

# Deaf or Hard of Hearing Employees



## MYTH



## FACT

**Deaf employees will need a sign language interpreter full-time.**

An employee may need a sign language interpreter for certain situations, like interviews and training. At other times, there are many low-tech ways to communicate, like a notepad, texting, and live captioning.

**An employee who is hard of hearing and uses hearing aids can hear just fine.**

Hearing aids do not “cure” hearing loss. They can help improve hearing by amplifying certain sounds and filtering out background noise, making it easier to hear in a noisy environment.

**All deaf employees can lip read well but cannot speak.**

Some deaf employees can speak and read lips, and some cannot. The ability to speak and read lips is unique to the individual and not a reflection of intelligence.

**Deaf employees who lip read understand everything that is said.**

Lip reading is different from hearing. In the best of conditions, approximately 30% of English speech sounds are visible on the mouth.

**Nodding by a deaf or hard of hearing employee indicates full understanding of what was said.**

Nodding may indicate understanding of the words being spoken but not always the concept being expressed. Use specific and clear language in your communications and ask questions to check for understanding.

**All hearing loss is the same.**

There is a wide range of deafness and hearing loss. How hearing loss affects an individual is unique.

**All deaf employees know and use sign language.**

Not all deaf employees know or use sign language, but most deaf employees will benefit from gesturing, demonstrations, and using more than one communication method.

**Deaf and hard of hearing employees are not sensitive to noise.**

Individuals with hearing loss want to protect their hearing, just like any other employee. Some loud sounds can be uncomfortable, especially when someone is wearing a hearing aid.

# Dos and Don'ts When Using a Sign Language Interpreter



**DO**

- Ask the deaf employee if they have a preferred sign language interpreting agency.
- Provide the interpreter with materials and relevant information in advance. Remember to include industry terminology and acronyms.
- Plan for multiple interpreters for events that are longer than an hour or are of a complex nature.
- Ask the employee where they prefer the interpreter be positioned for best access.
- Make eye contact directly with the deaf employee, not the interpreter. The interpreter is there to facilitate the conversation, not be a part of it.
- Speak at a normal rate with a normal tone. The interpreter will advise if you should pause, decrease your rate, or repeat yourself



**DON'T**

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- Don't expect the interpreter to filter the conversation. The interpreter will interpret exactly what you say.
  - Don't engage in a conversation with the interpreter on the side. The interpreter needs to focus on the reason they are present, which is to facilitate communication between you and the deaf employee.