

Consumer Technology Initiative— Providing Solutions for Consumers with Hearing Loss



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We are fortunate to live in a time of great technological advancements. The HLAA Consumer Technology Initiative can make an immediate difference in the lives of people with hearing loss by removing communication barriers, opening doors, keeping people in the workplace, creating opportunities for an active social life, and by helping to maintain and build new relationships with family and friends.

There are assistive and emerging technologies available that offer life-changing and positive changes to people's lives. Technology can enhance an individual's ability to function in everyday situations, increase independence at home and at work, provide communication access, and prevent the isolation that often occurs when people do not have the technology tools and skills to communicate.

Even when basic information is given to consumers, barriers remain, such as attitudes about using technology, funding problems, and confusion about how to select and use equipment for various situations and finding the right fit for the individual.

People of all ages should be able to use the latest technology. Employees need it to get jobs and succeed in their careers. Employers need to understand the impact technology has on recruitment, performance, and retention of employees with hearing loss. Students need to leverage technology to excel in school, enhance their learning capacity and build a solid foundation for their future. Older adults need help to adapt quickly to technology advancements to remove communication barriers that could prevent them from living full and happy lives.

HLAA Launches the Consumer Technology Initiative (CTI)

We know how important hearing assistive technology is to you because of the overwhelming number of inquiries HLAA receives about how and what new technologies can help with communication.

The Consumer Technology Initiative will help everyone across the age spectrum, socioeconomic segments, and in all communication situations.

The CTI goals include: providing assistance and resources to people with hearing loss and their families in order to learn to effectively use assistive and emerging technologies; ensuring communication technologies are compatible and user-friendly for people with hearing loss; increasing HLAA's technology capacity to enhance outreach to people with hearing loss; advocating for communication access in public and private venues; leading a national dialogue on hearing loss at the highest levels; orchestrating a national public awareness campaign; and increasing our outreach to underserved communities and populations.

We recognize there needs to be a unified, rather than fragmented, approach to increasing access to and knowledge of the most current technologies. Therefore, one feature of this new HLAA program is to build a national clearinghouse for information and access to hearing assistive technology.

We also want to partner with industry leaders to provide consumer input into technology design efforts even *before* products are produced so that products are developed with a clear understanding of the needs of people with hearing loss.

This is an exciting time for HLAA, our members, and the 48 million people with hearing loss in this country. Stay tuned for more information about this initiative and how you can benefit from this important work. **HLM**

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