

Communication in Outpatient Settings

Patients

When scheduling outpatient appointments, let staff know what aids and services you will need so you, your doctor, and your health care team can communicate clearly. Services and aids you use for your visit, will be at no cost to you, your family, or your caregiver. A **Communication Access Plan (CAP)** should be filled out and become part of your medical record. This will save time and help you feel less stressed and frustrated. It should make communication easier and make your visits go more smoothly.

Scheduling Appointments

Online Scheduling

- Check to see if your doctor’s office has online scheduling through their website or a patient portal.
- Check to see if you can email or fax your CAP to the doctor’s office before your appointment.

Phone Scheduling

- Tell the receptionist you are hard of hearing or deaf.
- When using a captioned phone or relay operator, let the receptionist know your call may take longer.
- Tell the receptionist your communication needs for the appointment. If possible, fax or email a copy of your CAP.
- Ask for the name of the office manager in case you need help getting the services you need.
- Ask if you can fill out medical forms online before your appointment.
- Repeat back the date and time of your appointment.
- Ask that an email confirmation be sent.
- Ask for the text number or email address you should use if you will be late.
- You may want to share information from the Provider section of this Guide with your doctors and staff.

Managing Appointments

When You Arrive

- Remind staff you are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Give them a copy of your CAP.
- Ask that a sticker be put on your paper chart showing that you are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Discuss your CAP with staff and decide what aids and services you will use for your appointment.
- Ask if staff will use a vibrating pager or come to where you are sitting when it is time for you to be seen.

Your Visit with Your Doctor or Other Health Care Staff

- Tell your doctor that you have hearing loss and give staff your CAP.
- You may want to print information from the Provider section of this Guide to give to your doctors and staff.
- Ask questions and make sure you get them all answered.
- Repeat back information to make sure you understood.
- Ask if any new medicine you are given might make your hearing, balance, or tinnitus worse (ototoxic reaction).
- Before having an MRI, if you have a cochlear implant (CI), be sure to tell your doctor.
- Ask that all information about your treatment plan and medicines be given to you in writing.
- Ask for the name, phone or text number, or email address of someone to contact if you have questions about your care.