

## ABOUT HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss is a full or partial decrease in the ability to detect or understand sounds.<sup>1</sup> It can range from a mild hearing loss to total deafness. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, approximately 10.4 million individuals in the U.S., or 3.5% of the U.S. population, have hearing loss.<sup>2</sup> In Delaware, approximately 31,000 individuals (3.6% of all Delawareans) have hearing loss.

### *Caring for people with hearing loss*

With appropriate auxiliary aids and methods, it is possible to communicate with people with hearing loss. Ask about the patient's preferred method of communication. Explore if the person reads lips, uses a hearing aid, sign language interpreters, writes, speaks, or gestures by following cues. Some people who have significant hearing loss may use cochlear implants that help them receive sounds.

- Ask persons with hearing loss what kinds of accommodations they will need when scheduling an appointment.
- Explore different types of assistive technology, such as captions, video phones or Teletype (TTY) that may assist your patients.
- Do not rely on family members or children to interpret, but provide a sign language interpreter if one is requested.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice directly to the person.
- Always direct the conversation to the person with the hearing impairment even if a family member, caregiver, or sign language interpreter is also present.
- To get the attention of a person who has a hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder.
- Make sure you have the person's full attention before speaking.
- Ensure that the individual can always see your face. Your mouth and your facial expressions carry a lot of helpful information.
- Have conversations in a one-on-one setting without background noise whenever possible.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Legal. Retrieved from [www.definitions.uslegal.com](http://www.definitions.uslegal.com)

<sup>2</sup> Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2010, March 17). Disability Statistics from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC). Retrieved from [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)



## Resources

Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHH)  
 4425 North Market Street  
 Wilmington, DE 19802-1307  
 302-761-8275 Phone  
 302-761-8336 TTY  
 302-761-6611 Fax  
<http://www.delawareworks.com/dvr/dodhh.shtml>

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf  
 333 Commerce Street  
 Alexandria, VA 22314  
 703-838-0030 Phone  
 703-838-0459 TTY  
 703-838-0454 Fax  
<https://www.rid.org/acct-app/index.cfm?action=search.members>  
 To find a sign-language interpreter through the online, nationwide registry go to  
<https://www.rid.org/acct-app/index.cfm?action=search.members>

### Relay Delaware

Free telecommunication services for communication between people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, have a speech disorder and hearing.

Call 7-1-1

800-232-5470 Toll Free

800-232-5460 TTY

877-335-7590 Voice Carry Over

800-232-5460 Hearing Carry Over

877-335-7274 Speech To Speech

877-335-7595 Spanish

<http://www.delawarerelay.com>

### National Association of the Deaf

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 820

Silver Spring, MD 20910

301-587-1788 Phone

301-587-1789 TTY

<http://www.nad.org>

Questions and Answers for Health Care Providers:

<http://www.nad.org/issues/health-care/providers/questions-and-answers>

### Hearing Loss Association of America

7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200

Bethesda, MD 20814

301-657-2248 Phone

<http://www.hearingloss.org>

### Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative Locations in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties

800-870-3284 Toll Free (Delaware only)

302-651-6790 Phone

302-651-6794 TDD

302-651-6793 Fax

<http://www.dati.org>