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Breaking The Sound Barriers

Employing People who are Deaf,
Deafened or Hard of Hearing

THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY
LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE L'OUÏE



Breaking The Sound Barriers

Employing People who are Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing

Welcome to "Breaking the Sound Barriers – Employing People Who are Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing".

This manual provides a comprehensive overview of workplace issues for people who are deaf or have hearing loss - and a unique opportunity to learn about their communication styles. We encourage you to review the entire document. However, you can go directly to the section you are interested in by simply clicking on the subject title on the left.

For easier access to information pertaining to a particular recruit or employee, we have included two separate sections – "Deaf Employees" and "Hard of Hearing and Deafened Employees". These important sections address the language, communication needs and various accommodation requirements of the 'group'. In an effort to make the sections complete and self-contained, some common communication strategies appear in both. The information in the second half of the manual applies to all employees – deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

We hope you enjoy the manual and find its information useful and rewarding.

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Foreward

Hiring a person who is deaf or has hearing loss is often no more complicated than hiring a hearing person. In assessing any candidate, you consider:

- Is this person qualified to do the job?
- What does the candidate need to do the job well?
- What changes are needed in the work environment to make this happen?
- What orientation and training is required for both the new employee and existing employees?

The answers to these questions may be different when hiring someone who is deaf or has hearing loss, but not necessarily more complicated or costly.

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) provides services that enhance the independence of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people. Our goal is to help employers develop an environment that is inclusive and barrier-free, and to assist job-seekers and employees who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing to achieve their full potential in the workplace. We believe this is a win/win situation that benefits all people, organizations and society as a whole.

"Breaking the Sound Barriers" offers a comprehensive overview of deafness and hearing loss, recruiting, hiring and creating an accessible environment. It is also a blueprint for designing and implementing effective accommodation plans for both new employees and current employees who are experiencing the onset of hearing loss.

Acknowledgements

This material has been prepared by The Canadian Hearing Society for the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.



Ontario



Introduction

Hearing loss is on the rise in part due to our aging population, however, hearing loss is also occurring at younger ages because of exposure to an increasingly noisy society.

The Canadian Hearing Society Awareness Survey of October 2001 revealed that 23 per cent of adult Canadians - almost 1 in 4 - report having some degree of hearing loss. Of these, one in four are under 40, and almost half are between 40 and 60 years old. These people are not retirees – they are adult, working Canadians.

How does this affect your business, organization or facility? You can expect that almost one in four of the people applying for a job at your place of business will be deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. Even more probable is that many of your existing employees already have, or are acquiring, some degree of hearing loss.

Deaf people are lawyers. Deafened people are doctors. Hard of hearing people are accountants. They are teachers, computer analysts, sales people and supervisors. They are machine operators, data entry and customer service experts. They are people that you know and work with every day.

Barriers, Benefits and Responsibilities

The Barriers

Workers who are deaf or have a hearing loss are willing and able to do the job required of them and have the same capacity for success and failure as hearing employees. However, they face additional work challenges in barriers to communication including:

- Availability of technology such as assistive listening devices or effective computer communications
- Access to services such as sign language interpretation or real-time captioning needed for interviews, meetings and training situations
- Consideration of environmental barriers (sight lines, lighting levels, distance and noise)
- Co-worker misconceptions about deafness and hearing loss
- Invisible barriers of attitude and perception about people with a hearing loss

The Benefits

There are many benefits in employing and accommodating people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

- By focusing on ability rather than disability and offering an accessible workplace, an employer will have access to a larger, more qualified pool of workers, a plus in today's competitive business world.
- Promoting accessible communication in the workplace will create more diversity, respect and understanding among all employees.

- Having demonstrated your respect for a diverse workforce, your employees will place higher value on the organization, increasing morale, productivity and overall effectiveness.
- There is a direct link between employee satisfaction/loyalty and customer satisfaction to the bottom line of your organization.
- Company image will improve in the business community and with the public as being an employer of choice.
- Barrier-free communication is achievable at a low cost and provides a big payback, including an increased bottom line. Check the Resources section for more information on the economic advantages of creating access, including The Business Case for Accessibility on the Paths to Equal Opportunity Website .

Consider this:

Countless organizational studies have shown that good morale, teamwork and high employee satisfaction correlate with better product and service quality. Access to training and work-related supports make a difference in the employability of people with disabilities. Those who have done well, who earn above median income, are those people with disabilities who have been better supported by employers. They have received better access to training, assistive devices and to other supports, all of which have helped them break through the access barrier.

The results:

A highly trained, motivated staff and a workplace that is free of communication barriers! The professional benefits of providing access have been clearly demonstrated. Employers frequently rate workers with disabilities better or about the same as co-workers in task performance (e.g., quality/quantity of output, attendance, safety, working without supervision). (Equal to the task II : 1990 Du Pont survey of employment of people with disabilities – Wilmington, CE : El Du Pont de Nemours, 1991). In addition, deaf, deafened and hard of hearing workers have a 98% average or above average safety record, among the highest of all of the disabled workers and workers in general. ("Keep Deaf Workers Safe", Menchel & Ritter, National Technical Institute of the Deaf, Rochester, New York – 1984).

The Responsibilities

In addition to just being the right thing to do, clear communication is also the legal right of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people.

Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing workers in Canada have the same rights as those employees who are hearing. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms , Canadian Human Rights Commission, provincial Human Rights Commissions and Supreme Court of Canada rulings mandate the legal responsibility for an organization, business or facility to be accessible.

In Ontario, the " Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate" is included in the Ontario Human Rights Code, to ensure equal participation of all Ontarians. The Code forms the basis for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA).

The ODA requires accessibility planning for mandated sectors (provincial government, municipalities, and broader public sector) to make their services, policies, and practices accessible to people with disabilities.

Creating an accessible workplace is more than just meeting the demands of human rights – it's also about good business. As an employer, you provide employees with the tools to do a job well. Hiring an employee who is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing simply means complementing existing tools with a few accommodations, many of which cost little or nothing to put in place.

Some accommodations are simple adaptations while others require more sophisticated equipment. In hiring any employee, you aim to match the essential functions of the job and the functional abilities of the individual; the way the worker does the job is far less important than the outcome.

Terminology and Definitions

Terminology

Language is powerful – it both shapes and is shaped by ideas, perceptions and attitudes. And it's these very attitudes that can pose the most difficult barriers in a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person's search for meaningful and sustainable employment.

When speaking about a person who has a hearing loss, speak about the individual, not about the condition. Use phrases like 'persons or people with hearing loss', 'deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people', and 'Deaf people.' Avoid using terms such as 'hearing impaired', 'normal or abnormal hearing', 'deaf and dumb', and 'deaf mute'.

Definitions

The following terms describe people, their language of communication and self-identification, rather than degree of hearing loss, cause, or time of onset.

Deaf

This term is generally used to describe individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no residual hearing. Some deaf people use sign language such as American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) to communicate. Others use speech to communicate, using their residual hearing and hearing aids, technical devices or cochlear implants, and lipreading or speechreading.

Culturally Deaf

This term refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture and community of Deaf people, based on sign language. Deaf culture, indicated by a capital 'D', does not perceive hearing loss and deafness as a disability, but as the basis of a distinct cultural group. Culturally Deaf people may also use speechreading, gesturing, spoken language and written English to communicate with people who do not sign.

Deafened or Late Deafened

These terms describe individuals who grow up hearing or hard of hearing and, either suddenly or gradually, experience a profound loss of hearing. Late-deafened adults usually understand speech with visual clues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speechreading or sign language.

Hard of Hearing

This term is generally used to describe individuals whose hearing loss ranges from mild to severe, and occasionally profound. Hard of hearing people use speech and residual hearing to communicate, supplemented by communication strategies that may include speechreading, hearing aids, sign language and technical devices. The term "person with hearing loss" is increasingly used and preferred.

Disability and Handicap

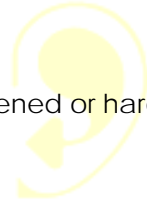
These words are not synonymous. A "disability" is a functional limitation or restriction of an individual's ability to perform a certain act. A "handicap" is an environmental or attitudinal barrier that puts an individual at a disadvantage. To properly describe a person with functional limitation or restriction, the word "disability" should remain in the form of a noun, not an adjective, i.e. it is better to use the term "persons with disabilities" as opposed to "disabled".

Access

Access is the creation of an environment where people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing can communicate clearly and participate actively.

Accommodation

Accommodation is an adjustment or modification of the workplace that improves the ability of a person who is deaf or has a hearing loss to do a required job. It is a tool to create access.



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Communication

Communicating with People Who are Deaf or have Hearing Loss

"I want to communicate well: what's the best way to speak to someone who is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing?"

"I want to be knowledgeable; what systems should I have in place for an interview?"

"I want to be professional; what supports should I, or am I required to, provide?"

Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people interact with hearing people all the time, and most are comfortable in telling you what works for them. Don't worry about being considered insensitive if you use the words 'hear', 'hearing' or 'sound', as these are common words.

People who are deaf or have hearing loss are able to communicate and connect as well as hearing people - often better when the necessary accommodations are in place. By providing accommodations, you are creating an accessible workplace where employees are comfortable conversing and sharing information with each other.

No two people communicate in exactly the same way; each person uses an individual combination of communication strategies. Therefore, the best way to learn how to communicate with an applicant, employee, or co-worker is to ask him or her what method or methods of communication they prefer. This section summarizes the possible communication styles of people who are deaf or have hearing loss and the typical aids that encourage interaction.

Self-Identification

A person may let you know about his or her deafness or hearing loss in a number of ways. She or he may:

- Use an interpreter or have requested an interpreter be booked for the appointment.
- Tell you via spoken language about the hearing loss, advising the best way to communicate.
- Point to a hearing aid or cochlear implant.
- Use gestures.
- Have contacted you through a telephone relay service, interpreter services or a third party.
- Present a COMMUNICARD indicating a hearing loss.

Deaf Employees

Deaf Culture

Language and culture grow and evolve together. Deaf Culture celebrates sign language (ASL and LSQ) and other values, traditions and behaviours specific to the Deaf community, offering pride in one's identity and a strong sense of belonging. Deaf culture takes a socio-cultural point of view of deafness, rather than a pathological perspective.

Sign Language

The language of the majority of North American Deaf people is American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is a visual language that has its own grammar and syntax (word order) distinct from spoken language. Over 40 years of linguistic research have produced evidence that ASL is as much a language as any that is spoken.

Sign languages are rich languages that express the same scope of thoughts, feelings, intentions and complexities as spoken languages. Meaning is conveyed through signs that are composed of specific movements and shapes of the hand and arms, eyes, face, head and body posture. There are many different sign languages in the world today, but the two main sign languages in Canada are American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).

The majority of culturally Deaf people function bilingually and are proficient, to a greater or lesser degree, in written English or French and ASL (LSQ). But, for many Deaf people, as for many Canadians, English or French is not their first language, and their written English or French should not be perceived as an indicator of education or intelligence. Sign languages do not have written forms, so the written skills of a person whose first language is a sign language may appear stilted.

Cross Cultural Differences

Deaf people communicate in a visual way. In addition to ASL, rules of behaviour include visual strategies for attention-getting such as touching, waving, vibration or light signalling. Eye contact, body language and facial expression are all key to effective communication. Communication discourse is direct and to the point, and written English may also seem terse and abbreviated by standards of hearing people.

The following are examples of how a Deaf person's activity could be misinterpreted by someone who is not familiar with Deaf culture:

- A Deaf welder is very noisy when putting away his equipment. He is not angry or disgruntled, but simply unaware of the noise that he is making.
- The individual ahead of you ignores you entering the stairwell; she swings the door open, it hits the wall with a bang. She is not angry or purposefully ignoring you, but simply cannot hear either your approach or the door hitting the wall.
- The Deaf employee frowns when receiving instructions. He is not insubordinate, but merely curious about the reason why such procedure is used, or is focused intently on understanding the instructions. This "frown" of concentration is often misinterpreted as disagreement or annoyance, when it is actually a common

element of communication in Deaf culture. Hard of hearing people also commonly frown when listening, an indicator of the enormous amount of energy required to communicate when you have a hearing loss.

- Facial expressions have linguistic value and may not necessarily reflect the Deaf person's feelings. Rather than jumping to conclusions about a Deaf person's intent, ask questions to help clarify issues and feelings.

Fingerspelling

ASL includes signs for individual letters that are used for communicating words that have no equivalent or translation in ASL, such as titles, names and other proper nouns. This easy-to-learn alphabet can assist hearing employees to improve communication with Deaf colleagues.

Real-time Captioning (RTC)

Although it should not be used as a substitute for interpreter services between ASL and English, captioning is a useful communication tool. RTC uses modern stenographic and laptop computer technology to display conversation, verbatim and in real-time, on a screen, TV monitor, or computer monitor. A highly trained captioner records the communicated message that is read instantly by people who are deaf or have hearing loss. Captioners bring and set up their own equipment.

Reading and Writing Notes

Writing notes on paper or typing back and forth using a keyboard and display (computer, TTY) is handy in many situations. Abbreviated written messages can result in incomplete communication, so confirmation of key points is helpful. Deaf and deafened people commonly use this informal method of communication.

Cochlear Implants

This auditory prosthesis, surgically implanted in the cochlea of the inner ear, bypasses damaged nerve-cell endings and directly stimulates the auditory nerve that conveys sound 'messages' to the brain. Cochlear implant (CI) technology is continually improving and, while not all implants are successful, cochlear implant users undergo intensive rehabilitation to achieve the best possible benefit from their technology. Signing Deaf people who are able to hear after being implanted, also continue to use ASL to communicate.

Sign Language Interpreters

Clear communication is based on a common language. A professional sign language interpreter, knowledgeable in the language and culture of both Deaf and hearing people, is the bridge between ASL and English to a common understanding.

Most provinces have interpreter services available through agencies providing services to Deaf people. In Ontario, the mandate of CHS's Ontario Interpreter Services (OIS) is to increase accessibility for Deaf individuals by providing quality ASL-English interpreting in a variety of settings including: employment, medical, legal, social services, mental health/counselling, education related business, and government ministries and agencies.

When interacting with a Deaf employee whose language is ASL, use a qualified interpreter for:

- Interviews
- Meetings
- Training sessions
- Disciplinary actions
- Performance appraisals

The Role of an Interpreter

Some of the interpreter's responsibilities are to:

- * Interpret the intent and spirit of everything that is signed and spoken.
- * Keep all information confidential.
- * Provide interpretation only; an interpreter will not give advice or a personal opinion on anything that is discussed.
- * Accept only those assignments for which she or he is qualified.
- * Arrive 15 minutes before the appointment to become familiar with the people and the situation.
- * Consult with the person who is Deaf about the set-up of the room.

Team Interpreting

For meetings over two hours in length, more than one interpreter is required. In team interpreting, both interpreters are responsible for the provision of service at all times throughout the assignment. While one interpreter is actively engaged in the interpreting process for approximately 15 to 20 minutes, the other interpreter is attentive and ready to support the active interpreter at any stage in the process. After the prescribed period, the roles switch and the interpretation continues as seamlessly as possible.

Assignments of two hours or less may be covered by one interpreter, provided the material is not overly technical, fast-paced, or involves numerous individuals participating in rapid interactions. In these circumstances, even for a period of less than two hours, two interpreters may be needed. Regardless of the number of interpreters present at an assignment, a minimum 10-minute break is required after each hour of interpreting.

Deaf Interpreters

Deaf people from other countries, Deaf people with special needs, and those who have different sign language proficiencies or other unique communication requirements may require a Deaf interpreter. This trained and qualified interpreter is a native user of ASL and/or LSO and works in conjunction with a hearing sign language interpreter. OIS can provide Deaf interpreters.

Working with Interpreters

These guidelines will help you communicate comfortably with a Deaf person using an interpreter.

- Be relaxed; the Deaf person or the interpreter will let you know if something needs correcting or clarification.
- Face the person with whom you are talking; don't direct your conversation to the interpreter, whose role is only to facilitate communication.
- Provide information in advance of the meeting or training session to allow the interpreter to become familiar with topics of discussion, names, and other English words that require more definition.
- Before starting the meeting, ask if the Deaf employee would like the role of the interpreter explained to hearing participants.
- If the room is darkened for a slide or overhead presentation, make sure the interpreters can be seen. Ask the interpreters for suggestions.
- Depending on the situation, interpreting between two languages simultaneously can be mentally and physically challenging necessitating breaks of 10-15 minutes per hour of interpreting or after 1 hour in team interpreting. Before the meeting starts, ask the interpreters when they would like to break.
- Speak at a comfortable pace. If your speech is fast, be aware that the interpreters may need to ask you for clarification or to repeat.
- In group discussions, have only one person speak at a time. Give the interpreter time to identify who is speaking.
- Seating should be a circular or U-shape so the Deaf person can see all participants.
- A well-lit room makes it easier to watch the interpreters and prevents eyestrain.
- Consider where the interpreter stands; a neutral, uncluttered background of solid colours rather than one with busy patterns, improves the clarity of ASL. Busy backgrounds are known as "visual noise" and obscure clarity. Interpreters wear solid clothes, no jewelry or brightly-coloured nail polish for the same reason.

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Hiring an Interpreter

Ask the Deaf person if she or he has an interpreter preference and try to secure that interpreter for the assignment. A Deaf person and interpreter familiar with each other's signing style will improve communication between you and the employee.

The Canadian and Ontario Human Rights Codes require that all businesses - including unions, non-profits and other sectors - be accessible to all employees and consumers. If an employee requires an interpreter for staff meetings, the employer is responsible for making the arrangements and covering the cost of the accommodation. By doing so, the employer ensures that all staff receives the same information.

Use only professional sign language interpreters as they have received extensive training in a demanding discipline that requires finely honed skills to provide accurate and

sensitive interpretation. Well-meaning but untrained or unqualified interpreters such as friends or family will not provide the most effective interpretation.

In Ontario, CHS provides Ontario Interpreter Service (OIS). OIS uses a screening process to determine the skill level of the interpreter and that these skills meet the minimum levels as required. Interpreters who pass are put on the OIS freelance interpreter list and may accept assignments under the CHS/OIS name. OIS is not a certification process, but a CHS hiring tool. The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), is the national professional association and certifying body of ASL-English interpreters.

OIS offers several employment-related services. Note that OIS covers the cost of the first three services, while the employer is responsible for the other services.

Job Interviews

OIS will absorb the cost of job of interviews between job seekers and potential employers if the employer is unable or unwilling to absorb the cost. Other possible funding sources are government programs such as HRDC or ODSP Employment Supports Program.

Initial Orientation to New Job

Introduction to a new job position and/or employer: as an employer, you may wish to cover the cost; however, up to seven hours may be funded by OIS.

Job Loss Prevention (Crisis on the Job)

Brief intervention to stabilize a work situation and avoid job loss: again, the employer should pay for this, but the cost may be absorbed by OIS for one or two meetings.

Yearly Evaluation of Work Performance

Staff Meetings or One to One Employee Meetings

Union Conferences and Meetings

Unions provide meetings regarding employee advocacy, labour rights issues, labour-management issues, negotiations, grievances and other related business. The unions are responsible to ensure these functions are accessible, and that sign language interpreters are provided as required.

How to Book a Sign Language Interpreter

- Call two to four weeks before your appointment. OIS needs as much notice as possible to book a sign language interpreter.
- Give the OIS staff person the following information:
 - name and telephone number of the consumer(s)
 - date, time and location of the appointment
 - name and phone number of the contact person for the interpreter
 - purpose of the appointment
 - number of people who will be present

- o special circumstances such as video recording, media coverage, etc.
- o billing information

Hard of Hearing and Deafened Employees

Hearing Loss Behaviour

Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people who use spoken language as their main means of communication, speak for themselves. People who define themselves as hard of hearing or deafened do not generally identify with a culture associated with their hearing, although they may belong to hearing loss-related consumer organizations.

Just as there are many causes, types and degrees of hearing loss, people with hearing loss function in very different ways. Hearing loss behaviour, therefore, varies from person to person and the following examples may not apply to everyone.

A person with hearing loss who gives a seemingly inappropriate response may not be daydreaming, less intelligent, inattentive, rude, or stubborn; she or he may simply not have heard correctly.

The following are examples of how hard of hearing or deafened people's activity could be misinterpreted:

- Hard of hearing or deafened people often miss the auditory clues taken for granted by hearing people. For example, a hearing person hears the intake of breath that indicates someone is about to speak. A hard of hearing person may miss this and start 'talking over' the other person, a common and often embarrassing hallmark of hearing loss.
- Judging the level of sound is sometimes difficult and a person with hearing loss may speak unnecessarily loudly. A discreet hand motion will signal the problem to the speaker.
- A hard of hearing person cannot overhear or understand nearby conversations in the way that hearing people do. While waiting to join or interrupt a private conversation, the person may stand closer to the speakers than is customary, looking for the visual cues that indicate an opening to speak.
- In meetings or other situations involving a great deal of information, people with hearing loss may 'tune out' due to the strain of concentrating to keep up with the conversation.
- Hard of hearing people also commonly frown when listening, another indicator of the enormous amount of energy required to communicate.
- Rather than make assumptions about a worker's communication abilities or needs, ask the employee and then provide access whenever possible. Communicating with a person with hearing loss is straightforward when a few key tips are followed. A detailed list of Communication Tips is found here.

Communication Strategies

People who are hard of hearing have varying degrees of usable hearing (whereas those who are deafened usually do not), and use spoken language as their means of communication. Residual hearing, even if it is minimal, may be boosted by amplification through hearing aids and other assistive technology, as well as other communication strategies.

Hearing Aids

Hearing aids amplify sound; they do not correct or restore hearing. Technology has improved greatly over the past few years, offering better amplification, quality of sound, and some reduction of background noise. How well a person benefits from a hearing aid (or two) depends on many factors: type and degree of hearing loss, physical ability to wear an aid, personality, attitude, manual dexterity for handling small parts, etc. Hearing aids, when fitted and worn properly, are often the best communication tools for a person who has hearing loss. However, a person who is deafened with little or no usable residual hearing will generally not benefit from hearing aids.

Speechreading

The majority of people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing use speechreading to some degree, often unconsciously. In fact, almost everyone – hearing, deaf, or hard of hearing – speechreads at some time or another.

Speechreading, once called lipreading, uses visual cues to comprehend what's being said. A good speechreader watches a speaker's lips, teeth, tongue, jaw, eyes, facial expression and body language, and uses context to discern the message.

Speechreading skill and effectiveness varies widely from person to person. Do not assume that an employee with hearing loss is a good speechreader. It is an extremely difficult skill to learn and very rarely completely mastered. Speechreading appears to be more difficult for those who become deafened or acquire hearing loss as an adult.

Many factors affect how well a person 'reads' speech:

- type of hearing loss and age of onset
- degree of good vision and ability to focus
- familiarity with the language
- positive attitude
- more than half the movements involved in speech sounds occur within the mouth and cannot be detected by the eye
- between 40 – 60% of English words are homophenes, words which look identical on a speaker's face, i.e. cake and take
- no single speech sound has a distinct lip/jaw movement or position of its own

Cochlear Implants

This auditory prosthesis, surgically implanted in the cochlea of the inner ear, bypasses damaged nerve-cell endings and directly stimulates the auditory nerve that conveys sound 'messages' to the brain. Like hearing aids, cochlear implant technology is continually improving and is an increasingly popular option for adults who cannot use

hearing aids. While not all implants are successful, cochlear implant users undergo intensive rehabilitation to achieve the best possible benefit from their technology.

Assistive Listening Devices

Also referred to as ALDs, these technical tools boost communication for hard of hearing and some deafened people. An ALD, using one of several electronic systems such as FM or infrared, brings the speaker's voice directly to the ear, helping to eliminate problems posed by distance and surrounding noise. ALDs can be used alone or to complement hearing aids and visual cues.

There is a broad spectrum of assistive devices available, many of which have business applications. A more in-depth listing of technical devices can be found [here](#).

Real-Time Captioning uses modern stenographic and laptop computer technology to display conversation, verbatim and in real-time, on a screen, TV monitor, or computer monitor. A highly trained captioner records the communicated message that is read instantly by the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person. Captioners bring and set up their own equipment. Many people with acquired hearing loss are not yet aware of the benefits of this service.

Note: This technology is the preferred method for larger meetings or where clear and precise interpretation is required.

Computerized Note-taking is provided by a trained typist who uses a laptop to summarize the key spoken messages. The person with hearing loss usually sits beside the note-taker and reads the messages on the computer screen.

Writing Notes can ease the flow of conversation when obstacles occur. Key points should be highlighted to ensure that the important information is conveyed. Use either paper and pen, or type on a keyboard to display messages on a screen (computer, TTY).

Acquired Hearing Loss

Chances are that some of your existing employees are experiencing the onset of hearing loss, the fastest growing chronic condition in North America today. While many people do seek help once they realize that they are not hearing as well as they used to, the CHS Awareness Survey conducted in October 2001 indicates that one in five prefers simply to 'live with it'. The average length of time between when a person first realizes a hearing loss to seeking professional help is five to seven years.

People are often reluctant to draw attention to their hearing difficulty, in part due to a natural sense of privacy in discussing disabilities, and partly due to historical misperceptions about hearing loss. Many employees have work-related fears that include:

Stigmatization

- Anxiety about their ability to carry out the job
- Loss of potential career advancement
- Fear of being viewed as "different", "deficient", "less effective"
- Lack of information regarding accommodation

- Lack of awareness of employer's obligation to provide accommodation
- Anxiety about changing jobs and the need to re-educate colleagues

Trying to hide or deny a hearing loss takes its toll, and many employees who choose not to disclose have experienced:

- Leaving job or early retirement due to psychological stress
- Increased illness or absenteeism
- Lowered self-esteem; self-limiting of career
- Being thought of by supervisors and co-workers as "slow", "not sharp", "inattentive"
- Moodiness, withdrawal from social situations
- Decreased communication and poor job performance

Recognizing Signs of Hearing Loss

You may suspect that an employee's performance is affected by an undisclosed hearing loss. Although the law does not allow you to ask the employee outright if he or she has a hearing loss, you can present the relevant performance facts and show your willingness and support to find solutions. Your employee may be experiencing hearing difficulties if she or he:

- Has difficulty conversing in meetings or crowded, noisy situations.
- Feels that speakers are mumbling or not speaking clearly.
- Has problems understanding from a distance.
- Turns up television, radio and other audio sources to a level uncomfortable for other listeners.
- Has difficulty with telephone conversations.
- Complains of buzzing or ringing in the ears.
- Speaks unnecessarily loudly in conversation.
- Asks for words to be repeated and strains to hear.
- Has problems understanding conversation unless face-to-face.
- Nods in conversations, yet answers inappropriately.
- Favours one ear.
- Avoids social contact.

Encouraging Disclosure

An employee who discloses a hearing loss needs your help to make some changes. He or she may have already sought outside guidance and now wants to discuss revision of a job description or accommodation to help continue with the current job.

Disclosing to you may be the first step that he or she has taken in dealing with a hearing loss, in which case you should refer the employee to a physician to start the medical process. Take advantage of any company resources such as Human Resources, staff occupational nurse or an Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) that can provide counselling and support.

In either case, you and the employee need to start talking about accommodation. He or she is likely experiencing many conflicting emotions, and offering your immediate support will go a long way to retaining a valuable employee.

Communication Tips

These simple guidelines can help create the best possible communication between hearing and deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people. The best tip is to be open and willing to discover what works. Ask the person with whom you are speaking for suggestions to improve communication.

The Environment

- * Choose a well-lit area.
- * Speak with the light on your face to make speechreading easier.
- * Eliminate as much noise as possible, closing doors when appropriate.
- * Ask the employee if the setup is suitable and if he or she can understand you.

Technical Tips

- * Write down key phrases and words if required.
- * Use the employee's assistive technical devices.
- * Use text technology such as hand-written notes, computers, email, real-time captioning in meetings and TTY (text telephone) phones.

Personal Communication

- Get the person's attention before you speak. (See below for details.)
- Talk to, not about, the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person.
- Maintain eye contact, and minimize head and body movement.
- Speak clearly and at a normal or slightly slower pace.
- Sit as closely together as is comfortable and professional.
- Facial expressions should match words, and are helpful when a tone of voice can't be heard.
- Your visual attention, facial expressions and physical contact are all very important in creating a bond between you and the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person.
- Do not shout or over-enunciate, which distorts the face and lips.
- Do not indulge in side chat. Although second nature to hearing people, side conversations make deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people feel they are missing important information, which may indeed be the case.
- Don't do anything unexpected from behind the person.
- Don't restrict the person's hands (for writing and/or signing purposes).
- Do not put obstacles in front of your face (i.e. your hands), and refrain from chewing gum or smoking.
- Moustaches and beards on a speaker can make speechreading difficult for some people.
- Give clues when changing the conversation subject.
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, when you are not understood. If you have trouble understanding a person with a hearing loss, ask him or her to repeat what they have said.
- Patience and flexibility are important when establishing communication with a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person.



Getting the Attention of a Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing Person

- Ask how he or she prefers to be approached, i.e. from the side or front so as not to startle.
- Tap the desk or floor to gain attention.
- A shoulder tap is appropriate if the person is near you.
- Wave your hand if he or she is at a distance.
- Flash the room lights for meetings of larger audiences.
- Install a light on the telephone to signal incoming calls.

Communicating in Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, people who are deaf or have a hearing loss may not respond to an auditory signal such as an alarm bell, and it's easy for other employees to forget that not everybody can hear.

Consider modifying your company emergency action plan to recognize the needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people and to ensure appropriate actions are taken in emergency situations. Detailed descriptions of devices that ensure the safety of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing employees are detailed in the section on Workplace Accommodation.

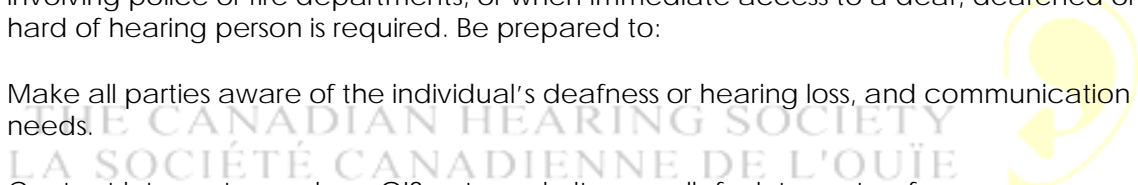
It's important to know how to communicate in situations of medical emergencies, those involving police or fire departments, or when immediate access to a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person is required. Be prepared to:

Make all parties aware of the individual's deafness or hearing loss, and communication needs.

Contact interpreter services. OHS puts a priority on calls for interpreters for emergency situations, and makes every effort to provide assistance as soon as possible.

Use assistive listening devices when appropriate.

Communicate in a well-lit area and do not restrict the person's hands, which are needed for signing, writing or gesturing.



Recruiting and the New Employee

Interviewing, hiring and welcoming a new employee who is deaf or has hearing loss is another step towards becoming an inclusive and accessible organization.

Your recruit or new employee has been hired for his or her skills, experience and potential. Introduce him or her the way you would any new employee, while providing the necessary accommodation. Avoid drawing undue attention to his or her deafness or hearing loss, as this fact is irrelevant to his or her interview or new role in the company.

The Canadian Human Rights Act clearly states an employer's duty to accommodate all types of employment and in all aspects of the employee relationship, from recruitment, training and working conditions to performance appraisals, dismissals or promotions.

This section covers the major stages of integrating a new employee into your organization, starting with the job advertisement.

Recruiting

Management Attitudes: Creating a diverse workforce and accessible environment will work best if your management team willingly supports the presence and contributions of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing employees.

Job Advertisements: Clearly define job descriptions to attract an appropriate pool of applications. By advertising and offering an accessible environment for people of all abilities, you will tap into the largest possible field of workers.

Selection Process: You are looking for qualified and competent applicants to fill a specific position and you should not expect more or less from workers who are deaf or have hearing loss. Expect the same quality of work from all employees.

Volunteers and Interns: Hire deaf, deafened and hard of hearing high school and college students for internship positions. A volunteer program will give workers much-needed business experience while filling some of your organizational gaps.

TTY #: Install a company TTY number and list this number on all pertinent company literature and stationery, including the business cards of key personnel and recruiting staff.

Job Applications

Disclosure of a disability is the responsibility of the applicant or the employee. However, the applicant is not required to do so. In fact, people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing are in most cases advised not to self-disclose in the application or covering letter. In this way, prospective employers can make an unbiased initial evaluation of an applicant's qualifications and experience.

Scheduling the Interview

Some applicants will disclose their deafness or hearing loss when contacted for an interview, although others choose to self-identify during the actual interview.

Applicants may let you know if any accommodation is required for the meeting, such as a sign language interpreter or a computerized note-taker. Many deaf people take the initiative in organizing an interpreter for the first interview. The majority of requested accommodations have no associated costs, i.e. holding the interview in a quiet room. It is, however, the employer's responsibility to supply the requested accommodation. (Note: OIS pays for the cost of sign language interpreters for job interviews.)

When making interview arrangements with an applicant, ask if any accommodation is required for the interview, such as an ASL-English interpreter, captioner or note-taker.

Inform the receptionist you are expecting a candidate who is deaf or has a hearing loss.

Interviewing with an Interpreter

The interpreter should be positioned next to the interviewer so the candidate can look easily at both individuals.

Clarify whether the applicant will speak for him or herself, or whether the interpreter will voice what the applicant signs.

Make eye contact and address your questions directly to the candidate, not the interpreter

For more information on working with an interpreter is located [here](#).

Disclosure During the Interview

The applicant who is deaf or has hearing loss is responsible for requesting any accommodation needs. If no accommodation request was made in advance, you are not expected to find an interpreter or captioner. However, the applicant may have some simple requests at the start of the interview that you will be able to accommodate such as:

- writing down key words
- eliminating background noise
- rearranging the seating
- improving the lighting
- using the applicant's personal listening system

Interview Tips

In addition to normal job-seeking jitters, a candidate may also be worried about the interviewer's attitudes about deafness and hearing loss. Many people with a hearing loss find that their level of residual hearing 'drops' during stressful situations, and extra measures to put the person at ease will be helpful.

When multiple interviewers are involved, allow one person to speak at a time, indicating their intention to do so by raising a hand.

Ask questions about the candidate's deafness or hearing loss only if these relate to the job.

For behavioural interview questions, provide an example or scenario when possible.

Focus on how an applicant's qualifications match the job's requirements.

Where applicable during the interview, ask the candidate to demonstrate his or her skills on equipment, using the computer, etc.

The communication style of Deaf people is often very direct and to the point, in contrast to those without hearing loss, who may use preamble to introduce a new idea

Be aware that it may take a little longer to interview a candidate with hearing loss.

- Use positive language.

Follow the Communication Tips provided in this manual.

Preparing for the New Employee

Hold a meeting of pertinent managers and supervisors to discuss the best ways to facilitate integration.

Provide staff awareness training.

Determine the new employee's communication preferences. A Deaf employee may benefit from having an interpreter for the first day to ensure clear communication and understanding of company policies, benefits, safety issues, lunch and break times. (Note: OIS provides up to seven free hours of interpreting specifically for job orientation.) (LINK) Develop and have orientation materials available in writing.

Initial Job Restructuring

On the first day of the job, discuss any immediate accommodations required with the employee, e.g. for the telephone.

In the discussion on how telephone communication is to be handled, include all employees who will be involved.

If necessary, review job descriptions and agree how tasks will be re-assigned. For example, the employee who is deaf or has a hearing loss may take on duties formerly covered by a hearing worker who will now handle the telephone calls.

Training

Rely on demonstrations whenever possible.

Allow extra communication time for the training process.

Provide an outline or agenda.

Use clear and concise written instructions.

If training videos for equipment or technical systems are not close captioned, obtain scripts from the manufacturer or consider having them captioned.

Assign a willing person to work directly with the new employee during the training period. Offer frequent breaks to alleviate visual fatigue from speechreading and/or watching the sign language interpreter.

Career Advancement

Communicate career opportunities to give employees of all abilities access to the information and equal opportunity to apply. Written notices and email announcements are ideal, as are one-to-one conversations.

Discuss procedures for applying for internal postings.

Provide equal access to training required for job promotion.

Install a TTY in the Human Resources department and train all HR personnel to use it.

Assign a mentor to the new employee.

Educating Other Employees

Use discretion in informing other employees of a worker's hearing loss. Many people prefer to take the lead on either disclosing their hearing loss or keeping it private. It is important that the employee's feelings on disclosure are respected. You should, however, discuss this situation in more detail with the employee if:

- there are safety issues.
- other employees and their ability to do their job are in some way affected by the employee's hearing loss or if they don't understand the reasons for any modifications to the employee's job.
- the employee's own job performance is affected by his or her hearing loss.

If the employee is comfortable in disclosing this information, other co-workers should be informed of how best to communicate. The following are some ideas on how to educate other employees and include your employee who is deaf or hard of hearing:

Schedule awareness training that includes Communication Tips for co-workers ([link](#)). Positive relationships flourish when co-workers understand how the new employee communicates and what his or her job entails, especially if any modification has been made to the position. Awareness training is a service available from The Canadian Hearing Society. Be sure to involve the deaf or hard of hearing employee in this session.

Encourage employees to include the new employee in casual conversations.

Employees appreciate the opportunity to learn sign language (e.g., some signs and finger spelling) to improve communication with Deaf co-workers. This has a proven positive effect on employee morale and productivity.

Socializing on the Job

Employees who communicate well with each other will work well with each other. Provide opportunities for the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person and co-workers to get to know each other on a personal level.

Support and encourage the inclusion of employees who are deaf or have a hearing loss in day-to-day social activities.

Distribute written notices of social events, including the time, place and date.

The Accommodation Plan

Doris

Doris has just been hired to be the front desk receptionist for a small legal firm. She is open about her moderate hearing loss and her hearing aids. Although she has never worked the front desk before, telephone work has not been a problem in the past. However, by the end of the first week on the job, Doris realizes that she is not coping well on the telephone. She is extremely reluctant to admit her problem, as she had assured her employer in her interview that she could handle the job, which she likes and doesn't want to lose.

After making several more mistakes, Doris advises her supervisor that she is having difficulties. The manager is anxious to keep a good employee and he and Doris explore several options. The company obtains a HATIS phone system that works with Doris' hearing aids and dramatically improves her ability to communicate on the phone. Other employees are advised about the new system, why Doris needs it, and how it helps her do the job. Doris takes regular breaks to relieve the stress of a handling a busy switchboard.

Dave

Dave has been a sales manager with a stationery company for 25 years. His hearing has been progressively deteriorating to the point that it is now severe-to-profound. After years of denial and prodding by people close to him, Dave recently obtained hearing aids for the first time.

Dave's boss asked him about other techniques that might help him hear and communicate better on the job. After consultations with a CHS accommodation specialist, Dave's phone was fitted with an amplifier and his office desk was re-situated to allow a better view of the office and approaching people. Computerized note-takers were used at small meetings, real-time captioning provided for important or larger group meetings, and new meeting protocols were introduced to ensure Dave did not miss anything that was communicated during meetings.

Meredith

When she was contacted for an interview for the position Accounts Receivables Manager, Meredith advised that she would require the services of an ASL-English interpreter, which she arranged through Ontario Interpreter Services. A week after the interview, Meredith was offered the job. On the first day of work, she and the company owner had a consultation and agreed on some key accommodations that would facilitate Meredith's ability to do her job, her safety, and communication with clients and co-workers. Interpretation would be provided for weekly meetings with her staff of five people; the office would have TTY's installed at appropriate locations; visual alarms would be installed; company staff would have awareness training and introduction to ASL and fingerspelling. In addition, all company policies would be reviewed to ensure all information be made available to Meredith in writing.

Creating a work situation free of communication barriers is straightforward once the barriers are identified and the accommodation team of employer and employee is established. Others may be involved at some point, but you and your employee are the key players in designing and implementing an accommodation plan that works.

Your company may already have comprehensive accommodation policies and procedures in place, or you may be more informal in your approach. (See Section on Human Resources Policy Models.) The following is a brief summary of a suggested accommodation process. Many accommodation requests from people who are deaf or have a hearing loss are relatively simple in nature, so not all steps may apply in every situation.

Employer and Employee Responsibilities

The Responsibility to Accommodate

The Ontario Human Rights Code is a provincial law that provides equal rights and opportunities without discrimination in specific areas such as employment, housing and services, goods and facilities. The Code states that everyone has the right to be equally treated in employment, to have access to the same opportunities and benefits, and be treated with equal dignity and respect on sixteen grounds, including handicap/disability (R.S.O. 1990, c.H.10 (1) a). In the workplace, employers are required to provide accommodations for persons with disabilities in order to enable them to perform the essential duties of the job.

Employment includes full and part-time, contract work, work done by temporary staff from agencies, probationary periods, and may even include volunteer work. The right to equal treatment in employment applies to every aspect of the employment relationship, including:

- Job applications
- Recruitment
- Training
- Transfers /promotions
- Dismissal/layoffs
- Pay and benefits
- Performance appraisals and discipline
- Working conditions



Employee Responsibilities	Employer Responsibilities
Take the initiative to request accommodation	Respect the dignity of the person seeking accommodation
Explain why accommodation is needed	Assess the need for accommodation based on the needs of the group of which the person is a member
Provide notice of request in writing, and allow a reasonable time for reply	Reply to the request within a reasonable time
Provide enough information to confirm the existence of a disability and the measures of accommodation required	Grant requests related to the accommodation required, short of undue hardship
Deal in good faith	Deal in good faith
Be flexible and realistic	Consider alternatives
Request details of the cost of accommodation if undue hardship may be a factor	If accommodation is not possible because of undue hardship, explain this clearly to the person concerned and be prepared to demonstrate why this is so

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The Accommodation Process – 5 Steps to Successful Accommodation

STEP 1: Employee Makes Accommodation Request (Employee Responsibility)

The employee should provide pertinent information about his or her needs, although she or he is not required to state the exact nature of his or her hearing loss. A medical diagnosis will rarely be relevant to planning accommodation; the key issues are the barriers in the job that affect the performance of job duties.

STEP 2: Employer Response (Employer Responsibility)

Acknowledging the request as soon as possible will help ease any frustrations the employee may be experiencing, and if for any reason you must refuse the request, provide explicit reasons. When committing to an implementation plan with the employee, set out clear timelines for the various stages of the process.

STEP 3: Employee/Employer Initial Meeting

Share responsibility in developing and implementing the entire process. Both parties must develop a clear picture of the job's demands.

Review the job, its duties and challenges, especially those that involve listening and communication, possible outcomes, and set out a process.

The employee should be able to explain why the challenges exist and what possible accommodation would work. This is not always easy for the employee to do, especially if the hearing loss is new and he or she is still unfamiliar with what's available. A CHS hearing loss expert or accommodation specialist may be helpful in the first meeting. (Link to CHS and other resources)

The employee should, if possible, prepare a simple evaluation of the job in terms of his or her deafness or hearing loss. Both parties, plus any other professionals who may be involved such as a union, professional association, or an accommodation specialist, can review the job and develop a plan to reconfigure only those activities affected by the employee's deafness or hearing loss.

The employee may agree to share medical information if it helps identify the best accommodation to adopt. The employer is responsible for any costs associated with obtaining medical information. Access to this information should be restricted to only those who need to know; it should not be put in an employee's file. This will protect both the organization from allegations of discrimination, and the employee from potential discriminatory practices.

The Canadian Hearing Society has a Workplace Communication Assessment Tool (Link) designed to help assess the needs of a workplace looking to become communication barrier-free. Use this tool to develop an Accommodation Plan, or ask a CHS Employment Consultant to use it for you. Contact CHS Employment Services.

STEP 4: Investigating Barriers and Successful Options

The accommodation process should review the requirements of the job and the communication needs of the employee to do the job successfully. It's important to realize that people who are deaf or have hearing loss cope in different ways; there is no 'one size fits all' accommodation plan. Any accommodation plan should enable the employee to carry out the job's identified essential duties, while looking at ways of restructuring, if necessary, non-essential duties.

External expertise is useful in identifying needs and options, selecting solutions and coordinating some or all of the accommodation stages. Internal resources might include a human resources consultant or computer systems staff. Outside resources could include external accommodation specialists such as The Canadian Hearing Society, health care practitioners or physicians, or community organizations involved in deafness and hearing loss advocacy and services (See Resources Page XXX).

What are the qualifications and expectations of the job?

What are the job's essential duties and requirements?

What does the worker do in the course of an average day? Why?

What specific duties are hearing-dependent?

How would others perform these duties?

What is the extent and type of deafness or hearing loss?

What are the channels of communication? For what tasks? With whom?

How does the employee usually communicate, e.g. phone, TTY, using speech, ASL, or via text messaging such as computers, pagers, etc.?

Does the employee benefit from amplification and are hearing aids worn?

Do the hearing aids have telephone coil or direct audio input feature?

Is background noise a problem in the work environment? What is causing the noise (i.e. machines, high volume of conversations, etc.)?

What is the employee's preferred work style?

What are potential workplace hazards for people with hearing loss, if any? What corrective measures are required? What signalling devices could be used (flashing fire alarm, etc.)?

When Reviewing Specific Options:

How well does the option respect the employee's dignity?

How long will it take to arrange?

Is it difficult to learn?

Is it compatible with current office systems?

How compatible is it with the employee's personal and home accommodation supports?

How has the employee successfully used similar accommodations in the past?

How do the options compare in value for the dollar?

When two or more options meet objectives, accommodation provider can choose.

If a trial period demonstrates that an accommodation choice is unsuitable, consider a temporary job restructuring or other interim arrangements while exploring new options.

STEP 5: Evaluating the Accommodation

Sometimes what seemed like a good idea simply doesn't work. On a regular basis, both parties need to review and assess whether the accommodation plan's objectives are being met. The employee should provide feedback on the chosen option's viability and the employer needs to monitor how the employee is performing with it. If "Plan A" is not working, both parties should agree to look for a suitable "Plan B".

It may also be necessary to revisit the accommodation plan when changes to organizational policies and practices create new communication challenges. For example, a change in a computer network could affect an employee's efficient use of a technical aid connected to the system. An employee's hearing loss or needs may change or improve over time, which could change the type of accommodation needed.

Performance reviews should include discussion of the employee's accommodation plan in terms of the effectiveness of the accommodations provided and review of possible updates to the accommodation.

Workplace Accommodation Suggestions

Whether workplace accommodations are very basic or technically advanced, they will increase the efficiency, productivity and safety of deaf, deafened or hard of hearing staff. The types and combination of accommodations used will vary, depending on each employee's preferred mode of communication.

This section suggests accommodations for a variety of workplace situations; use them as a guide to help you develop a suitable Accommodation Plan for your employee and your organization. More detailed information on Technical Devices [here](#).

An Accessible Environment

Environmental accommodations benefit employees of all abilities: they improve visibility and reduce vibrations and distracting noise. Individual workstations, offices or meeting rooms will require different adjustments, depending on the employee's job and communication needs. A skilled CHS Employment Consultant can provide you with an onsite workplace evaluation; contact CHS's Employment Services for details.

The following is a list of environmental accommodations. Not all will be required for individual accommodation plans, although their adoption may help to create effective communication throughout your organization and facilities.

Lighting

- * Room should be well lit to help people who are deaf or have hearing loss see the interpreters or speechread.
- * Avoid backlighting, both from windows and artificial light sources, on speakers and interpreters; it's tiring for the employee who may then miss information.
- * Adjustable lighting for instructors, interpreters, and visual displays is essential, with versatile ball-and-socket spotlights recommended.
- * Proper placement, shielding or diffusion of light sources can control glare. Choose light-blocking curtains, blinds or shades, as well as non-glare room surfaces.
- * Light and other switches should ideally be located in a spot that minimizes disruptions.
- * Install emergency power failure lights.

Other Visual Cues

- * Telephone light flashers alert the employee to incoming calls.
- * Prominent signage at key locations provides directional information.

- * Operational or procedural instructions should be available in written or graphic form whenever possible.
- * Vision panels in doors allow identification of incoming visitors, as well as room activities before entering. Use 'peep sights' when vision panels aren't appropriate.
- * Doors that display room numbers, names and office titles help identification.
- * Visible elevator arrival signals should be in direct line of sight.
- * Desks should be situated for the employee who is deaf or has a hearing loss to see anyone who approaches, and to provide a sight line between co-workers for sign language communication.
- * Convex mirrors can be purchased and placed in locations to provide the deaf employee with greater visibility of the department and what is around the corner.
- * Flashing warning lights on moving vehicles (e.g. tow trucks) and machinery to indicate malfunctions is mandatory for health and safety.

Noise Reduction

Noise can interfere with any person's ability to focus and understand speech, but it is especially difficult for a hard of hearing person to communicate in the presence of background noise. There are many ways to reduce workplace noise that will help ease communication and reduce stress.

- * Situate offices or workstations away from loud and constant external noise such as major roads or construction.
- * Heating and ventilation ducts can be insulated or silencers installed to control duct-borne fan noise.
- * Airflow can be regulated to control noise.
- * Install diffusers, grilles and registers with low sound production ratings for terminal airflow.
- * Design office layouts to provide buffer zones between noisy areas such as high-traffic hallways, cafeterias, meeting rooms, gymnasiums and those areas where a quiet environment is preferred such as work areas and meeting rooms.
- * Carpet with minimum 1/4 inch pile laid without a pad helps reduce noise. Denser carpets reduce noise only marginally and make wheelchair mobility more difficult.
- * Sound-absorbing ceiling materials make work areas quieter.
- * Absorptive panels on opposite walls also reduce sound reverberation. The critical zone for placing acoustic treatment is between 30 - 80in. (76 - 203cm) off the floor. Walls and doors can be insulated against sound transmission.

- * Double-glass windows with airspace between layers reduce sound transmission.
- * Wall and floor insulation can suppress noise from mechanical equipment.
- * Self-contained stairways reduce noise.

High Frequency Sound

Ultra high frequency sound security systems and low-cycle electric transformers can cause problems with hearing aids and should be avoided.

Electrical Interference

- * Anti-static carpet controls static electricity that can interfere with hearing aid operation. Anti-static treatments are also available for carpeting previously installed.
- * Increased humidity minimizes static electricity.

Workstations

The Technical Devices section lists tools that will create an effective employee workstation, including enhancements to computers, telephones, pagers, light systems and other technical areas. Consider the office location and where the desk and computer are situated to allow the best lighting and sight lines.

Meetings, Conferences & Training

- * Interpretative accommodation should be confirmed well in advance of the meeting or training session. Interpreters, captioners, and note-takers appreciate receiving related materials, including agendas, ahead of the event in order to adequately prepare.
- * Real-time captioning is valuable for all participants, including hearing people, in meetings that are long and involve a lot of information.
- * Let the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person determine the best seating arrangement in order to see the speaker and ASL interpreter.
- * Consider a U-shaped or circular room layout for best possible communication.
- * Offer employees frequent breaks to alleviate visual fatigue from speechreading and/or watching the interpreter. Interpreters and captioners also need regular breaks.
- * Use assistive listening devices. Table conference microphones transmit voices to a person's headset; discourage tapping of fingers or pens on table as the sound reverberates in the earphones.
- * Speak clearly and at a moderate rate.
- * Do not pace while giving a presentation.

- * Speak facing the audience; don't talk to the blackboard, screen or overhead presentation.
- * One person speaks at a time. Keep a speaker's list whereby the meeting chairperson will note who wishes to speak and then recognize them in order. This prevents side chats and people interrupting each other.
- * Repeating questions before responding helps clarify questions for the person with hearing loss.
- * Point to the person who is speaking, and/or have speakers identify themselves by putting up their hands. This helps the person who is deaf or has a hearing loss to follow the flow of conversation.
- * Watch for the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person's desire to contribute or make a comment.
- * Incorporate visual aids, demonstrations, flip charts, written agendas and handouts in conversations. Write key words, phrases and changes of topic on the flipcharts or whiteboards.
- * Use a large font size for text displayed on overheads or other visual aids. Larger print is easier to see/read and allows participants to quickly resume concentration on the interpreter, captioner, or on speechreading.
- * Videos should be captioned or have scripts available. If the videos aren't captioned, situate the captioner's projection device (e.g. screen, TV) for the best possible sight line.
- * Some audio-visual equipment such as overhead and slide projectors are noisy, so turn on and off as required.
- * Review critical issues introduced in a meeting to guarantee understanding.
- * Provide detailed minutes or notes for later reference.
- * The employee may want to meet with presenters after meetings and other presentations to get clarification, particularly if note-taking was the only accommodation provided.

Fire and Personal Safety

With the implementation of a few simple precautions deaf, deafened and hard of hearing employees are at no greater risk for job safety than other workers are. In fact, studies have shown that they have substantially better safety records with the implementation of key safety techniques, combined with strict company safety policies ("Keep Deaf Workers Safe", Menchel & Ritter, National Technical Institute of the Deaf, Rochester, New York – 1984).

Employers will usually not find it necessary to buy 'special' equipment, but instead use ordinary safety devices in particular ways. An example is the use of flashing lights, which

can either be incorporated into an existing system or stand-alone. In noisy work environments, employees of all hearing abilities have responded better to the flashing warnings rather than audio alarms.

The following safety suggestions will increase the security of all employees:

- * Incorporate fire and personal safety needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing employees into your emergency procedures and plan.
- * Flashing lights can be hardwired to the existing audio fire alarm.
- * A paging system such as a multiple paging system can be programmed to signal an emergency.
- * A buddy system can be set up to alert the deaf or hard of hearing employee of an emergency.
- * Safety procedures, including exits, extinguishers and hazards should be reviewed with the employee and, if necessary, with an interpreter present.
- * Alerting devices should be placed in all areas an employee who is deaf or has a hearing loss may be such as the main work area, washrooms, lunchrooms, warehouse, lobbies, etc.
- * Security should be notified when a deaf employee is working alone in a specific work area.
- * Emergency interpreter services are available from OIS.

Alerting Safety Devices

Strobe lights flash at high intensity levels, useful in heavy manufacturing areas, office space or large open areas. Strobes can be linked to smoke alarms.

A revolving light is bright red and can be ceiling mounted, usually in large areas such as factories, or on any equipment that poses a possible danger, such as forklifts, trucks, etc.

Safety Equipment

Pagers: Vibrating pagers are widely available in several formats, including a wristwatch. Short messages can also be sent using email technology.

Personal alerting systems for an employee's workstation are available in a variety of formats, including flashing lamps.

Computers can be used to send emergency messages via company email systems.

Safety Apparel: Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing employees working in high-risk areas, such as on construction zones where safety vests and helmet are worn, could wear a symbol on their vests or helmets identifying themselves as deaf or hard of hearing.

Operation of Motor Vehicles

Driving is a visual skill. Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people tend to be more visually vigilant than people with no hearing loss and have above average motor safety records. Enhanced visual aids such as extra side or full-view mirror could be added to motor vehicles.

Technical Devices

Modern technology has opened up a world of communication for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people in the workplace. Computers, instant or real-time text messaging (email, e-pagers, ICQ and chat software) and advancements in telecommunications have boosted the accuracy and speed with which people who are deaf or have hearing loss interact with others.

The following is an overview of the types of technical devices that will assist employees to do their job. Technology is continually changing, so this is by no means an exhaustive list of what is available. CHS technical device experts and employment consultants can help you match a technical device or system to the needs of the employees and organization.

Captioning

Real-Time Captioning, much like court reporting, is provided by a professional captionist trained to convert speech verbatim to print, and is commonly displayed on a television screen, monitor or overhead projector making meetings, discussions and presentations accessible.

Open Captioning, whereby the dialogue and sound effects on a video are displayed across the bottom of the screen, works without the use of a "decoder".

Closed Captioning (CC) appears only through the use of closed caption decoder circuitry. All TVs 13" and larger manufactured after 1993 have built-in decoder circuitry. Separate decoders are available for older televisions.

Training, PR and promotional videos can all be captioned. See Resources for links to companies providing this service.

Telephone Systems

T-switch compatible telephones: Many hearing aid users find they can hear better over the telephone by using the telephone switch (T-switch) on their hearing aids. The T-switch picks up the magnetic field produced by the receiver of telephone.

Amplification

Although most telephone receivers are now made with volume controls, they don't provide sufficient amplification for many people with hearing loss. Special phones offer the necessary volume amplification, regardless of whether the user wears hearing aids. These phones work only on analog, not digital, phone lines.

An in-line amplifier device can be plugged into a modular single or multi-line telephone handset, significantly increasing the volume of the existing telephone.

A portable, battery-operated amplifier can be placed directly over the receiver of any telephone as needed.

Telephone headsets can be custom-made for both comfort and necessary amplification.

Business telephones that are used by employees or clients should also be equipped with amplifiers.

Telephone Ringers: Ringer volumes are adjustable on some phones, including tone ringers that convert the ring of telephones into a more easily heard frequency range. Adjustable add-on loud ringers are available, although loud ringers may not be appropriate in an office environment

HATIS: Hearing Aid Telephone Interconnect System (HATIS) works with any in-the-ear (ITE) and behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids that have a T-switch. HATIS plugs directly into a telephone, forcing the original electronic signals to travel directly to the HATIS device.

TTYs (Teletypewriters - also known as text telephones) & Telephone Relay Service: TTY or TTY-compatible devices are telephones that use typed conversation to communicate on standard phone lines between TTY users. Computers can be configured to function as a TTY by adding a special modem and purchasing TTY software. There are many styles of TTYs, including small portable units.

TTY telephones consist of a keyboard and small LED display. Some TTYs are used in conjunction with conventional phones, while others plug directly into the phone jack. Public pay phones can be equipped with TTYs.

For information and etiquette on using a TTY refer to the CHS's booklet, *Get Connected to Your TTY*.

If both the caller and the receiver have a TTY, the call can take place directly person to person. If, however, one of the parties does not have a TTY, they can still communicate through a telephone relay operator using a toll-free number (link to info on relay #'s in Canada).

Relay service operators are trained to use the TTY technology, trained in relaying calls, and have a strict code of ethics to ensure confidentiality.

Voice Carry Over (VCO): VCO phones are specially designed for deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people who wish to use their own voice, to speak directly to the other person on the telephone and read the other person's response on a text display. The call is made with the help of a toll-free relay service.

Telephone or TTY Alerting Devices: alerting or signalling devices indicate that the phone is ringing through a visual signal such as a flashing light, or through vibration.

Paging Systems

Many types of paging systems are available, providing text, numeric and email services. Some workplaces use a paging system strictly for emergency situations.

E-mail

E-mail technology, including e-paging, has helped create a level playing field for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people. Email communication is a valuable tool for instant, inexpensive access to people and information.

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)

Technical systems, used with or without hearing aids, allow the user to hear speech more easily. The speaker uses a microphone and the person with hearing loss listens through a receiver. ALDs reduce background noise and allow the listener to focus on the speaker.

People with hearing loss have trouble distinguishing speech over a distance, no matter how loud it is. Loudspeakers may disperse sound evenly, but they can't account for differences in hearing levels. A wireless hearing assistance system brings sound directly to the ears, so people can receive the information more clearly and completely.

FM systems: FM systems are relatively inexpensive, simple to install, extremely reliable and deliver high-quality sound to the listener and are the most widely used system. Using a receiver or headset, the consumer can hear from anywhere in the venue.

Personal FM systems are excellent for one-on-one interactions. For example, a presenter clips the microphone to her lapel, taking care to repeat any questions or comments from others in the audience, to ensure that persons with hearing loss do not miss any information.

Table FM conference microphones can be placed in the centre of a table and will send sound directly into the employee's earphones or hearing aids.

Infrared Systems: Infrared systems operate through the modulation and transmission of infrared light, which is captured by a line-of-sight receiver. Because the transmission does not pass through any opaque surfaces, such as walls, curtains or people, this system can provide privacy.

Portable Communication Devices: The 'Pocket Talker' is a good example of a portable one-to-one communication device. Speech is picked up by the microphone and the sound is then carried directly to the headset worn by the hard of hearing person. This minimizes background noise.

Computers

Computer technology is advancing at a rapid rate. Here are some adjustments that are currently available to enhance computer communications for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

- * Auditory cues, such as beeps and bells, can be replaced with visual cues - screen or cursor flashers, pop-up windows, etc.

- * E-mail and chat software can be installed to allow deaf, deafened and hard of hearing workers to communicate easily and in real time.

Fax Machines

Fax transmission offers a quick and easy way to send hard copy documents or hand-written notes and are now available in small, portable formats.

Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing technology connects participants at two or more sites by using computer networks to transmit audio and video data. It's an effective way of connecting staff and clients when travel time and expense are issues. Interpreting and real-time captioning can also be incorporated.

Government Incentives

Many provincial governments offer incentives to encourage businesses to recruit and hire people with disabilities. See the Resources section (LINK) for some important Websites, or contact your local taxation office for information about available supports in your area.

Volunteers

Many deaf, deafened and hard of hearing students and job seekers are willing to volunteer their services in return for work experience. By offering volunteer positions, your company will benefit from workers who are motivated, eager to learn and who will enrich your organizational culture.

Your workplace may already be accessible by the time you welcome volunteers who are deaf or have hearing loss. If not, you can discuss their communication needs with them as you would any new employee. Most required accommodation costs little to provide.

