

Persons who are Deaf /Hearing Impaired Key Points for Criminal Justice Professionals

OVERVIEW

- Persons who are deaf or hearing impaired are entitled to a level of service equivalent to that provided by other persons.
- Effective communication is essential in ascertaining what actually occurred, the urgency of the matter, and type of situation.
- Various types of communication aids are used to communicate with persons who are deaf or hearing impaired. These include: gestures, visual aids notepad and pencil, assistive listening systems, use of oral or sign language interpreter.
- In many situations, oral communication supplemented by gestures, visual aids or written notes will be an effective means of communicating. In other circumstances, a qualified sign language or oral interpreter may be needed.
- Professionals should find out what type of communication method he or she needs. Officers should defer to those choices if possible.
- Persons who are deaf or hearing impaired must not be charged for the cost of auxiliary aid or service needed for effective communication.
- The presence of a hearing aid does not guarantee the person's ability to hear and understand the spoken word.
- When a person who is deaf or hearing impaired becomes the focus of an investigation, only a certified sign language interpreter should be used when "Miranda Rights" are given.

IDENTIFICATION

- Appearance of bumper stickers, rear window decals, or other notices/symbols indicating a disability.
- Use of signs, hand signals, or gestures to communicate.
- A need to see the professional's face directly, suggesting person is attempting to lip read.
- Evidence of assistive devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, or picture symbols.

TIPS for INTERACTIONS

- Don't assume understanding until it can be confirmed by appropriate responses to questions or directives.
- Family member or friend may interpret in emergency conditions or minor situations. In all other situations, professionals should not rely on family members or friends to interpret.
- Be patient and allow additional time for responses.
- If possible, flick the lights when entering a room to get the person's attention.
- Face the person directly while speaking. Make sure you have the person's attention before beginning to speak.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice without shouting. Speak slowly and distinctly.
- Reduce background noise.
- When communicating via an interpreter, be sure you continue to speak to and establish eye contact with the individual, not the interpreter.
- Do not chew gum while talking.
- Avoid shining flash light in face

RESOURCES

- Communicating with People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: ADA Guide for Law Enforcement Officers. <http://www.ada.gov/lawenfcomm.htm>
- Best Practices for Dealing with the Deaf (Police Magazine) <http://www.policemag.com/channel/careers-training/articles/2013/09/dealing-with-the-deaf.aspx>

YouTube Videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSKZHZdflmc> First Responder Communication with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Citizens
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9aNpMRHH2c> Deaf Sensitivity Training for Police Officers

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The Arc of Louisiana recognized the need for an online resource to share current and accurate information on legal and disability issues, terminology and available resources between the criminal justice and human service systems.

To learn more about the project go to www.ldlr.org.

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