

# IF YOU INTERACT WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE



People who are Deaf or have hearing loss struggle to communicate as more people wear mouth coverings and masks during the Coronavirus pandemic. Hearing loss and Deafness are a hidden disability. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) community have ongoing concerns about the communication barrier when they come into contact with people who are wearing masks in public including hospitals, clinics, restaurants, businesses, and everyplace else.

Wearing masks is necessary to protect yourself and others to slow the spread of COVID-19, but are not conducive and create barriers for communication with DHH people. This notice will provide tips for enhancing communication between the hearing and DHH communities while mask coverings are necessary.

## Challenges DHH people are faced with during COVID-19:



- ✗ Lip-reading made impossible by wearing masks.
- ✗ Most masks do not have clear openings for seeing mouth movement.
- ✗ Sharing pens or pencils is a high risk when writing notes.
- ✗ Lack of training for health care and other workers regarding communication needs of DHH.
- ✗ Social distancing measures make it difficult to interact and limit the way DHH people can communicate.
- ✗ Shortages of in-person sign language interpreters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Tips for effective communication with DHH persons:



- ✓ Remove your mask for a few minutes to allow the DHH person to read your lips. If you are uncomfortable with removing your mask, you can use your gestures, body movement or any visual aids to help the DHH person to understand.
- ✓ The clear mask is the best method to communicate with a DHH person.
- ✓ Use your own pen or pencil for your protection. Any notepaper, paperless board (e.g. dry erase board), or phone app (e.g. Ava or live transcribe) can be useful.