

Effective Communications for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

On Line Manual Item AHJ 1314

SharePoint Manual Item EHP 250

- This Job Aid was created with input from:
 - Bureau of Child Welfare.
 - DHS, Office of Legal Services, Equal Employment Opportunity.
 - Michigan Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Department Requirements

- DHS will:
 - Arrange and pay for accommodations needed for effective communication at all
 - Interviews
 - Meetings
 - Hearings
 - Times when a client requests
 - Ask the person if they have a video phone (VP). The video phone allows an interpreter to view the... The interpreter can then translate for the worker what the is being signed.
 - DHS and/or the client can call the Michigan Relay System, 711,. This service will connect both parties to an interpreter.

Primary Consideration

- DHS will give the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing the opportunity to request the auxiliary aid or service of his or her choice.
 - Private applications, such as voice-to-text are becoming popular and may exist on the client's cell phone, computer or other device.
- Primary consideration will be given to the expressed choice of the individual unless,
 - It can be shown that another equally effective means of communication is available, or
 - That use of the means chosen would result in a fundamental alteration in the service, program or activity, or
 - Is an undue financial and administrative burden.
- DHS will secure the requested accommodation for the date, time and place where the service will be required.

Interpreters

- When utilizing an interpreter, DHS employees are required to ensure that the interpreter's skills will ensure effective and accurate interpreting. This is done through:
 - Witnessing non-verbal communication from the deaf/HOH person.
 - Ask open ended questions and pay attention if the interpreter is accurate in their answer. For example, “What is your children’s names?”, “What school does your child attend?”.
 - Ask the client if the interpreter is effective. If the question is answered in the negative, the proceedings will be suspended until a more qualified interpreter is obtained.
 - Does the interpreter present answers/statements in complete English with proper grammar?

Interpreters

- A sign language interpreter is a trained professional who facilitates communication and conveys all auditory and signed information so that all participants in a conversation may fully interact.
- The interpreter is bound by a code of ethics, which includes keeping all material interpreted strictly confidential. In addition, interpreters are to maintain the integrity of the message, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker. He/she should neither add nor delete any information at any time. Because of the specific nature of the interpreter's role, it is important **not** to ask the interpreter for his/her opinion or to perform any tasks other than interpreting.

Interpreters – Family and Friends

- Inquire if the client has a preferred interpreter or interpreting agency.
- If the client does not have a preference, the DHS worker should contact an agency before contacting an individual interpreters.
 - There are federal and state requirements for an interpreter. An interpreting agency can connect the DHS worker to an appropriate interpreter.
- A client may choose to use a family member, a friend or neighbor to interpret communication.
 - This does not lessen the department's obligation to provide and pay for appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including qualified interpreters as required.

Emergency Situations

- Exceptions

- In an emergency situation, such as a protective services investigation where safety is an issue, is an exception to the establishment of a qualified interpreter allowed. However, the agency must arrange for a qualified interpreter as soon as possible.
- Note taking is only sufficient, after normal business hours if it provides effective communication to the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Local offices should start planning for an interpreter before an urgent or emergency situation arises. Simply connecting with an interpreting agency in your community and starting the dialogue is a good start. A listing of interpreting agencies is found at the end of this presentation.

Emergency Situations

- With a standing relationship, some interpreting agencies may be able to arrange for an interpreter within a short period of time.
- Having an interpreter during the initial contact (home visit) will help decompress a stressful situation and will aid in understanding cultural body language and norms.

Special Considerations

- During long interviews, two interpreters may be required.
- The local office and interpreter negotiate the rate of payment.
- If the interpreter is coming in from out-of-town or will be used for an extended period of time (such as hearings), the local office may authorize reimbursement for all reasonable and necessary expenses (such as meals, lodging, mileage) per the Michigan Standardized Travel Regulations.
- DHS-1582, Payment Voucher, is used to provide payment.

Special Considerations

- A deaf individual could attempt to touch you. Tapping a shoulder, or if sitting touching near knee, are deaf norms. This is how a deaf person gets another person's attention. Stomping on floor, flashing lights, hands waving in the air, are also another means. The behavior should not be considered threatening.
- For an individual not accustomed to being around a deaf person, a deaf person's voice could appear threatening. However use caution, often a deaf person may not be aware their voice is raised or of the sounds they make, especially when the situation is highly emotional. Be aware of cultural differences. A deaf person may not be able to use voice inflections. Deaf people use facial expressions and gestures to express what hearing people use their voices to do. If a deaf individuals facial expressions change it does not always mean a threat. Keep physical distance until you are sure of your safety.

Resources

- Michigan Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHOH),
http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/0,4613,7-138-58275_28545-__,00.html
- Michigan Department of Civil Rights,
<http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/>
- DHS Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs,
(517) 373-8520
- An Online Directory Interpreter System offered through Michigan Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHOH), is located at , <http://www6.dleg.state.mi.us/interpreter/>