

# Sensitivity Training: Hearing Loss



# Deafness and Hard of Hearing

- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) refer to hard of hearing conditions as those that affect the frequency and/or intensity of one's hearing.
- Although the term "deaf" is often mistakenly used to refer to all individuals with hearing difficulties, it actually describes a more limited group.
- According to the CDC, "deaf" individuals do not hear well enough to rely on their hearing to process speech and language.
- Individuals who are hard of hearing differ from deaf individuals in that they use their hearing to assist in communication with others.

# Deafness and Hearing Loss Definition

- **Hearing loss:** Decrease in hearing sensitivity in one or both ears. It can be caused by many physical conditions such as childhood illness, heredity, injury, age, or prolonged exposure to noise. Hearing can vary with mild to moderate loss. Individuals may be able to hear sound but have difficulty distinguishing specific speech patterns in a conversation.
- **Deafness:** Profound or total loss of hearing in both ears resulting in not hearing well enough to rely on hearing to process speech and language.

# Preferred Terminology by those with hearing loss

- Acceptable to Neutral terminology:
  - A person who has a speech disorder
  - Deaf
  - Hard of hearing
- Unacceptable to Offensive:
  - Deaf and dumb
  - Deaf mute
  - Hearing impaired



# Hearing Loss

- Hearing loss can affect an individual the way they experience sound, communicate with others, and view their hearing loss.
- For example, some individuals who develop hearing losses later in life find it difficult both to adjust to a world with limited sound and to adopt new behaviors that compensate for hearing loss. As a result, they may not use American Sign Language (ASL) or other communication methods at all. They may not be as proficient as individuals who experience hearing loss at birth or at a very young age.



# Barriers to Accessing Health Care

- People with hearing loss have challenges accessing health care. For various reasons, the method of communication that suits them best may not be understood or accommodated by the health care provider resulting in poor engagement. Barriers can be related to:

- Access
- Attitude
- Competency
- Safety risk
- Potentially poor care
- Stress



# Factors That Influence Understanding of What is Being Said

## LISTENER:

- Level of hearing loss
- Type of hearing loss
- Use of hearing aid
- Use of assistive listening devices
- Attention level
- Motivation to hear
- Expectations
- Emotional state
- Fatigue
- Distracting sensations
- Distracting thoughts
- Speechreading skills
- Tinnitus
- Tension Level
- Manual communication

## SPEAKER

- Voice intensity
- Voice projection
- Rate of speech
- Clarity of speech
- Facial expression
- Body language
- Foreign accent
- Facing listener
- Monotonous tone
- Beard/mustache
- Emotionality
- Mannerisms
- Objects in mouth
- Interest of message
- Relationship to listener
- Quality of interpreter
- Quality of typist

# Maximizing the Hard of Hearing (HOH) Person's Ability to Participate in Conversation

## NONVERBAL AIDS:

- Get the person's attention by raising an arm or hand
- Face HOH person directly
- Give visual cues to conversation
- Avoid careless expression that can be misinterpreted
- Make certain your face is as clearly visual as possible
- Move closer to the person and toward the better ear if he does not hear you
- Write out proper names
- Avoid covering mouth or face with hands
- Do not attempt to converse while you have something in your mouth (pipe, cigarette, gum)
- Maintain eye contact
- Avoid a distracting environment

## VERBAL AIDS:

- Speak slowly and distinctly, pausing more frequently than normally
- Raise volume of voice and keep your voice at about the same volume throughout each sentence
- Ask the HOH person what is a comfortable voice level
- Avoid dropping your voice at the end of each sentence
- Speak as clearly and accurately as possible; do not over-accentuate words
- Articulate consonants with special care
- Pronounce names with care; make a reference to the name if possible
- Change to a newer subject at a slower rate
- Talk in a normal or lower tone of voice
- Use shorter phrases which tend to be easier to understand
- Do not show annoyance by careless facial expression
- In a group, repeat important statements and avoid asides to others in the group

## ADAPTING THE ENVIRONMENT:

- Eliminate background noise
- Place person in the most strategic place to hear
- Use furnishings and materials that absorb sound and reduce resonance
- Avoid the use of intercommunication systems

## OBSERVE THE HOH PERSON FOR UNDERSTANDING:

- Inattention, facial expression, tiredness
- Appropriate response
- Accurate repetition of information
- Irritability

# Guidelines for Better Communication

- **Tips for a good listening environment**
  - Decrease background noise whenever possible; move away from fans and noisy machines
  - Modify lighting and seating arrangement; this may require you to change old habits about where you sit
  - Provide good lighting- keep light on your face, not behind you otherwise it causes a harsh glare/shadow that makes lip reading difficult
  - Encourage groups to sit closer to the speaker and to each other
  - Make sure only one person speaks at a time

# Guidelines for Better Communication

- **Tips for the Speaker**

- Face to face communication is the easiest; don't call someone from another room; move closer to the listener and get their attention before speaking
- Continue to face the listener while speaking; don't turn away
- Be patient with listeners
- Remember there is a logical reason behind most lip reading errors and listening errors.
- Encourage them to wear hearing aids; offer help with obtaining assistive listening devices at lecture sites, theaters, and places of worship
- Ask questions using an "either-or" format, or a "yes-no" format
- Try to be understanding and caring when someone with a hearing problem asks you to help them understand better

# Guidelines for Better Communication

- **Tips for the Speaker**
  - Repeat or rephrase information if the listener appears to have misunderstood
  - Give important information to the listener in writing to be used later as a reference
  - In a group situation, repeat questions or comments before responding
  - If someone joins a conversation in progress, give the newcomer a short summary of the topic before proceeding with your discussion
  - Be flexible with types of cues, paraphrasing, and clarifications you give; when changing topics, make sure listener is aware of the new topic
  - Remember it takes two people to hold a conversation and both people have to do their part to make a conversation work

# Communicating with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Individuals

- It is appropriate to tap a person who is deaf gently on the arm or shoulder to gain their attention.
- Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face. Use body language; it offers important clues about what you are saying. Don't shout or speak too loudly.
- Ask about the best way to communicate, and arrange for a sign language interpreter if needed. If the person uses an interpreter, speak directly to the person who is deaf, not the interpreter.
- When calling an individual who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual. Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat who you are, and the reason for the call if asked.

# Communicating with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Individuals

- Rephrase rather than repeat. If the person did not understand you, then try using different words to express your ideas. Short sentences tend to be understood better.
- Ask information about their hearing loss and listening needs. Ask for tips on how you should speak and what you can do to facilitate communication.
- Many people who are deaf prefer to use text messaging or Video Relay Service to communicate. The phone number you dial may be a relay operator that will use ASL to communicate your information.
- TTY is not as common, but still used by some. If you do not have ready access to a TTY you can dial 711 to reach the national telecommunications relay service, which facilitates the call between you and an individual who uses a TTY.
- Ask the person what method they prefer. Never assume the same method works best for everyone.



# Resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumers

Additional resources specific to Behavioral Health Services can be accessed via the following website:

<http://www.deafcan.org/behavioral-health-services.html>

# Resources

- Guidelines for Better Communication. (n.d.). Hearing and Speech Center. Retrieved February 7, 2018, from:  
<https://d2edgo5zyrsrw1.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Guidelines-for-Better-Communication.pdf>
- Molina MyCare Ohio Disability Awareness & Sensitivity Training. (n.d.). Molina HealthCare. Retrieved February 7, 2018, from:  
<http://www.molinahealthcare.com/providers/oh/PDF/Duals/Sensitivity-Training-Orientation-Presentation.pdf>
- Questions and Answers about Deafness and Hearing Impairments in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act. (n.d.). U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved February 7, 2018, from:  
[https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/qa\\_deafness.cfm](https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/qa_deafness.cfm)

# Sensitivity Training/Hearing Loss

I have completed the Sensitivity Training

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date