

# Living on Campus

I have a deaf  
student in my  
dorm!  
What do I do?

## Information for Resident Assistants and Residence Hall Supervisors.



This brochure is provided by the  
Postsecondary Education Consortium,  
Center on Deafness at the  
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Knoxville, TN 37996-3454

The Postsecondary Education Consortium serves the Southern region of the United States, and is a consortium of state outreach and technical assistance centers which are housed at postsecondary programs serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The mission of the PEC is to enhance learning environments that empower these individuals. PEC promotes quality programs and services through innovative practices and outreach. A Member of PEPNet. For more copies of this free downloadable brochure, visit <<http://sunsite.utk.edu/cod/pec/products.html>>.

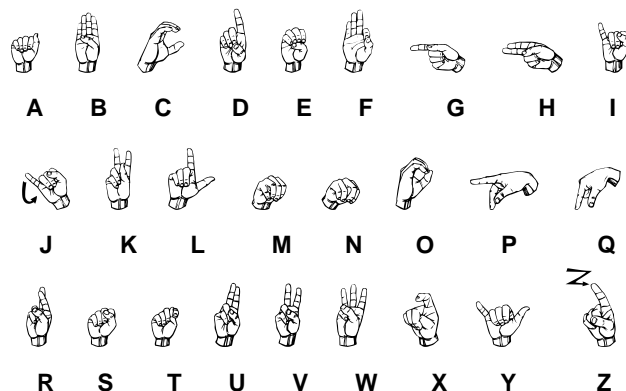
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## The Essentials

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are just like other students except they don't hear as well. They come in all shapes and sizes and call themselves by many names such as: deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing impaired. Ask the student how he/she identify his/her hearing loss and how the preferred method of communication. The biggest issue you'll face in a dorm setting is communication. Not all individuals with a hearing loss communicate in the same way. Some communication options are sign language, writing notes, and lipreading / speaking. Just remember the student is a person first - if you treat him/her as you would anyone else, you're off to a good start. The disability services office on your campus will be happy to provide additional information and support.

### Courtesy Points

- ◆ Have an interpreter at all dorm meetings.
- ◆ Show only captioned movies.
- ◆ Keep the closed captions turned on in the TV room.
- ◆ Encourage all students to learn some sign language.
- ◆ Include the students who are deaf.
- ◆ Never say, "It's not important, I'll tell you later."





## **Myths about hearing loss:**

### **Hearing aids enable a person with a hearing loss to hear normally.**

Hearing aids are able to amplify sound and, in some cases, block background noise. Depending on the type and severity of hearing loss, hearing aids may or may not be beneficial. Hearing aids may allow an individual who is deaf to identify loud noises but not recognize speech.

### **All individuals with a hearing loss can lipread well.**

Many people assume that lipreading is a natural skill that people develop to compensate for hearing loss. In reality lipreading is very difficult and does not happen easily. It is a skill like playing the piano or learning to snow ski. Many words look alike on the mouth. Because of this, a person who lipreads relies heavily on sentence context and residual hearing. Only 20% of the information is actually visible on the mouth. All the rest is guess work.

### **All people with a hearing loss know sign language.**

Individuals with a hearing loss communicate in a variety of ways. Some learn sign language and communicate through interpreters. Some prefer to lipread and speak for themselves. Ask the students how he/she prefers to communicate. This may change depending on the situation.

### **There is only one form of sign language.**

Sign language is not universal. Each country uses different sign languages just like spoken languages. Within the U.S. there 2 main forms of sign language: American Sign Language (ASL) and signed English.

### **If I speak slowly and loudly I will be easier to lipread.**

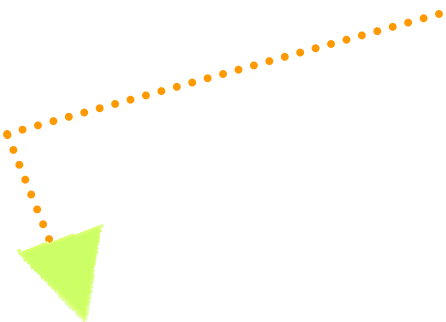
Lipreading is made even more difficult if a person exaggerates his/her mouth movements, which occurs when one tries to speak too slowly. An increase in volume level is also distracting. Having a hearing loss can be like listening to a radio station which is not coming in well. If you turn up the volume, the static doesn't get better. It only gets louder.

### **Individuals who are Deaf aren't very smart because they don't understand what I say and they sound funny when they talk.**

People with a hearing loss may not pronounce words clearly because they cannot hear themselves speak. This is not a sign of lower intelligence. Imagine if you tried to learn Chinese by watching others speak it, but could not hear it yourself. You would misunderstand many things and probably sound funny if you did try to speak it.

### **I don't need an interpreter for short dorm meetings.**

If the student communicates through sign language, you will need an interpreter for ALL dorm meetings. After all, if the information is important enough to call a meeting then all residents need access to it. Contact the disability service office on your campus to schedule an interpreter.





## How do they...??

### **wake up in morning if they can't hear the alarm clock?**

There are visual alarm clocks with flashing lights instead of auditory alarms. Another popular device is a bed shaker. One part goes under the mattress and the other attaches to the alarm clock. When the alarm goes off, the bed actually shakes to wake the person up.

### **talk on the phone?**

Individuals with a mild to moderate hearing loss may be able to talk on the phone by using a phone with sound amplification. Individuals with a profound hearing loss will use a device called a TTY, which is like a typewriter that the headset fits into. Then they type conversations back and forth with another TTY user, or they can call through a relay operator to speak with a person who doesn't have a TTY. They can also connect to the Internet and call someone through video relay, which allows them to sign instead of type to the operator.

### **know when the fire alarm is going off or someone is knocking at their door?**

Dorm rooms should be equipped with visual smoke alarms and door knockers. A visual smoke alarm will flash brightly when the alarm in the building goes off to alert those who cannot hear it. Door knockers use a different flashing light to alert a person when someone is knocking.



## Communication Tips

- Get the individual's attention before beginning to speak and look directly at the person when speaking.
- Speak slowly and clearly; don't exaggerate or overemphasize mouth movements.
- Use body language and facial expression.
- Maintain eye contact.
- If you have a problem being understood, try re-phrasing.
- Try writing when you have trouble communicating. Many words look exactly the same on the mouth.
- Make sure the lighting in the room is appropriate, not too dark and no glaring back light.
- Don't be impatient - the communication process will be slower than normal.



## Resources

### **Orientation to Serving College Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.**

<http://216.17.14.151/cover.htm>

### **A Basic American Sign Language Dictionary**

<http://www.masterstechhome.com/ASLDict.html>

### **ASL and Deaf Culture Info**

<http://www.aslinfo.com/>

### **The Captioned Media Program**

<http://www.cfv.org>