Communicating with Hard-of-Hearing and Deaf Patients

Providers

— Maintain eye contact when speaking with your patient.

— Give your name and discipline and show patient your ID badge.

— Ask patient if they have a printed Communication Access Plan (CAP). If not, complete one with the patient and include it in the Electronic Medical Record or paper chart.

— Inform patient of available aids and services provided by the facility. (See Communication Aids and Services in the Provider section of this Guide for more information.)

— Be sure all staff refer to the patient’s CAP and are familiar with devices and services needed for effective communication.

— Be sure all clinical discussions are directly with the patient and not with a family member, friend, or caregiver. *

— Be sure patient leaves with clearly printed instructions or discharge plans.

*If services and/or devices are provided, and patient and provider are still unable to communicate, ask the patient if a family member, caregiver, or friend may assist. Without permission from the patient, speaking with family members, caregivers, or friends, may be a violation of HIPAA and ADA regulations.

To Facilitate Effective Communication:

— Reduce background noise.

— Minimize visual distractions.

— Be sure room is well lit. The light source should be in front of the person speaking, not behind.

— Do not oversimplify, abbreviate, or dilute information. Hearing status is not related to intelligence or cognitive function.
— Be sure patient can see your mouth clearly. Do not chew gum, bite on a pen, or cover your mouth with your hand.

— Speak clearly and at a moderate pace, and do not exaggerate words. This distorts the mouth and can make speechreading difficult.

— Provide as much information as possible before putting on a surgical mask.

— If the patient does not understand what is being said, rephrase rather than repeat the same words or sentences.

— Inform the patient when you are changing topics or context (i.e., diagnosis, treatment, follow-up, medication).

— Use diagrams, models, illustrations, and other visual aids to augment communication.

— Use teach-back to encourage questions and ensure the patient’s understanding.

— Do not ask family members, friends, or caregivers to facilitate communication.