

# Make a Difference

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TIPS FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WHO  
ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING  
— HANDBOOK —

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***Sharon Downs, M.S.***

Program Coordinator, Arkansas SOTAC  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
Little Rock, Arkansas

***Christy Owen, M.Ed.***

Former Program Coordinator, Arkansas SOTAC  
Administrative Director  
New Life Deaf Ministry  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

***Anna N. Vammen, M.A.***

ESL Teacher  
North Little Rock School District  
North Little Rock, Arkansas



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The Postsecondary Education Consortium (PEC) is one of four Regional Postsecondary Education Centers for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Centers strive to create effective technical assistance for educational institutions providing access and accommodation to these students. Funded through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the PEC serves the southern region of the United States through eleven State Outreach and Technical Assistance Centers. For further information, for technical assistance with serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals, or for materials, please contact us at any of the State Centers, or at the PEC Central Office.

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## Table of Contents

The Classroom	5
Communication Issues	6
Using Interpreters	7
Assistive Listening Devices	9
Teaching Strategies	10
Tips that have Helped Other Faculty	11
Glossary of Terms	14
Instructions for the Inservice Presenter	16
Script from the Video	17

## The Classroom

The classroom itself can help or hinder the student's success in your class. Most students who are **\*deaf** or **hard of hearing** depend on their vision to either speechread the teacher or to watch an interpreter, so the physical aspects of the classroom become very important.

- Standing in front of a light source puts your face in a shadow, making it very difficult to speechread you.
- Try to avoid speaking any time the student can't see your face, such as when you write on the board or walk around the room.
- When using an overhead projector, stand to the side of the projector so that it doesn't block your face.
- If a PA microphone is used in a large classroom, keep the microphone below the mouth to facilitate speechreading.
- Use visual aids whenever possible.
- When referring to items on the board, try to be specific about the word or phrase you're making reference to by pointing directly to it.
- When showing a videotape to the class, make sure it is **captioned** and that the television has a **decoder**. Make sure any videos you purchase are captioned. Videos may be '**open captioned**' (always visible) or '**closed captioned**' (visible only when a decoder reveals them).
- For small classrooms, arrange desks in a semicircle.
- If that is not possible, the deaf or hard of hearing student may want to sit in front and to the side to better see you, the interpreter, and the rest of the class.
- Be aware of noise level. Hard of hearing students, whether or not they are using an assistive listening device, may be very sensitive to environmental (background) sounds, which

\*For words in **bold**, please see the glossary of terms.

tend to 'mask' speech. Background noise should be kept to a minimum.

- Deaf or hard of hearing students may also have visual disabilities, thus each situation with each student may have different solutions.

## Communication Issues

The host of the tape voices and uses sign language. The deaf or hard of hearing students you have in your class may do this, or they may just sign, or they may just use their voice. It is best not to make assumptions about how a student will communicate.

- Students who are deaf or hard of hearing receive information in various ways: through an interpreter, through speechreading, through an assistive listening device (ALD), **real-time captioning**, **C-Print**® or a similar system of speech to print transcription.
- Sometimes students use a combination of methods (for example, ALD and C-Print).
- Having a student who is deaf or hard of hearing in your class does not mean you have to learn sign language. Although it is preferable for you to learn some fingerspelling or some sign language (perhaps being able to say, "My name is..." or "Good morning. How are you?") to help put the student at ease, it is not expected that teachers who only occasionally have deaf or hard of hearing students in their classroom will learn to sign. Interpreters will be provided upon request to facilitate the communication in the classroom (or the lab, field trips, etc).
- If a student requests an interpreter or any other **accommodation**, contact the administration of your school.

## Using Interpreters

An interpreter is someone who facilitates communication and conveys all auditory and signed information so that both hearing and deaf individuals may fully interact. There are many types of interpreters, including **American Sign Language (ASL)**, **oral**, **tactile**, and **cued speech**. For the purposes of this training, they will be referred to as simply 'interpreters.' All interpreters perform the same function in your class: to facilitate communication between you and your class and the student who is deaf or hard of hearing. Go to [www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org) if you want to learn more about the profession of interpreting.

Interpreters are certified professionals who train for many years to do their job and who abide by a **code of ethics**:

- Interpreters/transliterators shall keep all assignment-related information strictly confidential.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using language most readily understood by the person(s) whom they serve.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, setting, and the consumers involved.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall request compensation for services in a professional and judicious manner.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall function in a manner appropriate to the situation.
- Interpreters/transliterators shall strive to further knowledge and skills through participation in workshops, professional meetings, interaction with professional colleagues, and reading of current literature in the field.
- Interpreters/transliterators, by virtue of membership or certi-

fication by the **RID**, Inc., shall strive to maintain high professional standards in compliance with the Code of Ethics.

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for the Deaf, Inc. All rights reserved.

Interpreters who work between English and ASL not only interpret the communication, but they also serve as cultural mediators. The interpreter understands the cultural variances between hearing culture and deaf culture, and works to make your interactions go smoothly.

When using an interpreter, remember:

- Look at the deaf or hard of hearing person, not the interpreter, when talking.
- Speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person, using first person speech (the example on the video was don't say, "Does she have her assignment?" but rather, "Do you have your assignment?").
- The interpreter is there to facilitate communication. Don't ask him or her to proctor a test or pass out papers, as this makes it impossible to interpret at the same time.
- Avoid private conversations with the interpreter or others in the presence of deaf persons, as everything you say will be interpreted.
- Speak naturally at a reasonable, modest pace – the interpreter will let you know if you need to speak slower. Also, be aware that the interpreter will lag behind you a few words, in order to hear a complete thought before signing it.
- Consider including breaks. The interpreter periodically needs time to relax, as interpreting is taxing, both mentally and physically. Without adequate 'down' time, the interpreter could develop a **Cumulative Trauma Disorder**, such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Also, receiving information visually can be tiring and cause eye fatigue for the deaf student.
- Make sure there is adequate lighting. If you dim the lights to use the overhead projector, make sure the lighting is adequate for the deaf student to see the interpreter.

- The interpreter will usually stand or sit near the teacher. The student then has the option of viewing both you, the interpreter, and any visual aids at any time.
- If you know a student uses an interpreter and you want to catch him or her in the hall but do not see the interpreter, communicating with written notes is appropriate. For lengthier discussion, give the student a note to call you so an appointment time with an interpreter can be arranged.

## *Assistive Listening Devices*

Many students who use hearing aids effectively in quiet environments have a difficult time following information presented in large college classrooms. In the classroom, the instructor's voice is competing with background noise, room echo, and distance. Therefore, the intelligibility of the instructor's voice is degraded by the poor room acoustics as well as the hearing loss. Most Assistive Listening Device systems use a microphone /transmitter positioned close to the instructor's mouth to send the instructor's voice through the air or by cable to the receiver worn by the student. By placing the microphone close to the instructor's mouth, ALDs can provide clear sound over distances, eliminate echoes, and reduce surrounding noises.

- Assistive Listening Devices have proven to be an effective teaching tool for students with hearing loss. Providing a good listening environment can have a major impact on an individual's academic performance.
- A distinct acoustic advantage of ALDs compared to personal hearing aids is the position of the input microphone at a location close to the instructor's mouth. The microphone location allows the level of the instructor's voice to stay constant to the student regardless of the distance between the instructor and the student. The instructor's voice is also heard clearly over room noises such as chairs moving, fan motors running, and students talking.

- There are a variety of ALDs which can be utilized effectively in the classroom. No single technology is without limitations or can be expected to fulfill all the essential auditory needs of all users. Consult with an audiologist and the student to determine the most appropriate ALD.
- ALDs can maintain a clear presentation of the speech signal in the presence of poor room acoustics. Therefore, the student with a hearing loss has better access to classroom information.

From the NETAC Teacher Tip Sheet series,  
“The Role of Assistive Listening Devices in the Classroom.”

## *Teaching Strategies*

- When new materials are to be covered which involve technical terminology not in common usage, supply a list of these words or terms in advance to the student and interpreter. Unfamiliar words are difficult to interpret.
- Students who use interpreters are receiving the information several seconds after the rest of the class. Allow enough time for the student to get the information from the interpreter before calling on someone. When asking the class to respond, have them raise their hands, rather than just shout out the answer. This will allow the deaf or hard of hearing student to participate.
- Repeat questions from the class before responding. Remember, a student using an ALD hears only what comes from the microphone, thus misses anything else spoken.
- Don't talk to the class at the same time you're having them read something.
- When reading aloud, don't read so quickly that the deaf or hard of hearing student and interpreter can't keep up with you and the rest of the class.

- Remember deaf and hard of hearing students rely on visual cues such as body language and expressions to gather information.

## Tips that have Helped Other Faculty

If you have a student who is deaf who uses **American Sign Language (ASL)**, it will be helpful for you to have some basic information about this complex language. ASL is used primarily in the United States and Canada. It is a visual language with its own rules for syntax and grammar unrelated to English. Extracting meaning from an English sentence is solely dependent on word order (syntax), thus making it a linear language. ASL is three-dimensional using space in conjunction with signs to convey meaning.

There are many linguistic differences between English and ASL. As you evaluate your students' work, keep in mind that students whose primary language is ASL may unwittingly follow some of the linguistic characteristics of that language when writing in English. Some examples of the linguistic differences between English and ASL include:

- Plurals are signified in a variety of ways in ASL, whereas English adds an 's' on nouns and verbs.
- In ASL the adjective is usually after the noun (just as occurs in Spanish, French, and other spoken languages), whereas in English, the reverse is true.
- In English verbs are conjugated to indicate past, present or future. Tense is highly developed in ASL as well, however not with verb conjugations. In ASL, only one form of verbs is used. This is handled by establishing the time frame first, and then all subsequent verbs will remain in that tense until the signer changes the time frame.
- No two languages have exact word-to-word equivalents. One sign in ASL can mean several different words in English, just

as one word in English can be translated into several different signs in ASL.

- ASL does not have the verb 'to be.' ASL, like many other languages, indicates this information in other ways.

There are many, many more examples, but hopefully this brief list will give you an idea of the challenges of written English that face students who are deaf.

It has been said that students who communicate through American Sign Language read and write English as a foreign language, or a second language. That is true, in that many times English is their second acquired language. However, the statement can be misleading. Individuals who are deaf and communicate through ASL do not mentally process language in the same manner as do "second language" students. Deaf students who rely primarily on visual modalities to gain information (i.e. ASL) process this data in a different hemisphere of the brain than the hemisphere for the spoken word. Even the written form of a spoken language is based on sound. Unlike other "second language" students, the student who is deaf must adapt to a different way of processing language when learning English (both written and spoken). For purposes of teaching, however, much of the second language pedagogy has been helpful in teaching students who are deaf.

Here are some tips about reading and writing assignments that have helped other teachers.

- Give assignments in writing (handout, overhead projector, on the board, via e-mail or web page).
- Most students will require a notetaker during class time, since it is not possible to take accurate notes while visually following an interpreter or trying to speechread the teacher. Check notes from the student's notetaker periodically to ensure the student is getting sufficient and accurate information.
- Provide copies of your notes to the student.
- Allow students to meet with you before a writing assignment is due to clarify what is expected.
- Allow a rewrite opportunity before the due date.

- Explain clearly to the student what changes you will and will not allow (the example from the video was 'will allow a re-write before the actual due date, but will not accept late work').
- Encourage the use of technology, such as the student using a computer with a spell checker and grammar checker.
- Be sensitive to the needs of deaf or hard of hearing students without drawing too much attention to them.
- Show as many correlations/differences as possible between English and ASL to enhance understanding. Get the students to teach you these differences. This will enable the students to internalize them. For example, show a sentence using articles. Get the students to write the same sentence on the board translated word-for-word from their languages.
- Teach idioms. Many times, deaf and hard of hearing students have difficulty with idiomatic expressions because of the linguistic differences between English and ASL. Idioms don't translate well, and therefore may not be understood by the student whose second language is English.
- Make sure students have acquired vocabulary-in-context skills.
- Teach effective dictionary skills.
- Be aware that many students have never learned to read academically. Teach what questions are actually asking, and explain inference and its relationship to academic reading.

As you can see, teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing presents unique challenges. Your awareness of the issues discussed in this handbook and the accompanying video will help prepare you for meeting those challenges successfully. Remember, you can make a difference.

For more information, contact PEPNet  
[www.pepnet.org](http://www.pepnet.org)

## Glossary of Terms

**Accommodation** — A service or modification provided to a student with a disability that enables the student to participate in the classroom (or other) experience on an equal basis.

**ASL** — American Sign Language.

**Closed caption** — Text that appears on the television screen that conveys the spoken information – requires a decoder.

**Code of Ethics** — Guidelines for ethical behavior that all interpreters must follow.

**C-Print** — Computerized speech to text transcription.

**Cued speech** — The use of hand shapes and placements around the mouth to aid in the recognition of spoken words – used in some parts of the country extensively, and not much in other areas.

**Cumulative Trauma Disorder** — A painful physical condition, such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, that is caused by overuse and repetitive motion without sufficient breaks for resting.

**Deaf person** — A person whose hearing loss makes it impossible to understand speech.

**Decoder** — A device which allows closed captioning to be seen on a television screen.

**Hard of hearing person** — One whose hearing loss makes it difficult, but not impossible, to understand speech with or without the use of hearing aids

**Notetaker** — Someone designated to provide written notes to the student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

**Open caption** — Text that appears on the television screen that conveys the spoken information – does not require a decoder.

**Oral interpreting** — A form of interpreting in which the interpreter mouths without voice what is being said so the person who is deaf or hard of hearing can speechread more easily.

**Real-time captioning** — Verbatim captioning that is produced live as words are spoken.

**RID** — Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, the organization responsible for testing and certifying interpreters, and the formation of the Code of Ethics.

**Tactile interpreting** — A form of interpreting with individuals who are deafblind which involves them receiving information by placing their hand(s) on the interpreter's hand(s) during the interpretation.

## Instructions for the Inservice Presenter

Teachers who have for the first time a student who is deaf or hard of hearing may experience some uncertainty or anxiety. The goal of this inservice video is to lessen those feelings and replace them with more confidence and skills, and to take away the perception that he or she can't communicate with these students. Because the teacher may be feeling anxiety, you may notice some defensive responses from them. Assure them that there are ways to make the situation go more smoothly, and that is why you are there!

The video covers the following topics:

- 1) The classroom
- 2) Communication issues/using interpreters
- 3) Assistive Listening Devices
- 4) Teaching strategies
- 5) Tips that have helped other faculty

You may pause the tape to discuss each area in more depth. The video script is provided on the following pages with information on places to pause the video for group discussion.

Reference information can be found at the back of this book. For additional copies of the video or handbook, please go to the PEPNet Resource Center at: [www.pepnet.org](http://www.pepnet.org).

# *Make A Difference*

Tips for Teaching Students  
Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing  
— Script —

Hi, my name is Pat. I'm a teacher, and I'm here to talk to my fellow teachers about a particular kind of student – a deaf or hard of hearing student. I know about this from both sides as a high school teacher and as a hard of hearing student. I was born hard of hearing but an illness at the age of five produced a profound hearing loss. From kindergarten on I was in the public schools and attended a state university. For many of my teachers, I was the first deaf student they had ever taught. But they were patient and willing to work with me, and that made all the difference. They gave me a chance to learn alongside my peers and to pursue the education I needed and wanted to become a teacher myself. As a teacher I know how important it is to reach out to all the students in the classroom. As someone who's deaf I know there are adjustments we can make to the classroom, in high school or college, to help us make sure to reach out to all of our deaf and hard of hearing students. These adjustments aren't difficult. They require little in money, time and effort. I know you'll find them helpful. But for your deaf and hard of hearing students, they can make all the difference. Now let's take a look at the physical aspects of the classroom.

• BREAK #1 •

## THE CLASSROOM

Make sure the deaf or hard of hearing student has a clear view of the teacher and fellow students. Sometimes this may mean just moving the student to a different seat. Other times it may mean a minor rearrangement of your classroom. If your class is small, you may want to arrange desks in a semicircle. When this isn't possible, the deaf or hard of hearing student may want to sit in front and to the side, a place that gives the student a clear view of

you and other students. Avoid standing in front of windows and other light sources. The glare will make it difficult for anyone to see you, but it will be especially difficult for the deaf student who reads lips. Try to avoid speaking anytime the student can't see your face, like when you write on the board or walk around the room. When referring to items on the board, try to be specific about the word or phrase you're making reference to by pointing directly to it. It also is helpful to inconspicuously point in the direction of a student who is speaking as a signal to the deaf or hard of hearing student. If the class time is devoted to a reading assignment, don't talk at the same time you're having them read. If possible, ask a hearing student to assist by following the text with his or her finger. Sometimes, you'll need to get a deaf or hard of hearing student's attention when they aren't looking at you. Just lightly tap on a shoulder, wave your hand in the peripheral vision – not in front of their face – or ask a student nearby to assist. Nonverbal communication can say so much, so try to accentuate your body language, facial expressions and gestures. Use visual aids whenever possible – good advice for all your students since visual reinforcement enhances all communication.

• BREAK #2 •

#### COMMUNICATION ISSUES/USING INTERPRETERS

Although many deaf and hard of hearing students use assistive listening devices and speech reading skills in the classroom, some rely on interpreters to communicate. It's important to remember though, that the interpreter is there to help you and the deaf or hard of hearing student communicate. The interpreter does not take your place. You must still maintain direct communication with the student. The interpreter does not explain, help or give advice about class material and information. If the student needs clarification, it should come from you not the interpreter. "Tell her to bring her homework in on Monday this time – not Tuesday." One of the most difficult things for any hearing person to remember is to communicate through the interpreter, not with the interpreter. You are still talking with a deaf or hard of hearing person, so don't talk as if he or she wasn't there. For instance, ask "Do you have your assignment" not "Does she have her assignment?" Let the interpreter sit or stand

to your side. This will allow the student to maintain contact with you and the interpreter. Make sure the interpreter doesn't have to struggle to hear you because of nearby noises such as projectors or air vents.

During class discussion, allow time for the deaf student to participate. Pause to give the deaf student time to communicate through the interpreter and for the interpreter to voice a question or answer back to you. If you are reading out loud, don't read so quickly that the deaf student and interpreter can't keep up with you and the rest of the class. This is just as important for the hard of hearing student who is speechreading or using an assistive listening device. You want all your students to have access to the best education possible, so be sure the interpreter is knowledgeable and qualified. Qualified interpreters have specialized training, a code of ethics and hold state and/or national certification. State rehabilitation services, college interpreter training programs, and state chapters of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf can assist. When the student relies on an interpreter, remember these points: Look at the deaf person not the interpreter when talking. Speak directly to that student, and don't use third person speech. Make sure the student has a clear line of sight to you and the interpreter. Avoid having the interpreter sit or stand in shadows or in front of bright lights and windows. Don't have the interpreter near sources of noise. Avoid private conversations with others in the presence of a deaf person because the interpreter must interpret everything said. Speak naturally; interpreters will ask you for clarification or to slow down. Finally, consider breaks if you have a long lecture. Signing and watching an interpreter require a lot more energy than simply listening.

• BREAK #3 •

#### ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

Again, not all students are going to use interpreters. Some hard of hearing students will rely on assistive listening devices, ALDs, that use wireless microphones to transmit sound to the student's earphone. This means the speaker – whether it's the teacher or a fellow student, must be near the microphone. When there is class discussion, make sure the ALD works effectively for the student by repeating what was said off mike or passing the microphone to the class

member who is speaking or if possible, arrange for multiple microphones. Check often with any student using an ALD to make sure sound is transmitting comfortably, but do it discreetly. People are sensitive about how they communicate and don't want unnecessary public attention. Most listening devices rely on battery power to operate so you might keep a supply of backup batteries or know where to find some, just in case. Rechargeable batteries should be charged each evening. Make sure the transmitter and receiver are turned off every day to conserve power. It's also important to turn the mike off when you're not using it for class discussion since the student can still hear conversations. You may be out of the classroom, but what you're saying isn't.

• BREAK #4 •

#### TEACHING STRATEGIES

Give students with a hearing loss the benefit of your prior planning. Provide them with a brief course outline early in the term. Before each class, on the blackboard make a list of any new vocabulary or specialized terms, or give them a copy in advance to both the student and if necessary to the interpreter.

Some teachers even offer a copy of their lecture notes. This could mean fewer interruptions during class. Because the student is concentrating on you and possibly an interpreter, help the deaf or hard of hearing student find a classmate to provide a copy of class notes. Even without an interpreter, deaf or hard of hearing students may have trouble taking notes because their attention is focused on you. Provide written directions or announcements for example test dates or schedule changes. If you're explaining anything that will mean students must take their eyes off you, referring to a problem on the board for example, allow enough time for the interpreter to communicate the information and for the student to focus on it.

When you show videos or instructional television, use captioned programs and decoders whenever possible. Even if the student is using an interpreter, television and video programs move too fast for adequate communication. On a bulletin board, in your classroom or one centrally located in the school, put any information delivered over public address systems. You also can set up a message relay system to make sure the deaf or hard of hearing student gets all school announcements.

• BREAK #5 •

TIPS FROM OTHER FACULTY

When it's time to evaluate the student's work, keep in mind that a hearing loss can cause problems with grammar, syntax or fluency of expression. Students who communicate through American Sign Language read and write English as a foreign language. Just as you would for any student, help the deaf or hard of hearing student find assistance, language development labs or tutoring for instance.

Here are some tips about reading and writing assignments that have helped other teachers. Understand the unique challenges deaf students face in writing English. Allow students to meet with you before the writing assignment is due. Allow a rewrite opportunity before the due date. Allow deaf and hard of hearing students enough time to read in-class assignments. Deaf and hard of hearing students may not understand idiomatic expressions, so allow time for explanation or try to avoid them. Make sure they understand new terms and phrases. Show them how to use a dictionary effectively. Help them understand difficult or unusual passages. Make sure they know how to interpret innuendo, subtlety or inference.

Meet with deaf students as early in the semester as possible to identify and outline strategies. Explain clearly to the student what changes you will and will not allow. For example, you will allow a rewrite before the due date but late work is unacceptable. If tutoring is needed in a language class, or any subject for that matter, meet with the tutor and student to identify needs and strategies. Follow up with the student about the effectiveness of tutoring sessions. Hold the student accountable for his or her responsibilities. Modify and adjust when necessary, be flexible.

Math teachers have found they need to keep these things in mind when communicating with deaf and hard of hearing student. Don't assume these students are proficient in math because it's visual. When writing examples on the board, be sure to write every step – the deaf student could miss steps explained verbally. In any class remember that special accommodations may be needed at test time. Deaf or hard of hearing students may need extra time if the test requires more reading and writing. They also may need an interpreter to sign test questions.

As teachers, we are challenged daily by our students. Deaf and hard of hearing students offer us unique opportunities. As it is in any classroom experience, your approach can set the tone. These guidelines and your positive attitude can help ensure a valuable experience for all of your students. Remember, you can make a difference.

• END •

## PEC State Outreach and Technical Assistance Centers

State Outreach and Technical Assistance Centers are located throughout the South not only to provide services and support programs to individual deaf and hard of hearing students within the region, but also to provide assistance and technical support to other post-secondary institutions offering similar services. For more information, contact the center nearest your state, or the PEC Central Office Staff.

### **IN ALABAMA**

Jacksonville State University  
Dan Miller, Coordinator  
Cindy Camp, Outreach  
Disability Support Services  
700 Pelham Road North  
Jacksonville, AL 36265-1602  
(256) 782-5093 (V/TDD)  
(256) 782-5025 (Fax)  
E-mail: dmiller@jsucc.jsu.edu  
ccamp@jsucc.jsu.edu

### **IN GEORGIA**

Georgia Perimeter College  
Lisa Fowler, Coordinator  
Katherine Bruni, Outreach  
Center for Disability Services  
555 North Indian Creek Drive  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
(404) 299-4038 (V/TDD)  
(404) 298-3830 (Fax)  
E-mail: KJBRUNI@aol.com  
lfowler@dekalb.dc.peachnet.edu

### **IN ARKANSAS**

University of Arkansas  
at Little Rock  
Sharon Downs, Coordinator  
Disability Support Services  
2801 S. University  
Little Rock, AR 72204-1099  
(501) 569-3143 (V/TDD)  
(501) 569-8068 (Fax)  
E-mail: sadowns@ualr.edu

### **IN KENTUCKY**

Jefferson Technical College  
Vicki Brashear, Coordinator  
Deaf/Hard of Hearing Student Svcs.  
727 W. Chestnut Street  
Louisville, KY 40203  
(502) 595-4221 (V/TDD)  
(502) 595-4399 (Fax)  
E-mail: vicki.brashear@kctcs.net

### **IN FLORIDA**

St. Petersburg Junior College  
Harriet Clark, Coordinator  
Rebecca Herman, Outreach  
2465 Drew Street, SS-101  
Clearwater, FL 33765  
(727) 791-2554 (V/TDD)  
(727) 791-2729 (Fax)  
E-mail: hermanr@spjc.edu

### **IN LOUISIANA**

Louisiana State University A&M  
Jennie Bourgeois, Coordinator  
Office of Disability Services  
112 Johnston Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
(225) 388-4913 (V)  
(225) 388-2600 (TDD)  
(225) 334-2652 (Fax)  
E-mail: jsbourg@lsu.edu

**IN MISSISSIPPI**

Hinds Community College  
Carol Kelley, Coordinator  
Jamy Dickson, Outreach  
Disability Support Services  
PO Box 1100  
Raymond, MS 39154-1100  
(601) 857-3310 (V/TDD)  
(601) 857-3482 (Fax)  
E-mail: CKelley@hinds.cc.ms.us  
JEDickson@hinds.cc.ms.us

**IN NORTH CAROLINA**

Central Piedmont  
Community College  
Peggy Brooks, Coordinator  
Services for Students with  
disABILITIES  
P.O. Box 35009  
Charlotte, NC 28235-6421  
(704) 330-6621 (V/TDD)  
(704) 330-4020 (Fax)  
E-mail:  
peggy\_brooks@cpcc.cc.nc.us

**IN OKLAHOMA**

Tulsa Community College  
Donald Hastings, Coordinator  
Shelli Dismang, Outreach  
Resource Center for the Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing  
3727 East Apache  
Tulsa, OK 74115-3151  
(918) 595-7428 (V)  
(918) 595-7434 (TDD)  
(918) 595-7401 (Fax)  
E-mail: dhasting@tulsa.cc.ok.us  
sdismang@tulsa.cc.ok.us

**IN SOUTH CAROLINA**

Spartanburg Technical College  
Nancy D. Lane, Counselor  
Student Disability Services  
PO Drawer 4386  
Spartanburg, SC 29305-4386  
(864) 591-3811 (V/TDD)  
(864) 591-3947 (Fax)  
E-mail: lanen@al.spt.tec.sc.us

**IN VIRGINIA**

New River Community College  
Lucy Howlett, Coordinator  
Center for Deaf and Hard of  
Hearing  
Drawer 1127  
Dublin, VA 24084  
(540) 674-3619 (V/TDD)  
(540) 674-3644 (Fax)  
E-mail: NRHOWLL@nr.cc.va.us

**IN TENNESSEE, TEXAS,**

**WEST VIRGINIA,**

**VIRGIN ISLANDS:**

The University of Tennessee  
Postsecondary Education  
Consortium Central Office  
Marcia Kolvitz, Associate Director  
2229 Dunford Hall  
Knoxville, TN 37996-4020  
(865) 974-0607 (V/TDD)  
(865) 974-3522 (Fax)  
Email: pec@utk.edu