



# NORTH CAROLINA Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

## How to Talk on the Phone to a Caller who is Hard of Hearing

- **Speak Directly into Mouthpiece (Phone/Wireless):** Avoid having the microphone too close or too far from your mouth and don't use the speaker phone. Both lead to voice distortion and clarity is lost.
- **Speak at a Normal Pace, with Good Volume:** Talking too fast will make it difficult to follow the conversation. Talking too slow, overenunciating, or yelling can distort your speech.
- **Be Flexible with Adaptations:** When being made aware of a caller's hearing loss, try increasing the volume of your voice in increments until understood. Focus on talking clearly without yelling. Ask the caller for feedback about communication and plan to revise if needed.
- **Rephrase if Needed and Ask for Clarification:** If the person has difficulty understanding a specific phrase or word, use a different word or phrase to say the same thing. Ask the listener to repeat your instructions to ensure they heard accurately.
- **Avoid Using Complex Terminology:** Use everyday words, sentences and phrases as much as possible. If complex terminology is unavoidable, ask the person to repeat what was said to ensure understanding.
- **Introduce Topics of Conversations:** Introduce the person to the general topic of the conversation you are covering, i.e., "Now we will talk about your food supply". A short pause in between conversational topics will signal a new topic is coming.
- **Follow Up:** Send a summary of the conversation and instructions by email, text or mail. The sooner received, the more effective it will be.
- **Accept Relay Calls:** People with hearing loss sometimes depend on relay services to make phone calls. Don't assume that a several second delay to your answer is a solicitation call.
- **Successful Communication Takes Patience:** Following the above tips and exercising patience will reduce strain on everyone's part.

**For further information related to accommodations for your callers,  
you can reach out to DSDHH at [www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh) or (919) 527-6930.**

