standard internet browser in real time and may receive a transcript as well.

As a professor seeking to support a student using CART services, you are asked to:

- ***Always speak directly to the student, not to the student's captioner.*** You can speak as you normally would, without "over-enunciating" or speaking loudly. Should the lecture or discussion rate become too fast, the student or captioner will advise you.
- During class discussions, **ask that one person speak at a time** and that the students raise their hands to request recognition. When a class member asks a question, **repeat the question** before answering.
- Arrange in advance of the first class for a **discussion with the captioner and the student regarding seating positions that are convenient** for all concerned. (Notetakers are provided because it is difficult for a deaf student to watch their screen and take notes simultaneously.)
- **Provide the captioner with copies of any handouts** (syllabus, vocabulary list, or other course materials) to assist in preparing for the course and/or programming their equipment.
- **When reading directly from text, provide an advance copy** and pause slightly when interjecting information not in the text.
- **When working with the whiteboard or an overhead projection system, pause briefly** so that the student may look first at the board/screen, and then at their screen, to see what is being said.
- Understand that focusing intently on an interpreter for up to an hour or more is extremely fatiguing. **If the student must leave class** for a moment, the service provider will stop for that time. If a student fails to show up for class, service providers are instructed to wait for 10 to 15 minutes before leaving as discretely as possible.
- Periodically **check in with the student *privately*** to make sure that all class content is being accessed.
- Don't hesitate to call the Disability Services Office (DSO) to arrange for a three-way meeting between you, a disability services personnel member, and the student to work out any issues and to collaborate on the best instructional strategies for the student.

Useful Resources

Deaf Linx, www.deaflinx.com "Deaf Linx firmly believes that deafness is not a disability, but a condition that produces a sub-culture that should be celebrated." Site offers a resource for information on deafness, deaf culture, American Sign Language (ASL) and all other related topics.

Postsecondary Education Programs Network (PEPNET), <http://www.pepnet.org> "PEPNET is the national collaboration of the four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The goal of PEPNet is to assist postsecondary institutions across the nation to attract and effectively serve individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing." Site offers information regarding the four Regional Centers, current news and events, a listserv to ask questions and share experiences, and online training for education professionals.

National Association of the Deaf (NAD), <http://www.nad.org> "The NAD, established in 1880, is the oldest and largest constituency organization safeguarding the accessibility and civil rights of 28 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans in education, employment, health care, and telecommunications." Site offers information regarding issues related to deafness including "information on deaf people, sign language, and legal rights."