
The Belleville Beat

Belleville Police Department
Belleville, IL 62220

October 2005
Volume 11, Number 10

From the Desk of Sgt. Don Sax

Welcome to October 2005 and its issue of *The Belleville Beat*. This issue is brought to you by the State of Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission. V/TTY: 217.557.4495, V/TTY: 877.455.3323, Fax: 217.557.4492, www.idhhc.state.il.us

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH A DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUAL

TTY

Teletypewriters (TTYs) are devices that allow deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-disabled individuals to communicate using standard telephones. Similar to a small manual typewriter, TTYs feature a keyboard on which the user types his or her message that is transmitted over the phone line and received by the user at the other end of the line whose TTY displays the printed text. This process is repeated by both users until the conversation is completed. More information about using TTYs is published in a separate brochure available from IDHHC.

Illinois Relay Service

Persons without access to a TTY can still communicate with deaf and hard of hearing individuals using the Illinois Relay Service. Illinois Relay is a free service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. By calling Illinois Relay, a communications assistant acts as a facilitator between a telephone user and a TTY user. The communications assistant types the spoken portion of the conversation to the TTY user and conversely reads the printed text of the conversation to the telephone user. Illinois Relay Service is available by dialing 711 from any telephone in the state. Contact our office for additional information regarding Illinois Relay Service.

Computer

Computers offer a variety of tools to communicate with a deaf or hard of hearing person. Typing messages back and forth that are displayed on the computer monitor is the electronic equivalent of pencil and paper. To span distances, many deaf and hard of hearing individuals utilize E-mail and instant messaging services.

Wireless Pagers

Alpha-numeric pagers have recently become a popular means to achieve portable, effective communication. These devices feature a miniature keyboard and screen that allow persons with or without a hearing loss to send and receive instant messages to other pagers or E-mail-based programs.

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)

Similar to court reporting, CART service is an assistive technology service that provides communication access by making an instant translation of speech into text displayed for individuals with a hearing loss that do not benefit from sign language or oral interpreters. IDHHC offers a separate brochure on this service and maintains a listing of qualified CART providers throughout the state.

Assistive Listening Devices

Many types of equipment are available to amplify sounds, ranging from personal pocket devices to FM systems capable of transmitting to large groups. All assistive listening devices feature a microphone that converts sounds into electronic impulses. The signal is then transmitted either by wire or airwaves to a receiver that decodes the electronic impulse and amplifies the sound.

Pen and Paper

If not the most elaborate, perhaps the most effective means of achieving one-on-one communication is good, old-fashioned pen and paper. Many deaf and hard of hearing individuals carry pen and paper for situations where writing a quick note back and forth can break the communication barrier.

Communication Barriers

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals experience a hearing loss that significantly reduces their ability to understand spoken words. Communicating with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing may require some adjustments to clearly convey the message. Sign language, written communication, assistive listening devices, and specialized services and equipment are among the most common means to break the barriers to effective communication.

Communication Modes

The most effective communication mode can vary significantly among individuals with a hearing loss. Many deaf individuals rely on sign language, cued speech or oral interpreters, while a person with a mild hearing loss may need little or no accommodations to facilitate the communication process. This brochure highlights a variety of communication modes and suggests the techniques that are frequently used to better communicate with deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is a fully functional, systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs and gestures, complete with a rich heritage and vocabulary. Many English words and concepts have a comparable expression in ASL, but not necessarily a direct translation. Sign language is the third-most widely used language in the United States. By learning sign language, you can express yourself in a new way and reduce communication barriers.

Speech-reading

Also known as lip reading, this means of receptive communication is somewhat limited in that only about one-half of the English language is visually distinct. Words like “fifty”, “fifteen”, and “fitting” all appear similar to a person who is speech-reading. Not all deaf and hard of hearing individuals are adept at this skill.

For effective speech-reading, the following guidelines are suggested: Keep your face and mouth visible. Do not turn your head or cover your mouth. Remove gum, cigarettes, food or other objects from your mouth. Make sure there is adequate light on your face. Shadows and low lighting can diminish the clarity of your mouth movements. Eliminate background noises to the extent possible, as many deaf or hard of hearing individuals rely, at least partially, on their residual hearing. Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Use normal volume. Do not shout or exaggerate mouth movements. Use explanations of complicated terms that are not easily understood. Be willing to rephrase thoughts or ideas that are not clearly communicated. Be aware that accents or slang can be difficult to understand. Use facial expressions or body language to convey the tone of the message. Use visual cues when changing subjects.

Interpreter

An interpreter is an individual who facilitates communication between a hearing person and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The interpreter could be either a sign language or oral interpreter. When using an interpreter or third party to facilitate communication, talk directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person. Watching the interpreter intently while communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person is not considered polite, as the thoughts being expressed by the interpreter are those of the deaf or hard of hearing person. The interpreter simply acts as a communication mediator.

The Illinois Interpreters for the Deaf Act (225 ILCS 442) requires that all interpreters meet certain minimum professional standards and register their certification with our office. Keep in mind that interpreters specialize in certain areas of expertise that make them more suitable for particular assignments, such as a medical, legal, or educational settings. Always inquire of the deaf or hard of hearing individual their preference for a specific interpreter. Contact our office for a statewide listing of certified interpreters or download it from our website at www.idhhc.state.il.us.