

Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing Minnesotans

Deaf people who use American Sign Language are a cultural and linguistic community, not only a disability category. Hard of hearing and late-deafened people may prefer captioning and assistive listening. DeafBlind people may use tactile or Protactile communication.

Maintained by: Equity and Inclusion Operations Consultant

Participation shaped by community voices

Minnesota's Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing shares opportunities for civic participation and engagement with public decisions. Community members are shaping public life—not merely requesting access to it. Communication access makes that participation possible.

- **Explore community participation and advocacy** — <https://mn.gov/deaf-commission/>

A different starting point

If participants helped design your meeting from the beginning, what might change about how people contribute and make decisions?

Community overview

ASL users, oral communicators, cochlear implant users, late-deafened elders, DeafBlind people, and Deaf people from immigrant communities who use other sign languages.

Names and terms

Deaf (cultural, capital D); deaf; hard of hearing; DeafBlind

Do not use 'hearing impaired'. Ask the person's preference.

Practice considerations

Effective communication is a legal obligation. Exchanging written notes is not equally effective for a Deaf person who uses sign language, and a family member is not an interpreter. Your process must work with video relay and captioned phone calls.

What to ask

- How would you like to communicate today: ASL interpreter, captioning, written English, or something else?

- Do you use video relay or a captioned phone?
- Who should be in the room?

Access considerations

- Qualified ASL interpreter or CART booked in advance; not a family member.
- Videos captioned; phone processes have a relay-compatible path.
- Visual alerts in waiting areas; written materials in plain language.

Who to involve

- Accessibility or ADA coordinator.
- Minnesota's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division as a resource (verify current contact).
- Equity Director or administration steward.

Assumptions to examine

- Do not assume lip reading is enough.
- Do not assume written English is a first language for a Deaf ASL user.
- Do not assume a hearing aid means full access.

Continue the connection

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- **Planning a learning or facilitation session** — program page </paths/gp-5>
- **Equity Analysis Toolkit** — program page </learn/equity-toolkit>
- **Community engagement and connections** — program page </learn/community-connections>
- **Learning and resources** — program page </learn>

Sources

- **ADA Title II effective communication** — External; verify at [ada.gov](https://www.ada.gov/). <https://www.ada.gov/>