

DISABILITY ACCESS RESOURCES

FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS



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Guidebook prepared by
FAIR HOUSING PARTNERS OF WASHINGTON STATE
Washington State Human Rights Commission
King County Office of Civil Rights
Seattle Office for Civil Rights
Tacoma Human Rights and Human Services Department
Fair Housing Center of Washington
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance

Other publications available from the Fair Housing Partners

Fair Housing in Washington State: 100 Frequently Asked Questions
Reasonable Accommodations for People with Disabilities
Service Animals
Tenant on Tenant Harassment

Contact agency: King County Office of Civil Rights
400 Yesler Way, Room 260
Seattle, WA 98104-2683
206-296-7592, TTY 206-296-7596
www.metrokc.gov/dias/ocre/ho

Note: Inclusion in this resource list does not constitute endorsement by the Fair Housing Partners of Washington State, nor does omission imply non-endorsement. Our goal is to provide you with information on some available key resources. Please let us know if you are aware of a useful resource missing from this list.

ALTERNATE FORMATS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Key to Quality Service

The key to providing quality services to people with disabilities is to remember that all people are individuals. People with disabilities come in all shapes and sizes with diverse personalities, abilities, interests, needs, and preferences – just like every other person. There are an estimated 54 million people with disabilities, or 20% of the population – the nation's largest minority group.

Below are some basic tips for interacting with people who have disabilities. Keep in mind that in most cases, the best way to learn how to accommodate people with disabilities is to ask them directly. When interacting with people who have disabilities, appropriate etiquette is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Listen and learn from what the person tells you regarding his or her needs.

Serving People Who Have Disabilities

- Most disabilities occur after childhood as a result of injury, disease, or disorders (one out of every six disabilities is present at birth.)
- Two people with a similar disability may not have similar needs.
- Many disabilities are not apparent to a casual observer, and are sometimes called "hidden" or "invisible" disabilities. Examples are diabetes, heart disease, cancer, epilepsy, sickle-cell anemia, organ transplant, or emphysema.
- Some disabilities are variable from day to day. Some conditions are progressive, becoming more severe over time. Keep this in mind if you notice a person who appears to be walking, talking or seeing fine one day, but not the next.
- Some disabling conditions involve pain or require medication or treatments that have side effects. This may be the reason why a person with a disability exhibits restlessness, drowsiness, slurred speech, slowed reflexes, even irritability.
- Some people who are chemically sensitive experience uncomfortable or even dangerous symptoms in the presence of certain substances, such as scented personal products, cleaning products, and new carpeting or furniture. If necessary, move to a different location.

Serving People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Get the person's attention before starting a conversation (move into the person's field of vision or tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
- Identify who you are (introduce yourself or show your name badge).
- Look directly at the person; face the light; speak clearly and in a normal tone of voice; use short, simple sentences; and keep your hands away from your face.
- Ask the person if it would be helpful to communicate by writing or by using a computer terminal to type back and forth.
- If the person uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not to the interpreter.
- If you telephone a person who is deaf or hard of hearing*, let the phone ring longer than usual; speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.
- If you telephone a person who uses a TTY, call directly by TTY or use the Telecommunications Relay Service. Consider purchasing a TTY.

* Someone who self-identifies as Deaf or Hard of Hearing may use either a voice telephone or a TTY. In either case, let the phone ring longer than usual.

Serving People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

- Speak to the person when you approach her or him. State clearly who you are; speak in a normal tone of voice.
- Avoid distracting a guide dog – never touch or talk to the dog without first asking the owner.
- To guide a person who is blind, let him or her grasp your arm just above the elbow and the person will follow a half step behind. Note: While this technique is typical, some people may prefer to put a hand on your forearm or shoulder. Be open and flexible.
- Offer assistance if the person appears to have difficulty. Be descriptive when giving directions; give the customer verbal information that is visually obvious to people who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many and the direction.
- If you are offering a seat, gently place the person's hand on the back or arm of the chair.
- Ask if the person needs assistance signing forms. Offer to guide her or his hand to the appropriate space for signature.
- When dealing with money transactions, tell the person the denominations when you count out change.
- Tell the person when you are leaving; never leave a person who is blind talking to an empty space.
- Make sure the person has picked up all of her or his possessions before leaving.

Serving People With Mobility Disabilities

- Put yourself at a wheelchair user's eye level. If possible, sit next to the person when having a conversation.
 - Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device. Ask first before pushing someone's wheelchair.
 - Provide a clipboard as a writing surface if counters or reception desks are too high; come around to the customer side of the desk/counter during your interaction.
 - Offer assistance if the person appears to have difficulty opening doors.
 - Make sure there is a clear path of travel.
 - Offer a chair if a person will be standing for a long period of time.
 - Avoid distracting a service animal – never touch or talk to the animal without first asking the owner.
 - If you telephone the person, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the telephone.
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Serving People With Cognitive Disabilities

- Offer assistance with and/or extra time for completion of forms, understanding written instructions, writing checks, and/or decision-making; wait for the person to accept the offer of assistance; do not "over-assist."
 - Speak clearly. Do not shout, exaggerate, or over-pronounce. Use a normal tone of voice and normal speed unless asked to slow down.
 - Keep your concepts clear and concise. Use precise language and avoid complex sentences. Sometimes it is helpful to break down complicated concepts or processes into discrete one-by-one steps and deal with them sequentially.
 - Be prepared to provide an explanation more than once.
 - A person who has difficulty reading or writing may prefer to take forms home to complete.
 - Be patient, flexible, and supportive; take time to understand the person and make sure the person understands you.
 - Consider moving to a quiet or private location, if in a public area with many distractions.
-

Serving People With Speech Disabilities

- If you do not understand something, do not pretend that you do. Ask the person to repeat the statement, then repeat it back to the person. Consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the person if this is acceptable.
 - Be patient; take as much time as necessary.
 - Try to ask questions that require only short answers or a nod of the head.
 - Concentrate on what the person is saying; focus on listening and communicating.
 - Avoid barriers like glass partitions and distractions, such as noisy, public places.
 - Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish her or his sentences. However, if communication continues to be very difficult, you may ask permission to try to finish sentences or clarify ideas. If okay with the person, then go ahead and use this strategy.
 - If you and the person cannot work out a communication difficulty, ask if there is someone who could interpret on the customer's behalf.
 - Discuss private or personal matters in a private room to avoid staring or eavesdropping by other people, as you would do for anyone.
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Remember . . .

- Treat the person with dignity, respect, and courtesy.
- Listen to the person.
- Help the person feel comfortable.
- Maintain eye contact without staring.
- Offer assistance but do not insist.
- Ask the person to tell you the best way to help.
- Provide access to facilities and services.
- Relax and deal with unfamiliar situations in a calm, professional manner.

Adapted from a July 1998 publication of President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (now the Office of Disability Employment Policy), www.dol.gov/dol/odep.

Community Services for the Blind and Partially Sighted has an online Resource Guide at www.csbps.com/resource_guide.pdf.

DISABILITY LANGUAGE AND ETIQUETTE

LANGUAGE

Language is continually evolving, and that includes language related to people with disabilities. Staying current is important, not to show that you are "politically correct" but to communicate effectively and with respect. What you say and write may enhance the dignity of people with disabilities or inadvertently reflect stereotypes and negative attitudes.

Some words and phrases don't recognize the broad range of capabilities of people with disabilities. People with disabilities don't need or want to be pitied, nor should they be deemed "courageous" or "special" as they accomplish daily activities or work.

Remember, refer to the person first, not the disability. For example, "person who uses a wheelchair" or "person who has arthritis" is preferred over "the wheelchair person" or "the arthritic." These last terms defines the disability as the person rather than as one aspect of his/her life. This general rule may be different within some communities, such as those who are blind or deaf. Individuals in these groups often self-identify as "blind person" or "deaf person." Also, mention the disability only when it is relevant to the discussion.

"Handicap" and "disability" are not synonyms! Disability is a generic term for a condition which may affect a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech, or cognitive function (such as paraplegia, deafness, AIDS). Handicap describes a barrier that is environmental or attitudinal (such as no ramps or elevator, information not available in Braille, negative stereotypes).

ETIQUETTE

If you've never directly interacted with someone with a disability, it is not unusual to feel uncertain about what to do. Here are a few tips.

Shaking hands is usually welcome. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting. With some, you may want to take the cue from the person with a disability. (If someone is blind, she won't see your extended hand; wait to see if she extends hers.)

When talking with a disabled person, look at and speak directly to that person rather than to a companion, aide, or sign language interpreter.

Common words and phrases are okay to use. For example, it's fine to say "see you later" to a blind person, or "Do you want to go for a walk?" to someone who uses a wheelchair.

**When referring to people with disabilities,
choose words that reflect dignity and respect, such as:**

Inappropriate language	Appropriate language
the disabled, the blind, the deaf	people with disabilities, the disability community ("disabled" is an adjective, so must be accompanied by a noun.), the blind community, the Deaf community
crippled, suffers from, afflicted with, stricken with, victim of, invalid	has a disability, is a person with a disability, physically disabled, walks with a cane, uses leg braces
normal person, healthy, whole	non-disabled, person without disabilities, able-bodied
impaired, impairment	disabled, has a disability
hearing impaired, hearing impairment	deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened
visually impaired, visual impairment	low vision, blind
wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair person	wheelchair user, person who uses a wheelchair
handicap parking, disabled parking	accessible parking, disability parking
dumb, mute	person who cannot speak, has difficulty speaking, uses synthetic speech, is non-vocal, non-verbal
stutterer, tongue-tied	person who has a speech or communication disability
CP victim, spastic	person with cerebral palsy
epileptic	person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder
fit, attack	seizure, epileptic episode or event
crazy, lunatic, insane, nuts, deranged, psycho	people with emotional disorders, mental illness, mental disability, psychiatric disability
retard, mentally defective, moron, idiot, imbecile, Down's person, mongoloid	developmentally disabled, developmentally delayed, person with mental retardation, person with Down syndrome
slow learner, retarded	has a learning disability, person with specific learning disability
dwarf, midget	person of small stature, short stature; little person
paraplegic, quadriplegic	man with paraplegia, woman who is paralyzed, person with spinal cord injury
birth defect	congenital disability, disabled from birth
post-polio, suffered from polio	person who had polio
homebound	stay-at-home, hard for the person to get out

TIPS FOR PROVIDING WRITTEN MATERIALS IN ALTERNATE FORMATS

What is an alternate format? Why do I need to provide alternate formats?

The federal Fair Housing Act, local fair housing laws, and other disability access laws require housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. One common reasonable accommodation request that housing providers may receive is to make your written materials available in alternate formats, such as large print, Braille, computer disk, or audio cassette tape.

When a person with a disability makes a request for print materials in alternate formats, you should provide the material in the requested form when possible. You do not have to grant the request if it would result in an undue financial or administrative hardship. If someone requests a particular alternate format, you may offer other alternatives (for example, if you get a request for Braille, you may mention that you could provide it on computer disk instead).

How can I let people know that my written materials are available in alternate formats?

You can notify your applicants, tenants or prospective home buyers that alternate formats are available upon request by adding a short statement to your written materials (such as forms, lists of tenancy rules, rental agreements, sales agreements, etc.). There is no specific language prescribed for the notification. You may want to state "This material is available in alternate formats upon request" or simply "alternate formats available". We recommend that this notification sentence be in a sans serif, 14-18 point font for those who can read large print.

There is no obligation to have an alternate format immediately available; however, when an alternate format is requested, you should provide the alternate material in a timely fashion. Depending on the alternate format requested and the length of the document, it may take a few minutes to a few weeks to provide.

Where can I obtain alternate formatted materials?

Large Print: This is the easiest alternate format to provide. You can ask the person requesting the document what size print they want, and simply use your copy machine "zoom" feature to enlarge the material. Or, if the document was produced using Word or a similar word processing program, you can quickly change the print size (and font style, if necessary), and print out a large print copy.

Computer Disk: This is relatively easy to provide as an alternate format, particularly if the document was produced using Word or a similar word processing program. You may need to discuss whether the type of document you have is compatible with the requestor's software (PDF files may not be accessible for some people).

Braille: It will take more time to provide Braille versions of documents. If the document is fairly short and straightforward, it is possible to get a document Brailled within a few days. If the document is longer and/or complex, you will need to confirm delivery date with the vendor. Make certain the information is in a format the Braille provider can use.

RESOURCES FOR ALTERNATE FORMATS

Braille Transcription:

Washington Braille Access Center

Washington School for the Blind
2310 East 13th Street
Vancouver, WA 98661

Contacts: Colleen Lines and Kandi Lukowski
Telephone: 360-696-6321, ext. 158 Voice
TTY: 360-696-6321, ext. 171
Fax: 360-737-2120
e-mail: braille@wssb.wa.gov
Web site: www.wssb.wa.gov

- you may send the document to be Brailled by e-mail or on disk
- the file should be in Word, WordPerfect, or a text file
- if the file is in PageMaker, you will need to convert it to a different type of file
- if you have only a print copy, it can be scanned or re-typed for an additional fee
- costs vary, so confirm estimated cost with the vendor you select
- Brailled materials will be sent to you with an invoice
- you may request that the Braille materials be sent directly to the requesting person free of charge via the U.S. Postal Service "Free Matter for the Blind"

Audio Cassette Tape:

State Audio Services

Attn: Pam Wilson
Department: Disability Support Services
Central Washington University
400 East 8th Avenue
Ellensburg, Washington 98926-7431

Telephone: 509-963-2171
TTY: 509-963-2143
Fax: 509-963-3235
e-mail: WilsonP@cwu.edu

Send a print copy of the material you need recorded. Within a day or two, they will fax back a quote and an order form. E-mail is an option, though admittedly not reliable. If you send something via e-mail, be sure the document you send can be read by Corel WordPerfect.

Free Postage When Mailing Braille, Large Print, and Audio Tapes

Most alternate formatted materials can be mailed free through the U.S. Postal Service to people who are blind, low vision, or who cannot use or read conventionally printed materials due to a physical disability. This includes brochures, information sheets, booklets, and other reading matter, in Braille, large print (14-point or larger), or on tape. To use this service, omit stamps and print the words "Free Matter for the Blind & Handicapped" in the upper right hand corner of the envelope or package. These materials are subject to inspection by the Postal Service and may not contain any advertising. Handwritten or typewritten letters are subject to regular postage.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE

The federal Fair Housing Act, local fair housing laws, and other disability access laws require housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. Here are some helpful tips for communicating with deaf or hard of hearing applicants or tenants.

Background

Hearing disabilities may come at any time in a person's life, and hearing abilities vary widely. Some are born with no hearing, while others lose it gradually over time. Whether a person has a memory of sound can make a difference in the way they experience language, including written language. Do not be surprised if a person who is deaf or hard of hearing uses words differently. Remember, sign language may be their primary language, and English a second language.

Deaf and hard of hearing people communicate in different ways, depending on several factors – age at which deafness began, type of deafness, language skills, speech abilities, personality, intelligence, family environment, and educational background. Some people are more easily understood than others. Some use speech only ... or a combination of sign language, fingerspelling, and speech ... or writing ... or body language and facial expression.

Communication Strategies

You can communicate in several ways. And remember – deaf and hard of hearing people have successfully navigated a "hearing world" for years and are more than willing to help facilitate communication. The key is to find out which combination of techniques works best with each person. Keep in mind that it is not how you exchange ideas but that you do.

For someone who primarily uses sign language, use these guidelines for service when the communication will be short, simple and straightforward. If the information being conveyed is more complex, is of longer duration or is related to legal matters, you may need to engage the services of a sign language interpreter. For more information, see the section titled "Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter" on page 16.

One-to-One

Get the deaf person's attention before speaking. Call out the person's name; if that is not successful, a tap on the shoulder, a wave, or another visual signal usually does the trick.

Identify who you are. Introduce yourself or show your name badge or business card.

Ask about communication strategy. Ask if it would be helpful to communicate by writing or by using a computer terminal to type back and forth. If so, see "In Writing" below.

Background noise. The noise level in a room can make a big difference. Be aware that a person with partial hearing may have trouble hearing in certain situations. You may need to locate a quiet place in which to converse, with little or no background noise.

Key the deaf person in to the topic of discussion. Deaf people need to know the subject matter in order to pick up words that help them follow conversation. This is especially important for deaf people who depend on speechreading.

Look directly at the person when speaking and maintain eye contact with deaf person. Eye contact conveys the feeling of direct communication. Even if an interpreter is present, continue to speak directly to the deaf person. He/she will turn to the interpreter as needed.

Do not place anything in your mouth when speaking. Mustaches that obscure the lips, smoking, pencil chewing, and putting your hand in front of your face all make it difficult for a deaf person to follow the conversation.

Speak slowly and clearly, but do not yell, exaggerate, or over-pronounce. Exaggeration and overemphasis of words distorts lip movements, making speechreading more difficult. Try to enunciate each word, without force or tension. Short sentences are easier to understand than long ones.

Use the "I" and "you" when communicating through an interpreter, not "Tell him..." or "Does she understand?"

Avoid standing in front of a light source, such as a window or bright light. The glare and shadows created on the face make it almost impossible for the deaf person to speechread.

First repeat, then try to rephrase a thought if you have problems being understood. Don't hesitate to try communicating by pencil and paper if necessary. Getting the message across is more important than the medium used.

Use pantomime, body language, and facial expression to help supplement your communication. A lively speaker always is more interesting to watch.

Be courteous to the deaf person during conversation. If the telephone rings or someone knocks at the door, excuse yourself and tell the deaf person that you are responding to the knock or answering the phone. Do not ignore the deaf person and carry on a conversation with someone else while the deaf person waits.

Potential speech issues. Some people who are deaf or hard of hearing may not speak or may have speech that is difficult to understand. Focus on listening and communicating. Here are some tips:

- If you do not understand something, do not pretend that you do. Ask the person to repeat the statement, then repeat it back.
- Be patient and take as much time as necessary.
- Try to ask questions that require only short answers or a nod of the head.
- Avoid barriers like glass partitions and distractions, such as noisy, public places.
- Discuss private or personal matters in a private room to avoid staring or eavesdropping by others, as you would do for any other individual.

Note: For conducting brief business, a deaf person may bring along someone to act as their interpreter. This interpreter should be viewed similar to any hired interpreter, and you should direct your attention and communication to the deaf or hard of hearing person.

In a Group

Ask about communication strategy. As in one-to-one situations, ask the person what communication option(s) will be effective: sign language interpreter, assistive listening, providing a notetaker, etc.

Use an interpreter in a large group setting. In such a situation, an interpreter makes communication much more effective for deaf or hard of hearing participants who primarily use sign language. The interpreter will be a few words behind the speaker in translating the information. Therefore, allow time for the person to obtain all the information and ask questions.

Use a note taker when possible to record information. It is difficult for many deaf or hard of hearing people to pay attention to a speaker and take notes simultaneously.

Assistive listening devices. If the deaf person uses an assistive listening device, familiarize yourself with its operation. Read the instruction booklet and test it out before the meeting or event.

Seat the deaf or hard of hearing person to his/her best advantage. This usually means a seat near the speaker, so that the person can see the speaker's lips. If possible, use a round table or semi-circular seating so that he/she can see everyone's face. Usually, the person will know best where to sit. Also take into consideration lighting in the area, so that the speaker is illuminated clearly.

Provide new vocabulary in advance. It is difficult to speechread and read the fingerspelling of unfamiliar vocabulary. If new vocabulary cannot be presented in advance, write the terms on paper, a whiteboard, or overhead projector, if possible. A brief outline or script provided in advance helps the person follow the presentation.

Avoid unnecessary pacing and speaking when writing on a whiteboard. It is difficult to speechread a person in motion, and impossible to speechread someone whose back is turned. Write or draw on the board, then face the group and explain the material. If you use an overhead projector, do not look down at it while speaking.

Use visual aids if possible. Vision is a deaf or hard of hearing person's primary channel for receiving information. Make full use of visual aids, including films, overhead projectors, diagrams, and whiteboards. Give participants time to read before you speak.

Make sure the deaf person doesn't miss vital information. Write out any changes in meeting times, special assignments, additional instructions, etc. Allow extra time when referring to manuals and texts, since deaf and hard of hearing people must look at the written material, and then return their attention to the speaker.

Slow down the pace of communication slightly to facilitate understanding. Many speakers talk too fast. Allow extra time for the person to ask or answer questions.

Repeat questions or statements made from the back of the room and point to the person speaking. Remember, deaf and hard of hearing people are cut off from whatever happens outside their visual area.

Allow full participation by the deaf or hard of hearing person in the discussion. It is difficult for deaf people to participate in group discussion because they are not sure when the speakers have finished. Be aware of turn taking and try to give the person a chance to look at the various participants before each speaks.

Use hands-on experience whenever possible in training situations. Like other people, deaf and hard of hearing people learn quickly by "doing."

In Writing

Always ask a deaf or hard of hearing person if they prefer written communication. Do not assume that this is the preferred method. When using written communication, take into consideration their English and writing skills. Their skills may depend on whether their hearing loss was present at birth or developed later in life, what teaching method was used in their education, and which communication method they prefer. Also, if the person is deaf and has low vision (deaf-blind), use a black felt-tip pen so letters are dark and thicker for greater readability.

Keep your message short and simple. Establish the subject area, avoid assumptions, and make your sentences concise.

It is not necessary to write out every word. Short phrases or a few words often are sufficient to convey the information.

Do not use "yes and "no" questions. Open-ended questions ensure a response that allows you to see if your message was understood correctly.

Face the deaf person after you have written your message. If you can see each other's facial expressions, communication will be easier and more effective.

Use visual representations if you are explaining specific or technical vocabulary to a deaf person. Drawings, diagrams, etc., help the person comprehend the information.

Service Animals

Some deaf or hard of hearing people use service animals called "hearing dogs" which alert them to sounds such as a telephone, doorbell, fire alarm, or car horn. The service animal may accompany its owner most anywhere (except, for example, into the swimming pool). These animals are not required to have any special identification card, collar or harness. For more information, see the Service Animals Sample Policy online at www.metrokc.gov/dias/ocre/sample2.htm.

How to Alert People About Your Accessibility

It's important to make sure your applicants and tenants who are deaf know you have accessible services. One way is to include your TTY number next to your voice phone number on all brochures, flyers or other printed material you share with the public (if you have no TTY, include the Relay Service number, 711).

Some information in this handout is based on a publication by Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services (ADWAS).

TIPS FOR USING A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

The federal Fair Housing Act, local fair housing laws, and other disability access laws require housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. In some cases, a housing provider will be required to provide sign language interpreter services.

When should I get an interpreter?

Interpreters facilitate communication between hearing and deaf people during rental or sales tours, meetings and other group situations, or when you will be communicating with a deaf person about detailed, lengthy, or complex information. If an applicant or resident requests that you provide a sign language interpreter, you must give the request consideration. If the request is reasonable considering the communication needs, you should provide one at your expense.

What is the role of the interpreter?

An interpreter's role is strictly that of a communication "tool." It is the responsibility of an interpreter to relay communication between two parties via sign language and voice. Interpreters sign everything that is said and say everything that is signed. Per the Code of Ethics for interpreters, the interpreter is not permitted to voice personal opinions or enter the conversation.

Where do I go to get an interpreter?

There are various local resources that work with a number of interpreters. Information on these resources is at the end of this section. You may also establish your own list of interpreters and contact them directly.

What information do I need to give to the interpreter service?

- Date, time, location and expected length of the assignment
- Type of situation (tour, rental meeting, etc.)
- Names of interpreters with whom the deaf or deaf-blind person prefers to work (Many people prefer to work with specific interpreters, based on their different skills and individual communication needs.)
- Particular communication needs the deaf person has noted (for example, American Sign Language–ASL, Pidgin Signed English–PSE, or Signed Exact English–SEE. Others may prefer an oral interpreter. Also, it is important to consider that some deaf-blind people prefer a "tactile interpreter." Ask the deaf or deaf-blind person.

The interpreter service will seek to match the skills of the interpreter with the requirements of the situation.

When do I need to get two interpreters?

If a meeting will last more than an hour and a half, it is recommended to have two interpreters. It is difficult to interpret for more than an hour and a half. If the meeting will take longer, two interpreters will work on a rotating basis. Interpreters rotate every 15-20 minutes in order to remain fresh and provide effective, accurate communication.

How much will it cost to have an interpreter?

Fees can vary dependent upon the type of interpreting required (office meeting, legal proceedings, etc.) and the interpreter's certification level and experience. Fees are hourly, but some interpreters have a 2-hour minimum charge. In addition, mileage, travel time, and parking costs may be charged. Fees should be agreed upon by you and the interpreter or referral service before the service is performed; fees should not be discussed with the deaf person.

How do I alert people that interpreter services are available?

A housing provider can advise all applicants and tenants of their willingness to provide accommodations by noting on application forms, rental agreements, and rules or regulations that "reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request."

Because it can take some time to make arrangements for interpreters, for group meetings you will need to know ahead of time if interpreters are needed. You may include a statement on your meeting notice or flyer such as "Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon advance request. Please contact us at least two weeks before this event." [Note: If a person misses a deadline given, a housing provider must still make an effort to get an interpreter even with short notice.]

Working with an Interpreter: Some Tips

Before the meeting starts, it is helpful to meet with the interpreter to explain what will be covered. Provide the interpreter with copies of the agenda and other print materials for review and to follow as the meeting progresses. Ask the interpreter about any additional needs, such as a glass of water, a comfortable chair, etc.

When setting up at the beginning of the meeting, the interpreter and deaf or deaf-blind person will work with you to figure out the best positioning for each of you to ensure effective and comfortable communication.

Treat the interpreter as a professional. Introduce the interpreter to the group and explain why he/she is attending. The interpreter should be given the same privileges as the other group members, for example, lunch or other meals provided.

Speak directly to the deaf or deaf-blind person, not the interpreter, when using the interpreter to communicate. For example, say "Do you have anything you would like to add?" rather than "Does he/she have anything to add?" Speak directly to the deaf person.

Speak clearly, in a normal tone, and at a normal pace. If there is a problem with keeping up, the interpreter or the deaf or deaf-blind person may ask the speaker to slow down or repeat a word or sentence for clarification.

Direct eye contact. While direct eye contact is valued particularly in one-to-one meetings, direct eye contact on the part of the deaf or deaf-blind person is not always possible because the deaf or deaf-blind person will need to watch while the interpreter signs.

Remember that the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker. Give the interpreter time to finish so that the deaf or deaf-blind person can ask questions or join the discussion.

Permit only one person to speak at a time during group discussions. It is difficult for an interpreter to follow several people speaking at once. Ask for a brief pause between speakers to permit the interpreter to finish before the next speaker starts. It can be helpful to ask people to raise their hands and wait to speak after they have been recognized. Also, if a deaf-blind person is at the meeting or event, it is appropriate etiquette for effective communication for each participant to state her or his name before speaking so the deaf-blind person knows who is talking.

Schedule breaks during the meeting. Following a sign language or oral interpreter for a long time is tiring for a deaf or deaf-blind person and for the interpreter. Talk with the interpreter about when to take periodic, brief breaks.

Provide good lighting for the interpreter. If the interpreting situation requires darkening the room to view slides, videotapes, or films, auxiliary lighting is necessary so that the deaf or deaf-blind person can see the interpreter. If a small lamp or spotlight cannot be obtained, check to see if room lights can be dimmed but still provide enough light to see the interpreter.

If it is a large group setting, solid color backgrounds are helpful for platform interpreting.

As a final courtesy, thank the interpreter after the service has been performed. If there have been any problems or misunderstandings, let the interpreter or referral service know. Also, ask the deaf or deaf-blind person if the service was satisfactory. It is a polite gesture to inform the referral service of your satisfaction with the interpreter.

One Last Note ...

American Sign Language (ASL) is a language in its own right, with its own grammar, syntax and structure which includes using body and facial expression. It is important to realize that you are dealing with two different languages and that it may be necessary to rephrase or repeat your point. Examples are helpful to use for clarification.

ASL (American Sign Language) Interpreter Services

Sign On

1414 Dexter Avenue N., #316
Seattle, WA 98109

206-632-7100 Voice
206-632-4045 Fax
206-632-7200 TTY
e-mail: terps@signonasl.com

To request an interpreter, call, fax, or e-mail. Remember to include key details about the assignment (name, organization, date/time/location, and type of situation). The SignOn group scheduler can quickly confirm who is available to do the assignment. If you leave a message, SignOn will get back to you within a day (usually the same day) and let you know if they have interpreter(s) available for the assignment.

Terp Services

607 S. 17th Street
Renton, WA 98055

425-687-0413 Voice
425-687-8540 Fax
e-mail: moeshort@terpservices.com

To request an interpreter, call Terp Services and give them your name, organization, date/time/location of the assignment, and a description of the meeting and/or event. They will call you back and let you know if they have interpreters available for the assignment.

ASL Interpreter Network

7409 Greenwood Avenue N., Suite D
Seattle, WA 98106

206-527-9555 voice/TTY
206-527-9557 fax
Email: info@aslnetwork.com

To request an interpreter, call ASL Interpreter Network, providing the name of the client, date and time, location, contact name and number, and billing information. Or fill out the online request form at www.aslnetwork.com.

For interpreter referral centers elsewhere in Washington state, check DeafWeb online at www.deafweb.org/signlang.htm#interp_referral.

Note: Inclusion in this resource list does not constitute our endorsement, nor does omission imply non-endorsement. Our goal is to provide you with information on some available key resources. Please let us know if you are aware of a useful resource missing from this list.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICES

Introduction

Some people with disabilities (those who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing, or speech disabled) may find voice-to-voice telephone communications inaccessible or ineffective. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all states are required to have certain relay services available.

The federal Fair Housing Act, local fair housing laws, and other disability access laws require housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. In some cases, a housing provider will need to communicate with some people via a telecommunications relay service.

There are three types of relay services:

- TTY, Voice Carry-Over (VCO), Hearing Carry-Over (HCO) – one of the parties to a call uses a TTY.
- Speech-to-Speech (STS) – one of the parties to a call has a speech disability.
- Video Relay Service (VRS) – one of the parties to a call uses sign language, communicated by camera. [Note: Due to technical issues, this service is not legally required by the FCC. In Washington state, we have VRS available.]

TTY RELAY

What is a TTY?

TTY stands for TeleTYpewriter (also known as a TDD, a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf or text telephone). The TTY consists of a keyboard, a text display and a modem. A TTY user types letters that are converted into electrical signals and travel over regular telephone lines to another TTY, where they appear on a text display or a paper print-out. The TTY has millions of users nationwide (approximately 75% are deaf or hard of hearing, and 25% have severe speech disabilities).

What Are Telephone Relay Services?

Telephone relay services are the answer to the following questions:

- How can I make a TTY call if I do not have a TTY?
- How can I speak on the phone with someone who has a speech disability?

Below is information about the Washington Relay Service, used to facilitate communication between standard telephone and TTY users, VCO and HCO services that are essentially a hybrid phone/TTY relay service, and the Speech-to-Speech service, used to facilitate telephone conversations with those who have speech disabilities. Also available are video relay services (VRS), for those who prefer to use sign language.

WASHINGTON RELAY SERVICE

Washington Relay Service is a telecommunications relay service that provides full telephone accessibility between standard telephone users and people who may use TTY, phone/TTY combination equipment, or video-based communication. Specially trained Communication Assistants (CAs) complete all calls and stay on-line to relay messages electronically by typing on a TTY, voicing information to hearing parties, or signing information to sign language users.

Relay services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with no restrictions on the length or number of calls placed. There is no additional cost for the service; calls are billed at regular rates, and long distance rates are charged. This valuable tool gives people who have TTYs and those who do not the opportunity to communicate effectively via telephone.

The state of Washington established a relay service before the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law on July 26, 1990. Title IV of the ADA requires all telecommunications common carriers (telephone companies) to provide, or contract to provide, full interstate Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). Both TTY and Speech-to-Speech relay services are required by law. Currently, Sprint has the contract to provide these services within Washington.

How does the Washington Relay Service work?

WRS enables hearing people using a standard telephone to communicate with people who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing, or speech disabled, and who use a TTY or a specially equipped personal computer, and vice versa.

- A person who is deaf-blind may use either a TTY (often with a larger visual display) or a TeleBraille device (TTY with a refreshable Braille display). Someone who is deaf-blind may need a little more time to read visual or Braille displays, so please be patient.
- A person who is speech-disabled types his/her conversation for the CA to read to the standard telephone user, but can listen to the person being called with Hearing Carry-Over service (HCO).
- A person who prefers to speak for herself may use Voice Carry-Over service (VCO), speaking directly to the hearing party, but receiving responses via the relay CA on TTY.

These conversations take place in real time. By law, all calls are handled in strict confidence.

How Do I Make a Washington TTY Relay Service Call?

The procedure is similar for all types of relay calls. If you have any questions about procedure or etiquette, feel free to ask the CA. See sections on VCO, HCO, and VRS for additional information unique to those relay calls. The information outlined below is for a Voice-to-TTY relay call.

- Call the Relay Service (711). Tell the CA the number you wish to call and the person to whom you wish to speak.
- Wait briefly while the CA dials the TTY user. After making the connection, the CA will tell the TTY user that this is a relay call.
- As with any telephone call, you and the TTY user take turns. The CA will voice the TTY user's words to you, and will type your words on the TTY to the TTY user.
- As with TTY-to-TTY conversations, it is impolite to interrupt the other person while talking via TTY relay. It is respectful to be brief and to the point, taking breaks to give the other person a chance to respond.
- During the conversation, each time you finish with your turn and wish to hear from the other person, it is helpful to say "go ahead" or "GA" (like saying "over" in radio talk).
- Deaf TTY users have a broad range of English skills and for many, English is their second language. Some may use what seem to be awkward phrases, or "telegraphed" thoughts and ideas without using standard English grammar, syntax, or sentence structure. The CA is trained to make the call as conversational as possible, so the TTY user's words will be voiced to you in standard English order to help ensure clear communication. Take care to be respectful and try to avoid jargon and use language that the caller will be able to understand — "simplified English."
- Be sure to talk directly to your caller, not to the CA. For example, say, "How are you today?" rather than "Ask him how he is today." The CA will relay what you say to the TTY user verbatim.
- At the end of the conversation, you or the TTY user may say "GA to SK" (TTY shorthand for "stop keying" or "I am finished."). If also finished, the other person will say "SK" and you both can hang up. You may also simply close the conversation as you would with any other call, providing an opportunity for the other party to make final comments to be sure both of you are ready to end the call. The CA is trained and will be able to interpret closing remarks; if he/she is uncertain, the CA will ask.

What Happens When I Receive a TTY Relay Call?

When you receive a TTY relay call, the Communication Assistant at the relay service will tell you, "The person on the line is using the Washington Relay Service to communicate with you. The caller types the conversation, which will be read to you. When you hear the words 'Go Ahead,' it will be your turn to speak. Speak directly to the caller. Everything that is heard will be typed to them. One moment for your call to begin." Please refer to the above section on "How Do I Make a Washington TTY Relay Service Call?" for additional information and guidance for conducting the call.

Final Notes

A Relay Service call will likely take a bit longer than a standard telephone call. Be sure to set aside sufficient time for your call. Calls with TeleBraille users may take longer than the average Relay Service call. The TeleBraille unit works like a TTY but uses a refreshable Braille display that takes longer to read than a visual TTY text display. Be patient if the person you are calling takes a little longer to respond.

VOICE CARRY-OVER (VCO)

Some deaf or hard-of-hearing people prefer to speak for themselves in telephone conversations, though they cannot hear voice responses from the other party. Voice Carry-Over (VCO) is a service that allows deaf or hard-of-hearing users to speak directly to the hearing party, having their voice "carried over" via the relay service. When the hearing party responds by voice, then the CA types everything said to the TTY or VCO phone user. (A VCO phone is a combination phone/TTY.)

HEARING CARRY-OVER (HCO)

Hearing Carry-Over (HCO) allows people with speech disabilities to listen directly to the other party, whose voice is "carried over" rather than being relayed by the CA. The HCO user types the conversation on TTY to the Communication Assistant (CA) who then voices that message to the standard telephone user.

SPEECH-TO-SPEECH SERVICE (STS)

Individuals with disabilities that affect the clarity of their speech may have difficulty being understood in standard telephone conversations, particularly if the callers are not well known to each other. Speech-to-Speech (STS) users may have Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, ALS, muscular dystrophy, or are people who stutter, have had a laryngectomy, or use speech synthesizers. STS provides an intermediary "communication assistant" (CA) to facilitate effective telephone conversations. STS CAs are trained individuals familiar with many different speech patterns and language recognition skills, and re-voice the person's words exactly and clearly.

VIDEO RELAY SERVICES (VRS)

Sprint Video Relay Service (VRS) enables users who use sign language to communicate via videoconferencing with a remote Video Interpreter, who then relays the signed communication over the phone, in real time, to the hearing party. By using sign language over the full motion video, sign language users are able to fully express themselves in their natural language and convey facial expression and cues to ensure nothing gets lost in the translation. With Video Relay Service, there's no typing for the TTY user, no extended delay, and no "GAs" – just hassle-free, and faster communication that flows as freely as natural conversation.

Washington Relay Service telephone numbers:

1-800-833-6388 TTY ... or use the faster, easier 711
1-800-833-6384 Voice
1-800-833-6385 TeleBraille
1-877-833-6341 Speech-to-Speech
1-877-833-6399 Spanish TTY
1-877-833-6398 Spanish Voice
1-900-646-3323 900 Services

For more information on TRS, contact Sprint Relay Customer Service:

Telephone: 1-800-676-3777 Voice or TTY
Fax: 1-877-877-3291
e-mail: TRSCustServ@mail.sprint.com

This technical assistance handout includes information from the Washington Relay Service Web site at www.washingtonrelay.com.
