

WORKING WITH DEAF PEOPLE

A guide for employers and colleagues



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COMMUNICATION BASICS



Eye contact and facial expressions are very important in Deaf culture. These are simple methods that foster connection and show that you are engaged.



Written communication is best for short, simple interactions. Have a pen and paper nearby. Keep your notes brief and to the point.



English is a second language for most Deaf people. Remember that ASL sentence structure—and grammar—is different than English. Not all Deaf people are comfortable with communicating in written form.



Speak naturally. The tendency when meeting a Deaf person is to exaggerate our mouth's movements. Exaggerated mouth movements will not improve the Deaf person's ability to understand you.



The ability to lip read varies a great deal. Even the most skilled lip readers may only understand 30% of what is being said. Note that lip reading can be exhausting for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.



Learn a few signs. Keep a sign language chart and finger spelling chart handy. Ask your Deaf employee to develop a sign chart that suits their needs. Consider reviewing the signs from time to time at staff meetings.



TO LEARN MORE about working with Deaf people and American Sign Language interpreting services please contact the Diversity Services Office:



867-456-6537
Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm



interpreter.ASL@gov.yk.ca



Government of Yukon
Main Administration Building
2071-2nd Avenue

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Doing what matters.
comes with the territory

COMMUNICATION

is vital to an individual's enjoyment and growth in the workplace. These are some tips that can help you to support a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing (HoH) in your workplace.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Recognize that Deaf or hard of hearing (HoH) people are most often the last in the know, as they miss out on "incidental information" such as overheard conversations, comments and remarks. Be aware that this kind of information is missed, and do your best to keep them in the loop. Repeat topics as a courtesy when someone joins your conversation or group.

WHEN TO USE AN INTERPRETER

If you – or another employee – is able to communicate with sign language, this is encouraged. Please recognize that communicating in sign language is different than interpreting.

When communication goes beyond pen-and-paper or simple interactions a qualified interpreter should be requested.

An interpreter allows your employee to participate more fully in key workplace dynamics and interactions, including: staff meetings, assessment(s), evaluations, training, as well as filling out and signing important forms.

GETTING A DEAF PERSON'S ATTENTION

Deaf people cannot hear you approaching them from behind. Instead, approach from their side or directly in front of their physical position. Use a light tap on their shoulder to get their attention.

People who are Deaf often use visual cues to get each other's attention. A wave of hands, or the turning of a light on and off (three times maximum), is appropriate in Deaf culture.

PHONE ACCESS/TEXT

Organizations working with Deaf or HoH people should be accessible by text and/or email. Provide training for all staff regarding effective communication through texting.

TRAINING

Training opportunities for your Deaf employee may be more than a day long. Some interpreting assignments may require a team of two interpreters. Extra costs are the responsibility of the requesting organization. Keep this in mind for booking both training and interpretation service – always prepare in advance.

USE CAPTIONING

Captioning will allow the person who is Deaf to share in social activities that include a video. Do what you can to assure the program being viewed is captioned.

WALKING THROUGH/ AROUND A CONVERSATION

If you encounter two Deaf people having a conversation, determine first if there is a way to walk around them, allowing them uninterrupted conversational space. If there is no path around them, walk quickly and unobtrusively between them. There is no need to duck or crawl. Alternatively, touch the back or shoulder of one of the Deaf individuals and step around or pass between them.

USING THE RIGHT TERMS



APPROPRIATE IDENTIFIERS:

- Deaf
- hard of hearing (HoH)
- person with a hearing loss



INAPPROPRIATE IDENTIFIERS:

- deaf and dumb
- hearing impaired
- deaf mute