



What is American Sign Language?

The Birth of ASL

In 1815 Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet traveled to Europe from America to study about the education of Deaf people. He wanted to help his neighbor's young Deaf daughter, Alice Cogswell. After several months in Europe, Gallaudet returned to the United States with Laurent Clerc, a Deaf instructor from a school for the Deaf in Paris. Sailing over the Atlantic Ocean for more than three months, Gallaudet and Clerc exchanged their signs, a combination of Gallaudet's home signs and Clerc's French Sign Language. Today it is known as American Sign Language.

Reference: National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

American Sign Language (ASL) is:

- A fully developed, autonomous, natural language with a unique grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage; the gestures, visual components, and structures of which are neither derived from English nor a simplified version of English. It is not used simultaneously with voiced English.
- Like all verbal languages, ASL evolves over time to accommodate the needs of its native users.
- The first language of many Deaf North Americans. For ASL users, English is considered a second language.

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What is American Sign Language?

- One of several communication options available to Deaf individuals.
- Recognized as the predominant and preferred language of Deaf people in the United States.
- Not a universal language. Each country has its own sign language, much like the thousands of languages spoken by hearing people all over the world.

For more information, contact the nearest DSDHH Regional Center or visit www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh.



How to contact us:

We have seven Regional Centers throughout the state to assist you with your needs. Please contact the center nearest you for assistance.

DSDHH's phone listing uses the following abbreviations:

V – voice (for people who do not use telephone assistive equipment)

TTY – phone equipment

(for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people)

VP – video phone

(for people who use sign language to communicate)

Asheville:

12 Barbetta Drive • Asheville, NC 28806
828-665-8733 V • 828-333-5830 VP
828-665-8737 TTY • 800-681-8035 TTY
800-681-7998 V • 828-670-5054 Fax

Charlotte:

5501 Executive Center Dr., Suite 200 • Charlotte, NC 28212
704-568-8558 V • 704-918-1554 VP
704-568-8505 TTY • 800-835-5302 V
800-835-5306 TTY • 704-568-9615 Fax

Greensboro:

122 North Elm Street, Suite 900 • Greensboro, NC 27401
336-273-9692 V/TTY • 336-429-5644 VP
888-467-3413 V/TTY • 336-256-0689 Fax

Morganton:

107 Foothills Drive • Morganton, NC 28655
828-430-7185 V • 828-475-6606 VP
828-430-7192 TTY • 800-999-8915 V
800-205-9920 TTY • 828-430-7193 Fax

Raleigh:

4900 Waters Edge Drive • Raleigh, NC 27606
919-859-8526 V (Main) • 800-999-5737 V (Main)
919-233-7082 TTY • 919-890-0858 VP
919-233-7083 Fax

Wilmington:

3340 Jaeckle Drive, The Randall Bldg., Suite 104
Wilmington, NC 28403
910-251-5702 V • 910-777-5770 VP
910-251-5767 TTY • 800-205-9915 V
800-205-9916 TTY • 910-251-2677 Fax

Wilson:

2705 Wooten Blvd. • Wilson, NC 27893
252-243-3104 V • 252-674-1141 VP
252-243-1951 TTY • 800-999-6828 V
800-205-9925 TTY • 252-243-7634 Fax

Home Office:

919-874-2212 V/TTY • 919-890-0859 VP
800-851-6099 V/TTY • 919-855-6872 Fax

www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh