

Communicating with our **Deaf Patients**



Communication flows best when there is **trust between the provider, interpreter and patient.**

Best Practices for Communicating with Deaf Patients

- Gently tap on the deaf person's shoulder or wave your hand to get their attention
- Remember not to call out the deaf person's name in a waiting area
- Work with interpreters wherever needed - not all Deaf can speech-read (lip-read) and many are not comfortable with written communication
- Even the most proficient speech-readers (lip-readers) can only "read" about 30% of speech
- When using Video Interpreting, adjust height and position of screen to face the deaf person
- Make sure that the deaf person can see the interpreter's entire torso and vice versa - communication happens in the face, shoulders, arms and hands
- Don't follow the voice...always look and speak directly to the deaf person
- Allow time for the deaf person to review and ask questions regarding documents

Best Practices for Working with ASL Interpreters

- Speak clearly and at a normal pace
- Speak directly to your patient - avoid phrases like "tell her" or "ask him" (It is better to ask the patient "How are YOU feeling today?" than to say to the interpreter, "Ask HIM how he's feeling today.")
- Avoid "side conversations" with the interpreter while he/she is working
- Remember, interpreters communicate everything that is heard and seen within the assignment. Therefore, if you don't want something interpreted, don't say it!
- If in a group and a deaf person is present, only one person should speak at a time
- Pause for questions and use teach-back to ensure that the deaf person understands the message



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What is American Sign Language?

American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete, complex language that employs signs made by moving the hands combined with facial expressions and postures of the body. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf and is one of several communication options used by people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. – National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

ASL: Signing Essential Expressions

Practice signing these basic expressions in American Sign Language (ASL) to meet and greet people, join in on conversations, answer questions, and be polite and courteous.



HELLO



GOODBYE



NICE TO MEET YOU



YES



PLEASE



NO



THANKS

For online health education in American Sign Language, see <http://www.deafhealth.org/> and <http://deafdoc.org/> and <https://www.youtube.com/user/DeafWellnessCenter/videos>