

The Answer is always effective communication!

Recently, the [Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals defined “effective communication” in a medical setting](#). The court stated as follows:

There can be no question that the exchange of information between doctor and patient is part-and-parcel of healthcare services. Thus, regardless of whether a patient ultimately receives the correct diagnosis or medically acceptable treatment, that patient has been denied the equal opportunity to participate in healthcare services whenever he or she cannot communicate medically relevant information effectively with medical staff. It is not dispositive that the patient got the same ultimate treatment that would have been obtained even if the patient were not deaf.

What this means is that a Deaf patient has the right to participate in his or her care to the same degree as a hearing person, including conveying and receiving medical information from doctors or other hospital. The ultimate result of the treatment does not matter as much as having the ability to understand the entire treatment.

So now the question is, how does a doctor or a hospital ensure effective communication?