

Quick Guide to Serving and Communicating with Individuals who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Late-Deafened, or Hard of Hearing



*Services for the Deaf
and the Hard of Hearing*
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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 Nothing ComparesSM

Department of Health and Human Services | Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing
Physical Address • Woodoak Bldg., GL-3 • 1100 Navaho Drive • Raleigh, NC 27609
Mailing Address • 2301 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2301
919-874-2212 T | 919-890-0859 VP / 919-855-6872 F

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
How can DSDHH provide support before, during and after a disaster?	3
1. How can I recognize a person with hearing loss?	4
2. How can I try to make communication with a deaf or hard of hearing person easier for both of us?	4
3. That person has clear speech. I don't believe that s/he has hearing loss. How can I make sure this person has hearing loss?	5
4. Which tools can I use to communicate effectively with a deaf-blind person?	5
5. What are Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)?	6
6. I know fingerspelling and/or few signs. Will that be useful to communicate with deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing individuals who depend on sign language?	6
7. How can I get an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter?	6
8. What is the appropriate way to work with a sign language interpreter?	7
9. What is a video remote interpreter?	7
10. Which devices are helpful for me to effectively communicate with people with hearing loss? 8	
11. If an evacuee comes to the shelter with a lost, damaged, or forgotten hearing aid or cochlear processor, where can I find a replacement?	9
12. Batteries for hearing aids or cochlear processors are not working. Where can I find batteries to replace them?	9
13. Do some people who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing have service animals?	9
APPENDIX A: Contact Information for Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing Agencies	10
APPENDIX B: Service animals	14



Introduction

This guide is a quick reference for tips on serving and communicating with deaf, deaf-blind, late-deafened and hard of hearing individuals, as well as to find appropriate resources to assist those populations in a shelter, or any emergency situation.

The Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) under the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides direct services to individuals with hearing loss, and the agencies and businesses that serve them. DSDHH's specially-trained staff members are housed at its seven Regional Centers located throughout the state and are available to provide any services. DSDHH serves all 100 counties in North Carolina.

How can DSDHH provide support before, during and after a disaster?

Each of DSDHH's seven Regional Centers has a Community Accessibility Consultant (CAC) on staff.

CACs assist various agencies (emergency services, first responders, the Department of Public Health and the Department of Social Services) to ensure the safety and health of individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing by providing support, training, resources, and consultation services. CACs also work with community members on emergency preparedness and by providing weather radios with alerting devices.

Examples of CACs assisting emergency responders are:

- Review communication policy and procedures
- Develop contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with qualified interpreters (live and webcam) and video relay service providers
- Compile list of resources, such as qualified interpreters, places for hearing aids and batteries, communication equipment, and others
- Train staff to provide effective communication services
- Participate and/or recruit community members to take part in exercises
- Assist in creating a communication kit
- Others

Referrals to appropriate staff within the Regional Center or other agency will be provided, based on specific information needed.

See Appendix A for the list of Regional Centers. Please note that each Regional Center serves specific counties. A map is included to assist in finding an appropriate agency.



1. How can I recognize a person with hearing loss?

There are different types of hearing loss, ranging from mild to profound.

Signs of hearing loss that you may notice are:

- Pointing to their ears and shaking their head to indicate they can't hear
- Writing notes
- Hearing aid or cochlear implant
- Clear to unclear speech
- Loud speech
- No response, inappropriate response or asking for repetition
- Puzzled expression while listening
- Not hearing any or some sounds
- Frustrated with lack of communication
- Watching person's lips
- Gestures/sign language

2. How can I make communication with a deaf or hard of hearing person easier for both of us?

Each individual will tell you the best way to communicate with her/him. Follow her/his request. Ask this person how you can best communicate with her/him.

Each individual has her/his own communication preferences. Examples of communication strategies:

- Speak clearly at a normal pace (don't overarticulate)
- Face the person directly so this person can lipread (keep your back away from bright light and background noise, if possible)
- Avoid covering your mouth and face
- Repeat what you said
- Rephrase the word, sentence or question
- Use appropriate facial expressions
- Give visual cues or gestures
- Use mime, sign language or fingerspelling for simple communication
- Use an Assistive Listening Device (ALD)
- Write notes back and forth



- Type on smartphone, computer or tablet
- Use pictogram or communication board/book
- Use an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter (live or remote)

To get the person's attention, tap on their shoulder/arm or wave to get their attention (with a person who is deaf-blind, lay your hand on their shoulder or back until s/he faces you).

3. That person has clear speech. I don't believe that s/he has hearing loss. How can I make sure this person has hearing loss?

Anyone can become deaf any time at any age, even after acquiring speech and language.

There are a number of factors for losing hearing, such as illness, loud environment, aging and heredity.

Sometimes a disastrous event, which includes loud noise, can cause a person to lose hearing temporarily or permanently.

In order to determine if the person has hearing loss, observe this person for any symptoms as listed in No. 1. It is possible this person will talk to you and you respond by one of the communication modes listed above, or this person will tell you the best option to communicate with her/him.

4. Which tools can I use to communicate effectively with a deaf-blind person?

Each deaf-blind individual has varying degrees of both hearing and vision loss, therefore her/his communication preference varies.

Communication strategies may include:

- Talking clearly at a normal pace (don't overarticulate)
- Lip reading
- Using Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) such as a loop and/or pocket talker
- Writing notes back and forth with a black marker
- Using your finger to write letters on hand or arm (letters should be in capital)
- Typing on the individual's communication device
- Typing on a smartphone, computer or tablet (change font to larger size)
- Using a pictogram or communication board/book
- Using basic gestures such as wait, eat, drink, sleep



- Using an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter via close, distant, tracking, tactile (live or remote)

To get the deaf-blind person's attention, tap on their shoulder/arm. You may need to keep your hand on her/his shoulder or arm until s/he faces you.

If a deaf-blind person appears to be in danger, draw an "X" on their arm or back (to indicate an emergency), and then lead the person to a safe area. Upon arrival at a safe place, explain what is happening.

Please keep in mind that not all deaf-blind individuals will be familiar with "X." It depends on when the onset of hearing and/or vision loss occurred, as well as their experience with survival tips.

5. What are Assistive Listening Devices?

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) are amplifiers that can deliver sound directly to the ear. ALDs are used to help a person with hearing loss hear the world around them, and can be used in one-on-one or group settings. The amplified sound from the ALD can be delivered through a headset, or additional wired and wireless devices. ALDs can also be used in conjunction with a compatible hearing aid. Some smartphones, computers, or tablets can be utilized as an ALD through free and premium versions of apps available for both iOS and Android devices.

6. I know fingerspelling and/or a few signs. Will that be useful to communicate with deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing individuals who depend on sign language?

Each individual has her/his communication style and preference. Fingerspelling and minimal sign language skills may be okay for basic communication, such as wait, eat, drink, and sleep. It is strongly recommended to get a qualified sign language interpreter for more in-depth and important conversations to avoid any misunderstanding between both parties, especially during intake, medication discussion, treatment consent, and announcements. However, it is also important not to delay conveying important information for too long.

7. How can I get an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter?

Contact your local Shelter Manager or Incident Commander for instructions on recruiting an interpreter.



Also, if there is a deaf-blind person, please indicate that so an ASL interpreter with specialized deaf-blind skills can be obtained. Each deaf-blind individual has a specific mode, such as close-up, distant, tracking or tactile that would assist her/him to communicate effectively.

For additional assistance related to securing or using an interpreter, please contact the Community Accessibility Consultant from the DSDHH Regional Center serving your county. See Appendix A for contact information.

Please be prepared to meet the communication needs of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind individuals PRIOR to a disaster event by having local resources ready. This may include having a list of interpreters and communication accommodations, such as listening assistance devices, pictogram, tablet, etc. on hand, and available for use. For assistance in getting prepared, please contact the DSDHH Regional Center Community Accessibility Consultant for consultation and training – see Appendix A.

8. What is the appropriate way to work with a sign language interpreter?

The role of a sign language interpreter is to foster communication by relaying messages between parties that use sign language and those who do not. The interpreter will stand beside you, so the sign language user can see the interpreter. Face the sign language user and talk to this person as if you talk to anyone. Do NOT say, “Tell her or him this.” The interpreter will voice what the individual says – continue to look at the sign language user, even though you hear the voice of the interpreter.

Do not ask the interpreter to perform tasks such as filling out forms, fetching materials or assisting in any way other than interpreting. Their responsibility is to ensure communication occurs. If an individual needs assistance with filling out a form for reasons such as limited English skills or vision loss, the interpreter is available to interpret while you assist the evacuee.

9. What is a video remote interpreter?

In some instances, ASL interpreting services can be accessed through a computer/laptop with a webcam and microphone. Check with your Shelter Manager or the Incident Commander to see if the video remote interpreting (VRI) service can be established. The VRI service has to be contracted prior to a disaster.

As soon as the VRI is set up, a remote interpreter is available to interpret your conversation through the webcam and laptop.



10. Which devices are helpful for me to effectively communicate with people with hearing loss?

Make sure your shelter has a communication kit. It is strongly recommended that a communication kit be assembled for each shelter prior to a disaster event.

Several options to consider when preparing a communication kit:

- Compile things that can be taken to a shelter each time
- Meet with several emergency responders to discuss which devices to put in a kit and an appropriate place for a stockpile
- Use devices for multiple purposes (for example: a reader board can be used for everyone, regardless of hearing status. A tablet can be used as video chat, large print, attached to braille keyboard and others)

The communication kit enables shelter workers to communicate with individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing in one-to-one or group settings. Below is a list of items that may be included in a communication kit.

- One-on-one communication
 - Paper and black markers
 - Pictogram/communication board/booklet
 - Assistive Listening Devices
 - TV/laptop/tablet (for connecting to Video Remote Interpreting, VRS or DVD to show instructions in ASL with captions)
- Group settings/announcements
 - Electronic board reader
 - Signage
- Telephone access
 - TTY
 - Amplification (phones or attachments)
 - Captioning phone
- List of resources
 - Contact information for ASL interpreters and/or ASL interpreting agencies
 - Places with contact information to purchase and/or receive batteries for hearing aids, and cochlear implant processors
 - Hearing aid banks
- Other miscellaneous
 - Various magnifying devices for people with low vision



- Access to an electric outlet for recharging hearing aids/cochlear implant batteries and smart phones
- Flash light or small lamp for low light vision needs
- Emergency kit for service animals (dog chow, food and water bowls)

11. If an evacuee comes to the shelter with a lost, damaged, or forgotten hearing aid or cochlear processor, where can I find a replacement?

North Carolina doesn't have a specific program that distributes hearing aids and cochlear processors to people in times of a disaster. There may be some places, such as civic organizations that donate used hearing aids. Developing a list of places to contact for donated hearing aids and cochlear processors is encouraged for use as a resource during a disaster.

Even though shelters are required to ensure equal access by providing reasonable accommodations, the options for communicating effectively would be writing notes back and forth, facing a person while communicating and using an ALD (see No. 5).

12. Batteries for hearing aids or cochlear processors are not working. Where can I find batteries to replace them?

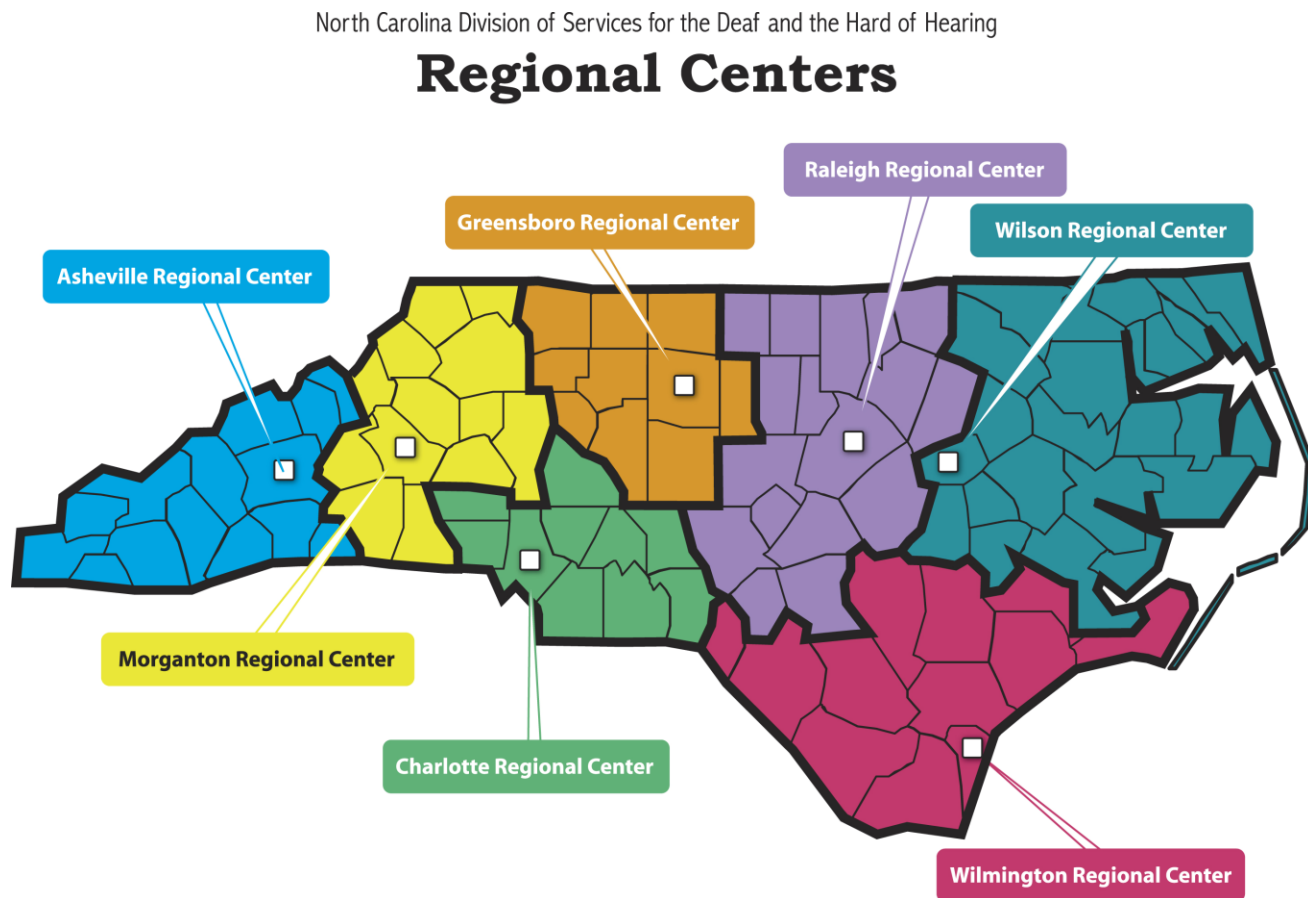
Develop a list of places to contact for donation and/or purchase batteries. This resource list can be placed in the communication kit.

13. Do some people who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing have service animals?

Service animals, such as hearing dogs or guide dogs, may be used by persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. For more information, see Appendix B or visit http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm



APPENDIX A: Contact Information for the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing Regional Centers



<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh/>
Scroll down to click on Find a Regional Center

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Continued - Contact Information for the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing Regional Centers (CONTACT NAMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

V - Voice

TTY - Teletypewriter, device for people with hearing loss to communicate via landline phone

VP - Videophone

CAC - Community Accessibility Consultant

Asheville Regional Center

12 Barbetta Drive, Asheville, NC 28806

Counties Served: Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Swain, Transylvania and Yancey

800-681-7998 V 800-681-8035 TTY
828-665-8733 V 828-665-8737 TTY
828-670-5054 Fax 828-333-5830 V/VP

Regional Manager: Tzena Keyes Tzena.Keyes@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C.: David Fitzsimmons David.Fitzsimmons@dhhs.nc.gov

Charlotte Regional Center

5501 Executive Ctr. Drive, Suite 200, Charlotte, NC 28212

Counties Served: Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Richmond, Rowan, Stanly and Union

800-835-5302 V 800-835-5306 TTY
704-568-8558 V 704-568-8505 TTY
704-568-9615 Fax 704-918-1554 V/VP

Regional Manager: Blaire McCorkle Blaire.McCorkle@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C.: Brenda Freeman Brenda.Freeman@dhhs.nc.gov





Greensboro Regional Center

122 North Elm Street, Suite 900, Greensboro, NC 27401

Counties Served: Alamance, Davie, Davidson, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin

888-467-3413 V/TTY 336-273-9692 V/TTY
336-256-0689 FAX 336-429-5644 V/VP

Manager: Ruben Leon Ruben.Leon@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C. : John Sherwood John.Sherwood@dhhs.nc.gov

Morganton Regional Center

107 Foothill Drive, Morganton, NC 28655-3704

Counties Served: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Iredell, McDowell, Rutherford, Watauga and Wilkes

800-999-8915 V/TTY 800-205-9920 TTY
828-430-7185 V/TTY 828-475-6606 V/VP
828-430-7193 FAX

Regional Manager: Andy Unger Andy.Unger@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C.: Shawn Lane Shawn.Lane@dhhs.nc.gov

Raleigh Regional Center

4900 Waters Edge Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606

Counties Served: Caswell, Chatham, Cumberland, Durham, Franklin, Granville, Harnett, Hoke, Johnston, Lee, Moore, Nash, Orange, Person, Vance, Wake and Warren

800-999-5737 V 919-859-8526 V 800-233-7082 TTY
919-233-7083 FAX 919-890-0858 V/VP 919-233-7082 TTY

Manager: Monica Harrelson Monica.Harrelson@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C.: Martina Moore-Reid Martina.Moore-Reid@dhhs.nc.gov





Wilmington Regional Center

3340 Jaeckle Drive, Suite 104, Wilmington, NC 28403

Counties Served: Bladen, Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Duplin, Jones, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Robeson, Sampson and Scotland

800-205-9915 V 800-205-9916 TTY
910-251-5702 V 910-251-5767 TTY
910-251-2677 Fax 910-777-5770 V/VP

Regional Manager: David Schultz David.Schultz@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C.: Christina Bauman Christina.Bauman@dhhs.nc.gov

Wilson Regional Center

2705 Wooten Blvd., Wilson, NC 27893

Counties Served: Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Edgecombe, Gates, Greene, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Lenoir, Martin, Northampton, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrell, Washington, Wayne and Wilson

800-999-6828 V 800-205-9925 TTY
252-243-3104 V 252-243-1951 TTY
252-243-7634 FAX 252-674-1141 V/VP

Regional Manager: Karen Caputo Karen.Caputo@dhhs.nc.gov
C.A.C.: Merri Schermerhorn Merri.Schermerhorn@dhhs.nc.gov

State Office:

Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

1100 Navaho Drive, GL-3, Raleigh, NC 27609

800-851-6099 V/TTY 919-890-0859 V/VP
919-855-6872 FAX

Emergency Preparedness Coordinator: Donna Platt Donna.Platt@dhhs.nc.gov
Communication Access Manager: Lee Williamson Lee.Williamson@dhhs.nc.gov



APPENDIX B: Service animals http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Are service animals permitted in the shelters?

Generally, Title II and Title III entities must permit service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas where members of the public are allowed to go.

Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal or other controls.

What are and are not appropriate questions to ask?

Staff **cannot** ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

Staff may ask two questions:

- (1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- (2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

How can I handle this situation if other people in the shelters are allergic and/or afraid of dogs?

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access, or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, for example, in a school classroom or at a homeless shelter, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room, or different rooms in the facility.

When is an appropriate time to remove service animals from the shelter?

A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or (2) the dog is not housebroken. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal's presence.

