

HOW TO HELP AND INCLUDE SOMEONE WITH HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss or deafness does not affect a person's intellectual capacity or ability to learn. However, children who are either hard of hearing or deaf generally require some form of special education services in order to receive an adequate education. Such services may include:

- Regular speech, language and auditory training from a specialist;
- Amplification systems;
- Services of an interpreter for those students who use sign language;
- Favorable seating in the class to facilitate lip reading;
- Captioned films/videos;
- Assistance of a notetaker, who takes notes for the student with a hearing loss, so that the student can fully attend to instruction;
- Instruction for the teacher and peers in alternate communication methods, such as sign language; and
- Counseling.

Children who are hard of hearing will find it much more difficult than children who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions and other aspects of verbal communication. For children who are deaf or have severe hearing losses, early, consistent and conscious use of visible communication modes (such as sign language, finger spelling and Cued Speech) and/or amplification and aural/oral training can help reduce this language delay. By age four or five, most children who are deaf are enrolled in school on a full-day basis and do special work on communication and language development. It is important for teachers and audiologists to work together to teach the child to use his or her residual hearing to the maximum extent possible, even if the preferred means of communication is manual. Since the great majority of deaf children (over 90%) are born to hearing parents, programs should provide instruction for parents on implications of deafness within the family.

People with hearing loss use oral or manual means of communication or a combination of the two. Oral communication includes speech, lip reading and the use of residual hearing. Manual communication involves signs and finger spelling. Total Communication, as a method of instruction, is a combination of the oral method plus signing and finger spelling.

Individuals with hearing loss, including those who are deaf, now have many helpful devices available to them. Text telephones (known as TTs, TTYs or TDDs) enable persons to type phone messages over the telephone network. The Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), now required by law, makes it possible for TT users to communicate with virtually anyone (and vice versa) via telephone. Dial 711 to access all TRSs anywhere in the United States. The relay service is free.