
Suggestions for Communicating with Deaf/HOH on Telephone

By Susan Sacco
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This article is being written to provide guidance and suggestions in communicating with people who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. There is a wide spectrum of people with hearing loss. Some can hear and some cannot. Some use hearing aids or cochlear implants and some use nothing. Some can use their voice and some do not. However, the following are some tips and suggestions hearing people can utilize if they need to communicate on the telephone with someone who is Deaf/HOH.

First and perhaps most important, is that TTDs or TTYs are more or less obsolete for most in the Deaf/HOH community.

Instead, we have telephones that are amplified or have “screens” so one can read what is being said on the other end (CapTel). For some Deaf/HOH, we will use the Relay – a number 711 – that will

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Spotlight



DeKalb

Caprisha Williams, self-advocate and past Co-Chair of the DeKalb Illinois Imagines Team, speaks out about living with a disability and shares facts about sexual assault of people with disabilities. In addition to being an advocate, Caprisha is a writer, an actress and active community volunteer.

Empowerment Guide Trainings

Illinois Imagines has three remaining regional trainings on implementing the Guide to Starting Empowerment Groups. The trainings will be:

- **March 25, 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** Macomb - Mosaic
- **March 26, 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**
Champaign - Savoy United Methodist Church
- **March 27, 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**
Centralia - Community Resources Center

If you want to attend the trainings, please register as soon as possible by contacting spaceley@maconresources.org.

Webinar Schedule

- **March 18, 10:00-11:30 a.m.** -
Response to Trauma Part 1. Presented by Karyn Harvey.

- **April 15, 10:00-11:30 a.m.** -
Response to Trauma Part 2. Presented by Karyn Harvey.

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bring in a “third party” to communicate for a Deaf/HOH person and a hearing person. The operator for Relay is a professional and maintains confidentiality at all times. This Relay/711 is Universal and the main number regardless of what state you are calling from and calling to.

The main rule for talking with a Relay Operator is to be “yourself” and be comfortable and talk as if you were directly talking to the Deaf/HOH person. You will, however, use the terms “GA” and “SK” to help facilitate the conversation. You would use “GA” to show that you have ended your part of the talk as this lets the Deaf/HOH person know it is their time to talk. You will use “SK” to show when you are finished and done at your end of communication. Again, the Deaf/HOH will use “SK” when they are finished with their talk and will sign off.

For the majority of Deaf, the use of VP – Video Phone is the main source of communicating by telephone. The Deaf/HOH person has the VP installed at their home/work and can make calls directly to another VP. In this case, the Deaf/HOH will sign directly to the other person on their VP.

If, however, the Deaf/HOH person is calling a hearing person using their VP, there is an Interpreter who will sign to the Deaf/HOH person what you are saying and will voice to you what the Deaf/HOH person is signing. The general rule here, is just communicate as if you were talking to another hearing person on the telephone. You do not have to treat or act “differently” when Deaf/HOH use their modes of communication.

Whether there is a Relay Operator or a Video Phone Operator, these people are professionals and well trained in their jobs. They simply “facilitate” communication between a Deaf/HOH person and a hearing person. They abide by strict confidentiality guidelines and conversations are not recorded or shared with anyone.

Again, this article is a general resource on how to communicate with someone who is Deaf/HOH. It is always good to ask the person, what mode of communication they use and if they have any tips to help you in making the most of your conversation. We are all human and regardless of our disability, we all wish to be treated equally.

If you wish for more information on this subject, do contact Susan Sacco at saccos@bhc.edu. Thank you.

SAAM I Am

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). Please be aware that many local rape crisis centers and teams will be hosting events throughout April. It would be great to have self-advocate representation at as many events as possible during SAAM.



Urbana Team creates PSAs

The Urbana Illinois Imagines team has launched a YouTube channel that features 10 of their “No More” public service announcements. The PSAs can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCa ckNueC72INfW3zm8Uw4Og/videos>