



DISABILITY FACT SHEET

Hearing Impairment

Communication strategies

- When communicating with a person with a hearing impairment it is important to acknowledge that each person is an individual and should be approached as such.
- To get a person's attention, place yourself where the person can see you and wave your hand or tap them on the shoulder.
- When talking with a person with hearing impairment, give instructions face to face, and talk slowly and clearly. Reduce background noise, and try to speak in quiet periods.
- Don't stand behind the person, or with your back to strong light or a window as they will not be able to see your face.
- Ensure that the person is concentrating on what you are saying.
- With a swivel chair the person can turn easily for lip reading.
- Try to use visual clues.
- Investigate assistive technologies for use in the workplace. For example, the use of vibrating paging and alerting systems, or TTY - a telephone for the deaf.
- Back up what is being said by using written communication.

Disability Overview

People who are deaf or hearing impaired are those who cannot hear at normal levels because of a variety of factors. Deafness and hearing impairment can be hereditary or may be the result of a range of factors, including physical damage, birth abnormalities, disease, prescription medicine, prolonged exposure to excessive noise levels or as part of ageing.

People who are deaf and identify with the Deaf community see themselves as a language and cultural minority not a disability group and may use a visual sign language to communicate.

In Australia, Auslan is the sign language used among signing Deaf people to communicate with each other. For further information view the Auslan Sign Language at <http://www.auslan.org.au/>.

People with a hearing impairment do not usually use a visual sign language but may use lip reading skills or assistive technology to assist speech comprehension and, in general, identify less with other deaf or other hearing impaired groups of people.

Implications

- A Deaf or hearing impaired person's ability to articulate verbally will depend on the degree of hearing loss, when that loss occurred, and assistive technology used and speech training they have received.
- Members of the Deaf community use Australian Sign Language (Auslan) as their first language and may experience some difficulty communicating in spoken and/or written English. To provide accurate and comprehensive communication between a hearing person and a signing Deaf person an Auslan interpreter is used.
- For people with a hearing impairment, it is important to understand that the use of a hearing aid will amplify sound so that background noises like the air conditioner or wind will sound louder, as well as any speech. It is crucial to make sure that background noises and other distractions are reduced when communicating.