



# COMMUNICATION SPECTRUM TIP SHEET FOR FIRST-TIME INTERPRETER/CART REQUESTS



The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has, since our beginnings in 1985, striven to provide the highest possible quality of communication access services throughout the Commonwealth.

In order to provide this high level of service, we ask requestors detailed questions about the events they are hosting and about the individuals they are intending to provide communication access to.

If this is the first time you are contacting us to make a request, we understand that this can be confusing and possibly even intimidating.

You may wonder why you have to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for some individuals, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART/captioning) for others, what a Certified Deaf Interpreter or an Assistive Listening Device is. We understand these concerns, and we are here to help walk you through them.

**The best way to provide effective communication access to someone is always to ask the person directly what their communication preference is.**

Just as it is impossible to conclude from simply looking at someone to presume to know what language they may speak, so it is impossible to visually identify whether someone is Deaf, hard of hearing or late deafened, or to draw conclusions about the person's individual communication needs without having asked them what those are.

The [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), [MGL151B](#) and other laws mandate the provision of effective communication access, which will vary from person to person. While the most effective method is always to ask someone directly what works for them, the following information is intended to help guide you to a better understanding of general communication methodologies.

Please feel free to ask us if you need additional assistance.

## DEAF:

- When someone identifies as 'Deaf', they generally will use American Sign Language (ASL)
- ASL is an entirely visual language; it has no relationship to spoken or written English
- Communicating in written English is a last resort, not a substitute for providing ASL
- Deaf individuals participating in onsite or remote events must be provided with ASL interpreters
- Not all Deaf individuals know ASL. Deaf persons from other countries may use different sign languages; others may have developed visual gestural communications in lieu of formal ASL
- For these individuals, a Certified Deaf Interpreter is required in addition to an ASL interpreter

## ORAL DEAF:

- Someone who is deaf, but prefers verbal communication and speechreading to sign language
- Oral deaf individuals may use hearing aids or cochlear implants
- Some oral deaf persons may use Signed English rather than American Sign Language
- Some oral deaf individuals may request oral interpreters - individuals who soundlessly repeat what a speaker may be saying, optimized for individuals who speech read
- Oral deaf individuals may also request Assistive Listening Devices or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART, a verbatim speech-to-text provided by expert stenographers)
- Oral deaf may choose to use ASL and become part of the Deaf Community

## DEAF BLIND:

- A deafblind individual may have no or very little useable sight or hearing
- Some deafblind individuals may use tactile ASL, placing their hands on top of other ASL users' - or ASL interpreter's - hands to 'read' what is being said, and responding in ASL
- Others prefer close vision interpreting, where an ASL interpreter sits very close to the person, often with additional light directed at them
- Still other deafblind people may benefit from large font, high contrast CART/captioning, or cochlear implants, and speak for themselves
- Communication is very highly individualized and should follow the individual's expressed needs

## HARD OF HEARING:

- Hard of hearing is the appropriate way to describe individuals with post-lingual hearing loss
- Hearing loss may vary from mild to profound, degree of loss impacts communicative abilities
- Hard of hearing people often benefit from hearing aids or hearing assistive technology (HAT)
- In addition to amplification, reducing ambient noise levels is always a helpful strategy
- Hard of hearing participants in remote events will require Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)/captioning. For onsite events, assistive listening devices should also be considered; CART/captioning may be requested by individuals requiring it
- Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) can be helpful in personal one-to-one situations

## LATE DEAFENED:

- A late deafened individual describes someone who has lost all of their hearing post-lingually
- Speech discrimination is likely to be extremely poor or absent even with HAT and hearing aids
- Late deafened individuals may benefit from Cochlear Implants to regain communicative abilities
- Late deafened participants in both onsite and remote events will require Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)/captioning in order to participate effectively
- Even with cochlear implants, many late deafened individuals benefit from HAT to further improve speech discrimination in complex listening situations.
- Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) can be helpful in personal one-to-one situations