



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

How to Communicate with Your Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind Patient

Pertinent to All Patients with Hearing Loss

- **Recognize:** Facemasks impede the ability to see important facial expressions and mouth movements. Maintain good eye contact, use gestures and point to parts of body. Most importantly, ask patient for their preferred methods of communication.

Deaf Patients (Profound Hearing Loss: Uses Visual Communication)

- **Use:** Licensed sign language interpreter. Let the Deaf person choose whether they want an on-site or video remote interpreter. Do not use family or friends to interpret.
- **Gaining Attention:** Wave hands, flick a light switch, tap gently on shoulder.
- **Avoid:** Standing in front of a window or light source when communicating.
- **Don't:** Rely on written English. Spoken and sign language rules are very different.
- **Deaf Family Members:** Also need access to sign language interpreter.

Hard of Hearing Patients (Mild to Severe Hearing Loss: Uses Verbal Communication)

- **Write:** Instructions on dry-erase boards, paper, computer tablet, apps, draw diagrams.
- **Use Amplification:** Ensure batteries work in hearing aids or use personal amplifiers.
- **Use Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) and Speech to Text Apps** such as, but not limited to: Google Live Transcribe, Ava, Otter AI, Microsoft Translator and more.

DeafBlind Patients (Dual Hearing & Vision Loss: Communication Modes Vary)

- **May Require:** Unique interpreters able to provide tactile or close vision sign language.
- **Usually Accompanied:** By a Support Service Provider (SSP). Do not confuse as an interpreter.
- **Visual Acuity Needs:** May require adaptations, i.e., using a black felt-tip marker, larger print or writing, using your finger to trace letters on palm. Adjust seating and lighting upon request.

Telehealth Tips and Solutions

- **Deaf or DeafBlind:** Speak to patient through Video Relay Services ASL interpreter who is bound to confidentiality. Clarify patient understanding often and be patient.
- **Hard of Hearing:** Speak directly into the phone/microphone, do not use a speakerphone, use normal volume and pace, rephrase what was not understood, clarify understanding, eliminate background noise.
- **Video/Virtual Appointments:** Ensure adequate lighting and display typed/written instructions.

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

