

Communication Aids and Services

Patients

Making sure you have the aids and services you need for *effective communication* is the responsibility of the hospital, institution, facility, or practice. You and your family cannot be asked to pay for aids or services.

Effective communication is when information between two or more people is shared or exchanged and each person is able to fully understand and make decisions based on that information. This is often a process that requires going back and forth with questions and answers until everyone has a clear understanding.

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs): An ALD will make the voice of the people you are speaking with louder when they speak into a small microphone. If you have a pocket talker, FM system or other ALD, bring it with you to your appointment. If you do not have an ALD, ask staff if a pocket talker is available. (See Pocket Talker below)

Amplified Phones: An amplified phone will make the voice of the person you are speaking with louder.

Captioned Phones: If you are using a captioned phone, you can read what the person you are speaking with is saying on the phone screen. Captioning services are also available on some smartphones.

CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation): A CART captionist will type the discussion you have with your doctor or staff so you can read it on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. CART can also be used remotely, meaning that the captionist is at another location using the internet to connect.

Dry Erase Board (or Whiteboard): A small board that can be written on with an erasable marker.

Hearing Loop: If your hearing aid or cochlear implant has a telecoil, and the room you are in has a special wire called a loop, you will be able hear and understand more clearly.

Pen and Paper: Pen and paper may be helpful for very short communications or as a back-up if there are no devices or equipment that can be used.

Pocket Talker: A pocket talker is a small assistive device with a microphone, amplifier, earbuds or headset and a neckloop for hearing aids that have telecoils. It makes the speaker's voice louder to help you hear better. Many hospitals have pocket talkers for you to use.

Relay Calls: You can call a specially trained relay operator who will type what a person is saying while you read it on the phone screen.



Tablet, Computer, Smartphone: Ask your doctor's office or hospital staff if they have an iPad or other tablet that can be used for typing discussions. If not, you might want to bring your own. You may also be able to use the voice activation option on a smartphone.

UbiDuo: Using two separate screens with keyboards, you and the doctor or staff member can face each other while they type and you read what they are saying on the screen.

Interpreting Services

- The hospital, facility, or practice is responsible for setting up and paying for interpreting services.
- The hospital, facility, or practice cannot ask or require you to bring your own interpreter.
- The hospital, facility, or practice should not ask your friends or family to help you and your health care team communicate. However, in case of an emergency, family or friends may be asked to help.

American Sign Language Interpreter: If you or a family member communicate in American Sign Language, you can ask for an ASL/English interpreter. An ASL interpreter can help you and your health care team communicate. If you need interpreting services, ask for nationally certified interpreters.

Certified Deaf Interpreter: A CDI is a deaf person who has been nationally certified to provide interpreting services to deaf people who may not be able to communicate well in American Sign Language. If you or a family member use sign language from another country, or have difficulties communicating in sign language, you may ask for a CDI. A CDI typically works with a hearing ASL interpreter.

Low-Vision Interpreting: If you or a family member have low vision, you may need the sign language interpreter to stand or sit very close to you so you can see the signs.

Oral Interpreter: If you or a family member are very good speechreaders, you may want to request an oral interpreter. An oral interpreter repeats what the speaker is saying, using different words that are easier to speechread. Oral interpreters and sign language interpreters *do not* provide the same service. Be sure to let the hospital or facility staff know which service you need.

Tactile Interpreting: If you or a family member use sign language and are DeafBlind, you can request a tactile interpreter. A tactile interpreter has a DeafBlind person put their hands lightly over theirs so signs and fingerspelling can be felt.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI): VRI is an interpreting service with the interpreter, in a different location. However, you may still need an on-site interpreter in medical and mental health settings. See [National Association for the Deaf and VRI](#). There are strict [guidelines for the use of VRI services](#) which hospitals and institutions must follow.

Note: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) refers to communication aids and services as [Auxiliary Aids and Services](#)

