

# Communication tips

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People who are deaf or hard of hearing use many methods to communicate. Some use lip-reading and speech, while others use sign language. Others may choose to write or use a combination of these methods. Many individuals who experience a hearing loss may feel isolated and left out of social situations. Ask the person who is deaf or hard of hearing what you can do to help improve the communication process. Here are some guidelines for effective communication:

- Converse in a quiet environment with few visual and auditory distractions.
- Communicate in a well lit area.
- Avoid standing in front of bright lights or windows.
- Begin the conversation by getting the person's attention. Call him or her by name, tap his or her shoulder, wave your hand or use other visual signals.
- Make sure your face and mouth are clearly visible. Do not eat, smoke, chew gum or in any way cover your mouth.
- Enunciate your words clearly, avoiding exaggerated lip movements or shouting.
- Maintain eye contact. If you have to turn away from the person, wait until you re-establish eye contact before continuing your conversation.
- Use facial expressions and gestures to help clarify your message. Pointing to appropriate objects or using visual aids can also be very helpful.
- Introduce one idea or fact at a time.
- Only one person should talk at a time in a group situation.
- Rephrase your message if the person does not understand you.
- Do not assume the person can hear and *understand* what you are saying if he or she is wearing a hearing aid. The hearing aid may be worn to help with awareness of environmental sounds like a fire alarm or a car horn.

*This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by calling 651-431-2351 voice, 888-206-6501 TTY; for speech-to-speech telephone re-voice services, call 1-877-627-3848.*



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

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## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division**

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