

Communication in Inpatient Settings

Patients

If you are hard of hearing or deaf, your inpatient stay in a hospital or other facility can be especially stressful. Planning ahead by filling out a **Communication Access Plan (CAP)** can help you to get the aids and services you need. Hospitals or other health care facilities cannot ask you to pay for aids and services you use during your stay.

Hospitals and health care facilities must follow laws that protect your rights to receive all information in a way you can understand. Clear communication helps avoid misunderstandings, keeps you safe, and helps you make better decisions.

Pre-Admission: Planning Your Stay at a Hospital or Facility

- Contact the Patient Representative or Patient Advocate and ask which department or staff member is responsible for arranging the services you need. Give them a copy of your CAP.
- Ask what aids and services the hospital or facility will have for you.
- Have staff give you information in writing about what to expect during your stay.

A Planned Hospital Stay

- Bring your pre-admission paperwork along with your CAP.
- Bring your assistive listening devices (ALDs), batteries, and a container with your name on it.
- Bring stickers for your wristband with a symbol showing you are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Bring pen and paper.
- You may want to print information from the Provider section of this Guide to give to your doctors and staff.

Admission from the Emergency Department

- Make sure patient escort/transport know about your hearing status and how to communicate with you when you are being transported for tests, to your room, or to another facility.
- Make sure you have all your personal communication aids with you
 - (ALDs, batteries, hearing aids, etc.).

During Your Stay in the Hospital/Facility

- Give a copy of your CAP to the department or staff member who will make sure you get the communication aids and services you need. Ask to have the CAP added to your Electronic Medical Record or paper chart.

- Let staff know you expect to be included in all discussions and decisions about your medical care.
- If you are unable to get the help you need, ask to speak with a Patient Representative or Patient Advocate.
- Check to see that the following are in place:
 - Sign over bed stating you are hard of hearing or deaf, or written on the whiteboard in your room
 - Wristband with universal “hearing loss” sticker or ask for a second wristband showing your hearing status
 - Captioned phone
 - Visual alerts in case of an emergency; other devices for alerts as needed
 - Instructions on how to set up captions on the TV and patient education videos
- Let staff know you will not be able to hear over an intercom.
- Tell staff the best way to get your attention before they speak with you.

Some options are:

- Turn lights on and off
- Stand a few feet away and wave their hand
- Tap you gently on the shoulder
- Make sure ALDs, cochlear implants, hearing aids, and other belongings are kept safe.

Leaving the Hospital (Discharge)

- Get all information and discharge instructions in writing before you leave the facility.