

AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO

WORKING WITH A DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING EMPLOYEE



Don't miss the opportunity to hire a hardworking employee who can be a great asset to your company!

People who are deaf or hard of hearing desire to work and care for their families just as everyone else.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** states that it is the employer's responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations, which may include sign language interpreters and communication technologies and other resources to meet their unique needs. See the section entitled Workplace Considerations.

Please note that the needs of people who are deaf versus hard of hearing will differ. Please discuss these individual needs with your employee.

PEOPLE WHO USE SIGN LANGUAGE

There are people who are deaf who use sign language as their primary mode of communication.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) is a visual language with its own grammatical structure and culture. English is considered a second language. Some people will use sign and speak at the same time for greater clarification.

An **interpreter** is trained to provide communication access.

PEOPLE WHO DO NOT USE SIGN LANGUAGE

Some people may be deaf or hard of hearing but do not use sign language. They may use listening and spoken language and/or lipreading as their primary and preferred mode of communication.

Technology is available that allows for greater access to sound. Hearing aids and/or cochlear implants are used by some deaf or hard of hearing people regardless of mode of communication.

WORKPLACE CONSIDERATIONS

Keep in mind the following when working with a deaf or hard of hearing employee. Remember to discuss your employee's individual needs.

- Ensure all webinars and training videos are closed captioned.
- Have another employee review and relay any important announcements that may only be heard on a loud speaker, or provide written copies.
- Allow the employee to use available communication apps on their cellphone, especially in emergency situations.
- Use tools such as white boards for visual communication.
- Learn the preferred way to get the employee's attention, such as a tap on the shoulder, wave, or flicking the lights.
- Make directions clear and concise to ensure they are understood. Visual aids work well for this.
- Use eye contact, and, if lipreading is used, face the employee when speaking. Remember that things such as gum chewing, covering your mouth, long moustaches and beards, and room lighting may interfere with clear communication.
- Look into available support services such as job coaching for your employee, work site analysis to optimize accommodations for your employee, and technology assistance to enhance communication.
- When using a face covering, please consider a clear mask or face shield, in order to allow full visual access to the speaker's face.

COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

It is important to discuss the individual's communication needs in the workplace. Below are some tools that can help:

- **Certified Freelance Interpreters in NJ**
A list of interpreters is available through the New Jersey State Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/caption/
- **Captioning Services**
 - **Relay Conference Captioning (RCC)**
A free service provided by NJ Relay for captioning of conference calls, video meetings and webinars, on site or remotely.
njrelay.com
 - **CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation)**
Fee for services provided on site or remotely.
nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/caption/
- **Video Phone**
Used by a deaf person to communicate with a non-signing person.
- **Text and Email**
Written communications are an easy way to communicate.
- **Video Remote Interpreter (VRI)**
An interpreter appears on a screen. This can be used for brief meetings, emergency meetings, and addressing immediate concerns, but should not be used as an alternative to in-person interpreters.
- **Assistive Listening Devices**
Personal devices that transmit, process, or amplify sound, but usually does not refer to hearing aids.
- **Alert Devices**
These give an audible, visual, or other form of alert.
- **Captioned Phones**
Designed to transcribe speech to text on a screen.
- **Speech to Text Apps**
Smart phone/tablet apps designed to transcribe speech to text.

NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services in New Jersey (NJDVRS)

Determine eligibility for support services such as job coaching, work site analysis, and technology assistance for your deaf or hard of hearing employee.

nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/individuals-with-disabilities/deafandhardofhearingservices.shtml

NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH)

Find captioning and sign language interpreting services.

nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/caption/

NJ State Department of Labor (NJDOL)

Apply to receive a Work Opportunity Tax Credit for hiring workers who frequently face employment barriers.

nj.gov/labor/employer-services/business/businessprograms.shtml#WOTC

National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

Get firsthand accounts and advice from employers who have hired deaf and hard of hearing workers.

nad.org/nerc/employers

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

Learn about deafness accommodation and compliance.

askjan.org

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Information on deafness and hearing impairments in the workplace and the Americans With Disabilities Act.

eoc.gov/laws/guidance/deafness-and-hearing-impairments-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act

United States Department of Labor (USDOL)

Innovative workplace safety accommodations.

osha.gov/dts/shib/shib072205.html

National Deaf Center (NDC)

Communicating with deaf individuals.

nationaldeafcenter.org/sites/default/files/Communicating%20with%20Deaf%20Individuals.pdf



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