

**The Deaf/Hearing-Impaired Women's Health  
Project 2001-2002 presents**



**A resource booklet for serving the  
Deaf/Hearing-impaired Community**

Developed in consultation with the Deaf/hearing-impaired  
women of Macarthur, NSW

Auspiced by The Benevolent Society

Supported by a South Western Sydney Area Health Service  
Women's Health Seeding Grant

This resource was published in November 2002.

Copies of it can be downloaded from The Benevolent Society website at [www.bensoc.org.au](http://www.bensoc.org.au)

# Welcome

---

This resource booklet is a gift to service providers from the women of WITCHES – Women Into Training, Communication, Health and Education Systems.

We would like to welcome you to this booklet with a very important message. In this manual the word 'Deaf' is used. People of the Deaf Community and others who have grown up with a unique experience of 'Deaf Pride' do not find the word 'Deaf' offensive. We welcome and are proud of its use.

Welcome, welcome, friends anew,  
Learning, learning, something new,  
Signing, signing, for me and you,  
Silent world, moving hands,  
Fun and laughter, tears and pain,  
Forever our long goodbyes.

*Lisa Van de Zwaag, 1999.*

## WITCHES

If you are interested in contacting WITCHES, please contact The Benevolent Society's Centre for Women's Health:

(02) 4627 2792 (Voice/TTY)  
whlth@bensoc.asn.au (Email)

# Mental Health Matters Award

---



The Deaf Women's Health Project has evolved from WITCHES – Women Into Training, Communication, Health and Education Systems. WITCHES is a network of Deaf/hearing-impaired women that meets regularly in Macarthur, NSW. A partnership involving WITCHES, The Benevolent Society and The Deaf Society of NSW received a Mental Health Matters Award in recognition of the Deaf/hearing-impaired Women's Health Project 2001–2002. The

project was supported by a South Western Sydney Area Health Service Women's Health Seeding Grant in 2001.

In general, the Deaf Community in Macarthur has benefited from increased solidarity that has resulted from the Deaf/hearing-impaired Women's Health Project.



the benevolent society

centre for women's health

# Table of Contents

---

Introduction	2
Welcome to our world	4
General tips for providing services to Deaf/hearing-impaired people	8
Providing health services	9
Using Interpreters	12
Staffing: Creating a service environment appropriate for the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community	16
Resources & Information	18
Relationships... Deaf/hearing-impaired people need counselling, too!	20
Safety & Transportation	23
Training and support for you	25
Glossary	26
Useful contacts	28



# Introduction

---

Dear service provider,

We are pleased to present this resource to you – one of our many health and community service providers. Who are we? We're a group of Deaf/hearing-impaired women in the Macarthur region of NSW. Our group is named Women Into Training, Communication, Health and Education Systems – we call ourselves WITCHES. We have put a lot of thought into this resource because we want to help you work with us!

In 1997, WITCHES began meeting at The Benevolent Society's Centre for Women's Health in Campbelltown, NSW. Since then, 10 women have met regularly. Together, we shared the challenges we face as a Deaf/hearing-impaired Community. As a group, we realised that by supporting each other and with leadership, we could make things better for the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community.

The Deaf & Hearing Impaired Women's Health Project has provided the opportunity to voice our needs and share our experiences. The project is a partnership between WITCHES, The Benevolent Society and The Deaf Society of NSW and was funded by the South Western Sydney Area Health Service Women's Health Seeding Grants in 2001. The project involved a series of consultative forums to discuss how to improve service provision for the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community. Participants included WITCHES and other Deaf/hearing-impaired women from throughout Sydney including Deafblind women. Between 15 and 20 women of various ages and backgrounds participated in the consultative forums. Working together, we identified the barriers that the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community experiences when accessing information and resources from health and service providers. Then we discussed how these barriers could be overcome. And that's what this booklet is all about. In it, you will find tips that can help you improve the services you provide to your Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers. We have also included profiles about several of us to help you understand our Deaf/hearing-impaired world better.

We realise that in some cases the recommendations and tips that resulted from our consultative forums go beyond the scope of this resource booklet. Consequently, WITCHES, The Benevolent Society and The Deaf Society of NSW will continue to work toward addressing these important policy issues.

So read on and thank you for taking the time and making the effort to hear our story and serve us better!





# Welcome to Our World

Here are some helpful hints for working with Deaf/hearing-impaired people.

Deaf/hearing-impaired people do some things differently than hearing people and this is part of our "Deaf Culture".

## How we identify ourselves

- Deaf with a capital "D" is a political statement of culture, belonging and pride in being Deaf and a member of the Australian Deaf Community. Some people consider themselves "Deaf" with an upper-case "D".
- deaf spelled with a lower-case "d" is a medical/pathological term used to describe the physical characteristic of being deaf. Some people consider themselves "deaf" with a lower-case "d".
- Hearing-impaired is the term usually preferred by those who have acquired a hearing loss in late childhood or adulthood, or who have mild or moderate hearing loss. These people usually communicate using speech, lip-reading and residual hearing (often amplified by hearing aids).

Please note, it is a personal choice whether a person identifies herself as "Deaf", "deaf" or "hearing impaired". Please do not assume how an individual identifies herself; always ask her which she prefers, especially in reports and case note documentation. It's that easy.

## Communicating with us

- **Communicating.** People who identify as Deaf use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and often require an Auslan interpreter to facilitate communication with people who don't understand Auslan. Whether or not to use an interpreter is the choice of the individual. She may, for confidentiality reasons, refuse to use an interpreter at any given time. Other options



used by Deaf/hearing-impaired people for expressing themselves are to hand write messages, one-on-one communication using a computer, TTY (teletypewriter), or e-mail. It is the Deaf/hearing-impaired person's right to choose which method of communication they prefer.

- **Getting a Deaf/hearing-impaired person's attention.** Deaf/hearing-impaired people tap each other on the shoulder, flash the lights on and off, or they may even stamp their feet on the floor and wave their hands to get attention. This is not seen as rude by Deaf people. This is just another part of our culture that makes it easier for us to communicate with each other.

Please do not use these practices if you do not have the agreement of the Deaf/hearing-impaired person you want to communicate with. Within the Deaf Community, people do not use this method with people they are unfamiliar or not comfortable with.

- **Wave "hello" when approaching a Deaf/hearing-impaired person to get her attention.** Speak and use the waving sign, indicate your name, ask how you can help the person and ask if they would like an interpreter. Use pen and paper, if necessary.
- **We are usually very patient when we are not understood by hearing people.** We have developed strategies to assist us in communicating. You can communicate with us by learning how to fingerspell, writing notes, using gesture and mime, pointing or learning our language when you feel ready.
- **Facial expression is very important to people using Auslan.** It adds meaning and conveys emotion. This is why Deaf/hearing-impaired people communicate using a lot more facial expression than hearing people. This is because facial expressions are very important to us. This is like hearing people using their voice to show they are happy, sad or shocked.



- **The “Long Goodbye”.** Deaf/hearing-impaired people tend to take a long time to say hello and goodbye. It is important to approach friends and say “Hello, I’ve missed you” or “Goodbye, when will I see you again?” This starts another round of conversation about when we will meet again. Friends would be offended if someone left without saying goodbye – that is what we call the famous “Long Goodbye”.
- 
- **Visual alert systems are used by Deaf/hearing-impaired people as a tool for living independently.** If you have established a rapport with a Deaf/hearing-impaired person or persons, flash the lights in a room to gain their attention. Other devices to be aware of are telephone flashing light systems, door bell flashing light systems and baby cry alarms.
  - **Setting the mood for signing.** Communicating in Auslan can be difficult if a room is very bright. Venues usually have plenty of overhead lighting so reduce window glare by closing blinds and avoid white backgrounds while signing. Deaf/hearing-impaired people see/hear differently and the eyes adjust to reading sign language just as they do to reading different text/fonts.
  - **As Deaf/hearing-impaired people, we can be very direct in the way we communicate.** For instance, if we haven't seen someone for a while and they have put on weight, we will naturally say, “You have put on lots of weight”. Hearing culture labels this rude but in Deaf Culture this is simply stating a fact. We only use this manner of communicating with people who we are familiar with or who also associate with the Deaf Community (whether they are Deaf or hearing).
  - **TTY and SMS messaging are very important communication methods for Deaf/hearing-impaired people.** They provide an efficient and fast method for accessing services and improving everyday life for Deaf/hearing-impaired people.
  - **Deaf/hearing-impaired people drive cars, too!** Although most of us don't hear sirens, we have adapted peripheral vision that enables us to identify flashing lights more readily via the rear view mirror.

You may notice us constantly checking the rear view mirror while driving. Feel safe driving with us – we are very good drivers!

- Pride in our Deaf Culture is important to us as Deaf women. It is a sign of acceptance of our deafness and our language!

## Profile

Hi, I am a Deafblind woman. I was born Deaf and attended North Rocks School for the Deaf. In my late 20s I was told that I had Ushers Syndrome, a disorder that results in progressive blindness and some level of hearing impairment depending on the individual. As I lost my sight, I learned to adapt using a special TV screen to magnify my work. I was very proud of my adaptation in the workplace over the years. Eventually, I was forced to stop working which was extremely hard for me emotionally. I was a professional and loved my work. I feared losing my independence and being bored with nothing to do during the day.

Last year (I am now in my late 30s) I learned new computer skills using a Braille keyboard that clips onto a standard computer keyboard. I am able to type using the Braille keyboard and my work is translated into English so that I can communicate with others. Information that I receive over the computer is translated into Braille so that I can read it once it is printed. I have valuable computer skills and I want to be a part of this world, too. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find money for interpreters so I haven't been able to continue my computer studies. I can do everything a hearing woman can do on the computer and I am so thirsty for opportunities to learn/access more computer skills. I talk by e-mail with people all over the world who have Ushers Syndrome and it has been fantastic support. My goal is to return to the workforce and to open up more opportunities for people with Ushers Syndrome around the world.



# General tips for providing services to Deaf/hearing-impaired people

**Every service provider should review their disability access and equity standards to ensure that they respond to the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community just like any other consumer audience.**

For example, some service providers budget for interpreters of languages other than English but not for Auslan (which is an officially recognised community language).

## Tips

- Allocate funds in your annual plans and funding submissions for hiring interpreters. This will help increase your clientele.
- Make links with the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community – this will facilitate their access to the services you provide.
- Be proactive by asking members of the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community to provide feedback to you on how your services can be more Deaf/hearing-impaired friendly.
- Invite members of the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community to serve on your advisory committee to ensure that their voices are heard throughout planning and decision-making processes.
- Be aware that not all Deaf/hearing-impaired people read and/or write in fluent English.



# Providing health services

**As Deaf/hearing-impaired people, like everyone else, we have the right to access a range of health information and services.**

There are many things you can do – some simple and some that will require more effort – that can make a significant difference to your Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers and their families.

## Tips

### Doctors

- Allow more time with Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers because the process of translating complex medical terms and concepts from English into Auslan may require flexible, creative and patient service delivery.
- Spend enough time with Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers to ensure that they fully understand their health status and any necessary treatment or follow up needed.
- Establish a system with your support staff so interpreters are automatically scheduled during appointments with Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers. Staff may require extra training in how to book an Auslan interpreter.
- Train staff to appropriately notify Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers in the waiting room when the doctor is ready to see them.
- When prescribing medication, ensure that Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers fully understand its purpose and use. This will help prevent the incorrect use by consumers.
- Using pictures to communicate with Deaf/hearing-impaired people can be helpful and may assist in clarifying information and concepts.



## Profile

### Valma Stebbings nee Pattearson

When I was young it took several years and many visits to specialists before I was diagnosed as being deaf. During my early childhood, my parents noticed something unusual about my attitude towards people; when people spoke to me or asked me questions I copied every word they said to me but I didn't answer their questions.

My parents took me to see different specialists to find out why I repeated what people said but did not answer their questions. My parents were not satisfied that the specialists could not diagnose what was wrong with me. Finally, my mother took me to see a specialist who determined that I was completely deaf. At first my mother did not believe him because I could hear the postman whistling and I answered the door when someone knocked. I use to run to collect the chooks' eggs every morning when I heard them clucking in the backyard. The specialist informed my mother that deaf people can sense vibration from noise to compensate for not hearing. My parents were shocked and devastated to learn this after taking me to so many specialists who hadn't been able to diagnose me.

As a result of my experience, I learned how important good health care is and I recommend that people seek opinions from different doctors before accepting a diagnosis. I want to share my story so that when young children are having problems that their parents don't suffer the way mine did.

## Hospitals

- Ensure that staff are aware of how to book an interpreter through the Health Care Interpreter Service. [Please see contact information for the Health Care Interpreter Service on page 15 of this booklet.]
- Conducting a survey of Deaf/hearing-impaired people in your hospital's service area is a proactive means of preparing in case of an emergency or disaster.
- Train emergency staff how to notify Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers when the doctor or admissions nurse is ready to see them. Calling out a name in a busy casualty section just doesn't work.

## Community health

- Develop information materials targeted to Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers that describe what community health services are available to all patients. Include any services you have that are tailored to Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers.
- Schedule information sessions specifically for Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers so that they can become more familiar with the services provided by community health.
- Provide sufficient notice so that interpreters can be scheduled for health education forums and seminars. (Better yet – schedule the interpreters when planning the event and publicise that the service will be available when promoting it!)

## General

- Provide interpreters for health seminars (as well as individual appointments with consumers).





## Using Interpreters

**Interpreting services are a Deaf/hearing-impaired consumer's right; interpreters can greatly improve the interaction between a Deaf/hearing-impaired consumer and service providers.**

Using an interpreter is empowering and provides us with access to information that directly impacts on or relates to our health and wellbeing. We have the same needs as hearing consumers – access to appropriate information and support.

### Tips

There are several things service providers can do to improve the quality of the services they provide through the use of interpreters.

- Post signs to let consumers know that the service provider will book an interpreter for any of the following:
  1. Deaf/hearing-impaired persons
  2. Deafblind persons
  3. People who use languages other than English
- When possible, use interpreters who have knowledge of the topic.
- Have Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers tell you what type of interpreter they need. This can be done using a form that is distributed to Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers and will help you in booking the most appropriate interpreter.
- Consider identifying a worker in your local area who could serve as a liaison between you and your Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers. Also, consider collaborating with other local services to “share” a worker who can serve the Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers of multiple organisations.

**Always request interpreters who are accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).**

## Profile

Hi, I am a 43 year old woman. I am Deaf and have been a member of the Deaf Women's Group in Macarthur, NSW for five years. I identify with the Deaf Community and my language at home and work is Australian Sign Language (Auslan). I live in Macarthur with my husband and two sons. They are all hearing and fluent users of Auslan. I'd like to raise awareness of a difficulty I experienced when requesting that my sons' school hire an interpreter during their Year 10 School Certificate and Year 12 Higher School Certificate graduation ceremonies. This is an experience shared by many Deaf/hearing-impaired parents in their attempts to participate in their children's education, health and welfare.

These were important events for my family so we contacted the school on several occasions to request that an interpreter be present for both ceremonies. Having been a parent at the school for seven years this was my first request that an interpreter be hired for a special event involving my sons. Unfortunately, the school did not make arrangements for an interpreter for me, even though I had offered to share the cost and had identified a professional interpreter who was available for the ceremonies. I was very frustrated and disappointed with the school's response to my request. I ended up hiring and paying a professional interpreter myself to attend the graduation ceremonies which I think was the school's responsibility. I was so proud when my elder son received a certificate from the University of Sydney Business Studies Exam involving all HSC students in that year. I was unaware he was receiving this award and it turned out his exam mark was a Distinction level. I also had the opportunity to meet other parents who were so pleased to see me at the ceremonies. It was truly an incredible day for my family.

I want to share my story because it is an example of how organisations have policies that are not inclusive of the Deaf/hearing-impaired community. As a parent, I felt very excluded



by the school's response to my request for an interpreter. Later, with support from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission I was able to communicate to the school my frustrations and how important it was that their policies be changed to be more inclusive to Deaf/hearing impaired persons. As a result, the school now provides an interpreter for similar ceremonies and the school is now aware of how to use the TTY to communicate with Deaf/hearing-impaired parents by telephone. My hope is that other organisations will learn from this experience how important it is to have policies that are inclusive of the Deaf/hearing-impaired community.

## Booking an interpreter\*

Interpreters can be booked through an interpreting agency. Many interpreters work on a freelance basis which means negotiating directly with the interpreter. There is an ongoing shortage of interpreters so make every attempt to book at least two weeks in advance.



\* Adapted from the ASLIA (NSW) document "The Use of Sign Language Interpreters"

## Useful contact information\*

Interpreters for certain occasions can be booked through the following:

Organisation	Relevant occasions
<p><b>Health Care Interpreter Service</b> Contact the Manager at the Area Health Care Interpreter Service, under Health Department of NSW in the White Pages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public hospital (including emergencies)</li> <li>● Public dental hospital</li> <li>● Psychiatric hospital</li> <li>● Government funded health service</li> <li>● Community health centre</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Relations Commission</b> Contact the Customer Service Coordinator at the Community Relations Commission Language Services on 1300 651 500.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Police and court matters (including emergencies)</li> <li>● Government department / Business organisation</li> <li>● Licence testing</li> <li>● Workshops</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deaf Education Network</b> Contact the Business Manager, Faculty of Interpreting at the Deaf Education Network on (02) 8845 9444.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Workplace / vocational</li> <li>● Government department</li> <li>● Corporate functions</li> <li>● Parent / school interview</li> <li>● Counselling (private)</li> <li>● Legal</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Deaf Society of NSW</b> Contact the Interpreting Service Clerk at The Deaf Society of NSW on (02) 9893 8555.</p>	<p>We provide fee for service interpreting for a range of situations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Police situations</li> <li>● Public legal appointments</li> <li>● Public health system</li> <li>● Court</li> <li>● Staff meetings</li> <li>● Training sessions</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Courses</li> <li>● Seminars</li> </ul> <p>We also provide a free interpreting service for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Private health appointments</li> <li>● Private legal appointments</li> <li>● Funerals</li> </ul>



# Staffing: Creating a service environment appropriate for the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community

---

Creating a service environment that is appropriate for Deaf/hearing-impaired people directly supports their right to access services.



Specific steps you can take to assist your staff serve Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers include the following.

## Tips

- Make a note in a consumer's file if they are Deaf/hearing-impaired. This will enable staff to be more proactive in providing appropriate communication and services.
- Network with workers and organisations who serve the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community to be up-to-date on the latest developments in how to best serve Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers.
- Consider hiring a Deaf/hearing-impaired staff member if your clientele includes a significant number of Deaf/hearing-impaired people. [Please note, Deaf/hearing-impaired staff require interpreting resources to attend staff meetings.]

- Consider learning Auslan so that you can directly communicate with your Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers/co-workers. But remember, learning Auslan is like learning any other language; it takes years of study and practice to become fluent.
- Ensure that there is always someone on your staff who knows how to use the National Relay Service (NRS) properly. The NRS allows hearing people to communicate with a person who can then transmit the message to the Deaf/hearing-impaired person via TTY.
- When staff leave who have participated in training for deaf awareness, ensure that other staff receive this training so that there is always someone on your staff with the capacity to provide culturally appropriate services to your Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers.

## Profile

As a Deaf woman, I've often experienced barriers in my life because I think there is a lack of awareness about the Deaf Community. While studying at university I had difficulties accessing an interpreter when I wanted to use the counselling service. When I was able to get an interpreter, I didn't know if I could trust them to keep things confidential. Also, it was hard to get an interpreter for my doctor's appointments. Either the doctor's staff couldn't get an interpreter immediately or they did not know how to book an interpreter.

Hearing people often question how they can communicate with Deaf people. Fortunately for me, I grew up with a hearing family and have learned to communicate verbally and by lip-reading. If I didn't have these communication skills, like others, I wouldn't be able to express myself clearly with hearing people, and would have more difficulty in accessing services.



## Resources & Information

**Printed resources and information are very important to Deaf/hearing-impaired people, particularly when service providers have limited capabilities to communicate with them.** There are several things service providers can do to ensure that the information and resources they produce and distribute are most useful for all of their consumers, including Deaf/hearing-impaired people.

### Tips

- Indicate in any of your promotional materials whether TTY, e-mail, fax or SMS messaging facilities are available.
- Include your TTY and fax numbers in your phone book listing.
- Incorporate Auslan translations or subtitles into video-based resources.
- Develop materials specifically for the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community just like you would do for any other community that uses a language other than English. We like information written in plain English with a lot of visuals.
- Consider seeking funds from your local council, a government agency or club to create a video in Auslan to detail the services that you provide. You may also want to consider partnering with other organisations to make a joint video.
- Videos and captions – please consider the need to have videos with captions or are translated into Auslan, when setting up or re-stocking your resource library.
- If you consult Deaf/hearing-impaired people for their insights, it is important to provide them with the outcomes, feedback, reports and recommendations associated with the consultation. This is good practice to ensure that miscommunication has not occurred.

## Profile

### Rebecca Stoker

Hi, I am Rebecca Stoker and I have a name sign (nickname) from the Deaf Community that means rosy cheeks because my cheeks are always rosy. My husband Scott is also Deaf; he has his own name sign, too. Name signs are a very important part of Deaf Culture. It makes it easier to remember the person's name rather than having to finger spell every letter in their name, it is so much quicker and friendly.

I was born Deaf. My mother, father and all my relatives are hearing. My mother can sign, and my relatives use finger spelling and gesture. I am not so good at communicating orally. I can read lips just a bit, but not as much as many service providers/people assume. We are all individual and our degree of deafness and ability to lip-read differs from one deaf person to another.

My aim is to improve things for the Deaf Community in how we are perceived. I want to break down old views/stigmas of Deaf people. I wish the Australian Deaf Community was as successful as the American Deaf Community. Sometimes we want help or information and we can't get it as easily as hearing people. Please think about changing your ways of providing services to include us as part of the local community, too.

I'd love to see all Australians successfully working together for each other equally. This for me means hearing people and Deaf people are viewed as equals. That Deaf people are not put down, discriminated against or excluded for being who they are by birth! Deaf people have a very hard time and yet don't scream and rant when they can't get help or things quickly. Our patience is something learned through life. We wait, we trust and we hope that things will change, that soon access to all things will be easier. I have the same feelings that hearing people have; we are all humans! Deaf people love to share with hearing people about our Deaf Community, culture and improvements to our everyday lives. I hope we can soon share in this special way together for the future.



## Relationships...

### Deaf/hearing-impaired people need counselling, too!

Like all people, Deaf/hearing-impaired people sometimes need counselling to get them through problems in a relationship and in life. There are many things you can do to make sure that the counselling you provide is helpful and successful.

### Tips

#### Deaf/hearing-impairment awareness

- Understanding challenges faced by Deaf/hearing-impaired people in relationships will help counsellors provide more appropriate support.
- Invest the time to develop trust with your Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers – it will improve your overall outcomes.
- As an individual service provider, join with your colleagues and organisations like The Deaf Society of NSW and the Australian Association of the Deaf to advocate for medical associations to incorporate awareness of deafness and hearing impairment into their professional training and codes of ethics.

#### Communication

- Explain things several times, in different ways if need be – visuals often help.
- Use plain English!
- Don't worry if you make a mistake when attempting to respond to a Deaf/hearing-impaired person – it's okay! Don't be nervous because it makes us nervous.
- Do not assume basic Auslan skills qualify you to provide counselling in the language; fluency in Auslan and understanding of Deaf Culture is imperative to adequately provide such services.
- At times a third person is needed to facilitate communication

between a Deaf/hearing-impaired person and a counsellor. You may need to consider this issue with respect to your confidentiality and privacy policies.

## Empowerment

- Encourage strength and self belief in your consumers.
- The inability to access services often leaves Deaf/hearing-impaired people feeling disempowered – you can help reduce this!
- Indirect communication is often extremely offensive to Deaf/hearing-impaired people. Be as direct as possible: talk to the Deaf/hearing-impaired person not the interpreter, and make eye contact. Both are very important to Deaf/hearing-impaired people.
- Respect the relationships of Deaf/hearing-impaired people – focus on their achievements in spite of the challenges they face.
- Please keep in mind that Deaf/hearing-impaired people have the right to access the same services as the hearing community.
- Recognise the abilities of the Deaf/hearing-impaired.

## Profile

### Linda's Story

The most difficult thing for me about counselling was finding someone who was able to understand the impact of being Deaf on my life but at the same time was not overwhelmed by the deafness itself. I have found that before being able to explore the issues that I wanted to address in counselling, I first had to educate the counsellor about what it is like to be Deaf.

The other major problem I have encountered is that people think because I can lip-read well and I can speak that I don't need an interpreter. However, I am still Deaf and I can't understand them! Lip-reading is hard work and when people are very sad or distressed it is just so tiring trying to work out what people are saying while thinking about what I need to talk about myself.



The most positive experiences I have had in counselling situations happened when the counsellor has:

1. Asked me what I need. Do you want an interpreter? Do you want to write notes and use some lip-reading? What about computer-assisted counselling where we can type to each other? In this way, the counsellor showed me that she/he was aware that I might prefer to have an interpreter and was also interested in exploring other options for communicating if I didn't want to involve a third person; and the counsellor was prepared to be patient.
2. Asked questions about being Deaf but has not focused on my deafness or made assumptions based on the idea that I am only having problems because I can't hear!
3. Listened when I have tried to explain how I feel about being Deaf. I don't want my hearing to be fixed. I don't see being Deaf as suffering from a pathological medical condition. I don't want to have a cochlear implant. I just want to be accepted for who I am and part of who I am is being Deaf. Respect for me and for the Deaf Pride I have as a Deaf person has been the key to successful counselling.
4. Understood that being Deaf is an extra dimension in my life but I still have the same types of problems and issues that other people have.
5. Shown me respect and compassion and does not expect me to carry the burden of their pity or to be a 'nice person'. I have been able to relax and just work through a whole range of emotions in an honest and safe environment.

What I would really like to see is more Deaf counsellors working within mainstream counselling and health services. I believe that not only would this facilitate access to counselling for people who are Deaf/hearing impaired it would also help to provide Deaf workers who have first-hand knowledge of disability and also of crossing cultural and language barriers.

## Safety & Transportation

**Emergency situations are traumatising, and this is amplified when a communication barrier prevents people from accessing help.**

Police officers and others responsible for safety need to be aware of how to communicate with the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community in emergency and non-emergency situations. This also applies to public transport staff who play an important role in people's everyday lives. Police and public transport staff need to have the capacity to serve Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers, not only so that they can go about their daily activities but also to ensure that staff can communicate with them in case of an emergency. Service providers who respond to issues of safety (for example, domestic violence and child protection) should also be aware of tips to ensure the wellbeing of the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community.

The Benevolent Society is currently implementing a domestic violence project with women who have disabilities or are Deaf/hearing-impaired. A desired outcome is the development of a resource focused on helping service providers support women who have disabilities or are Deaf/hearing-impaired, who have experienced or are at risk of domestic violence.

### Tips

- Every police station should be resourced, trained and accessible via TTY to communicate with Deaf/hearing-impaired people. This is important for safety as well as access to services.
- Train public transport staff – security and ticket takers – in how to communicate with Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers, for example, using written notes.
- Have a pen and paper easily accessible so that you can communicate with Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers. Be patient when communicating with Deaf/hearing-impaired passengers. They have a right to access transport services and have questions just like hearing passengers.



- The installation of electronic message boards in train carriages and on all train platforms would ensure that Deaf/hearing-impaired passengers have access to the most up-to-date information.
- Don't forget: the TTY doesn't work when the power goes off!
- Police: consider developing a register of the Deaf/hearing-impaired residents in your community in case of an emergency.

## Emergency services

The following emergency services can be accessed by the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community.

- 106 Emergency Relay Service: If life or property is in danger, Deaf/hearing-impaired people can access the Police, Ambulance or Fire by using a TTY and dialing 106 to contact the Emergency Relay Service provided by the Australian Communication Exchange.
- Lifeline is a national organisation that provides 24-hour telephone counselling service. Deaf/hearing-impaired people can access the service by using the National Relay Service. Lifeline Macarthur can be contacted on (02) 4648 2224.

## Recommendations

We would like to make the following recommendations for improving access to emergency services for the Deaf/hearing-impaired Community.

- Establish SMS text messaging access to the Police Assistance Line and State Emergency Service.
- Establish a local access number or direct TTY link for the Police Assistance Line (the National Relay Service based in Queensland cannot access the 13 11 14 number on behalf of Deaf/hearing-impaired people).
- Establish Direct TTY connections using (02) or 1800 numbers to contact the Police Assistance Line and State Emergency Service.

## Training and support for you

The Deaf Society of NSW offers several different training workshops that can help you and your staff enhance the services you provide to Deaf/hearing-impaired consumers. These training workshops include:

1. Deafness Awareness Training
2. TTY Training
3. Deaf Deaf World (An experiential workshop that simulates some of the communication barriers experienced by Deaf/hearing-impaired people in everyday life.)
4. Sign Language Classes (group and individual)

For more information, please contact The Deaf Society of NSW:

(02) 9893 8555 (Voice)

(02) 9893 8858 (TTY)

(02) 9893 8333 (Fax) or

[www.deafsocietynsw.org.au](http://www.deafsocietynsw.org.au).





## Glossary

---

**Australian Sign Language (Auslan)** – the sign language used by the Australian Deaf Community; it is a language in its own right (like Spanish, Arabic or Russian). Auslan is not simply a form of English using the hands. Auslan is a visual spatial language with meaning expressed not only by the signs used and their order of use, but also by body movement and appropriate facial expression.

**Deaf** (with a capitalised D) – is used to describe those who use Australian Sign Language (Auslan) to communicate, and who identify as members of the signing Deaf Community. These people may also identify themselves as "culturally Deaf." They are more likely to have been born deaf or become deaf early in life.

**deaf** (with a lower-case d) – is a more general term used to describe the physical condition of not hearing, and also to describe people who are physically deaf but do not identify as members of the signing Deaf Community.

**Deaf Community** – this refers to Deaf people as well as their family and friends who use Auslan fluently and understand Deaf Culture.

**Deaf Culture** – The Deaf Community has a distinct culture that can be noted in how we communicate with each other and how everyday life is lived in a non-hearing world.

**Hard of hearing** – sometimes used as an alternative term for "hearing-impaired".

**Hearing-impaired** – the term usually preferred by those who have acquired a hearing loss in late childhood or adulthood, or who have mild or moderate hearing loss. These people usually communicate using speech, lip-reading and residual hearing (often amplified by hearing aids).

**Relay service** (or **National Relay Service**) – a telephone access service provided by the Australian Communication Exchange whereby Deaf/hearing-impaired persons can communicate using TTY or a computer with a modem. A Relay Officer reads TTY messages out loud to the hearing person and types back the hearing person's message using the TTY. To use the relay service simply call the national number (13 36 77) and then provide the phone number of the Deaf/hearing-impaired person you wish to communicate with.

**TTY** (or **teletypewriter**) – an input device that allows messages to be typed in and sent to a computer or a printer. TTY systems are used by Deaf/hearing-impaired people to communicate via the phone or computer modem with hearing and Deaf/hearing-impaired persons.



# Contacts: Deaf-specific Services in NSW & ACT

Provided by The Deaf Society of NSW

As at 24 July 2002

<b>Australian Association of the Deaf (AAD)</b>		Peak Deaf consumer body. Provides information and advocacy for the Deaf Community.
Voice	(02) 9286 3944	Suite 513, Level 5 149 Castlereagh St Sydney NSW 2000 <b>www.aad.org.au</b>
TTY	(02) 9286 3933	
Fax	(02) 9286 3955	
Email	aad@aad.org.au	
<b>Australian Communication Exchange (ACE)</b>		Operates the National TTY Relay Service (NRS). Information on text calls and usage of text calls.
Free Voice	1800 555 660	PO Box 473 Stones Corner QLD 4120 <b>www.aceinfo.net.au</b>
Freecall TTY	1800 555 630	
Freecall Fax	1800 555 690	
NRS Voice	1300 555 727	
Freecall Voice	1800 555 677	
<b>ACT Sign Language Interpreter Service (Auslan)</b>		ACT Auslan interpreting service
Voice/Fax	(02) 6287 4391	Grant Cameron Community Ctr Lvl 2a, 27 Mulley St Holder ACT 2611 PO Box 3239 WESTON ACT 2611 <b>www.actdrc.org.au</b>
TTY	(02) 6287 4392	
24hr Mobile	0412 422 059	
Email	act.terp@austarmetro.com.au	
<b>Australian Hearing (AHS)</b>		Federal audiological service provider, hearing tests for eligible clients.
Voice	13 17 97 (Connection to nearest Centre)	Head Office: 126 Greville St Chatswood NSW 2067 Level 3, North Wing 2-12 Macquarie St Parramatta NSW 2150 <b>www.hearing.com.au</b>
TTY	(02) 9893 4213 (Parramatta)	
Fax	(02) 9893 4197 (Parramatta)	
<b>Australian Theatre of the Deaf (ATOD)</b>		Australia's only professional Deaf theatre. Performances/workshops for both schools and adults.
Voice	(02) 9310 1255	Suite 6 245 Chalmers St Redfern NSW 2016 <b>www.ozdeaftheatre.com</b>
TTY	(02) 9318 2835	
Fax	(02) 9318 2186	
Email	atod@mpx.com.au	

<b>The Benevolent Society Centre for Women's Health</b>		Provides counselling for Deaf women & their families.(Deaf women's support group meets weekly Tues 10am-12 noon)
TTY	(02) 4627 2792	288 Queen Street Campbelltown NSW 2560 <a href="http://www.bensoc.org.au">www.bensoc.org.au</a>
Fax	(02) 4627 2915	
<b>Deaf Education Network (DEN)</b>		Deaf specific adult education college. Basic literacy, numeracy and communication courses for the Deaf Community. Auslan courses from basic to advanced. Interpreter booking agency.
Voice	(02) 8845 9444	Building N,RIDBC 361-365 Nth Rocks Rd North Rocks NSW 2151 PO Box 5004 North Rocks NSW 2151 <a href="http://www.deaf.nsw.edu.au">www.deaf.nsw.edu.au</a>
TTY	(02) 8845 9411	
Fax	(02) 8845 9455	
Email	den@deaf.nsw.edu.au	
<b>The Deaf Society of NSW</b>		Provides a range of services for people who use Auslan
Voice	(02) 9893 8555	Suite 4, Level 4 169 Macquarie St Parramatta NSW 2150 PO Box 1060 Parramatta NSW 2124 <a href="http://www.deafsocietynsw.org.au">www.deafsocietynsw.org.au</a>
TTY	(02) 9893 8858	
Fax	(02) 9893 8333	
Free Voice	1800 893 855	
Free TTY	1800 893 885	
Free Fax	1800 898 333	
Email	deafsoc@tig.com.au	
<b>Deaf Sports and Recreation (DSR)</b>		Peak body in NSW for Deaf sporting and recreational groups.(DSR also organises children's social days, pen friends, holiday camps etc.)
Voice	(02) 9763 2455	7 Underwood Road, Homebush NSW 2140 PO Box 537 Sydney Markets NSW 2129 <a href="http://www.deafsportsnsw.com.au">www.deafsportsnsw.com.au</a>
TTY	(02) 9764 2350	
Fax	(02) 9764 1486	
Email	dsrnsw@deafsportsnsw.com.au	
<b>Deafness Centre New Children's Hospital Westmead</b>		Provides medical, communication and educational assessment of deaf children
Voice	(02) 9845 2139/40	Hawkesbury Road Westmead NSW 2145 PO Box 3515 Parramatta NSW 2124
TTY	(02) 9845 2703	
Fax	(02) 9845 2102	

<b>Deafness Resources Australia (DRA) (operated by ACE)</b>	Retailers resources on deafness, and equipment (e.g. TTYs)	
Voice	(02) 9895 2970	33 Argyle St Parramatta NSW 2124 Locked Bag 5380 Parramatta NSW 2124 <b>www.aceinfo.net.au</b>
TTY	(02) 9895 2971	
Fax	(02) 9895 2972	
Free Voice	1800 555 201	
Free TTY	1800 555 203	
<b>Internet Discussion Group for parents of hearing impaired &amp; Deaf children</b> <a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/phidcoz">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/phidcoz</a>	Provides a forum for parents to discuss issues & receive feedback from other parents with similar experiences.	
<b>National Relay Service (Operated by ACE)</b>	A telecommunication service for Deaf, hearing impaired and hearing people.	
<b>Voice</b> 1300 555 727 <b>TTY</b> 13 36 77 <b>Freecall</b> 1800 067 167 (for enquiries)		
<b>NSW Association of the Deaf Inc. (NSWAD)</b>	Peak Deaf NSW consumer body. Provides information and systemic advocacy for the Deaf Community of NSW. Publishes <i>Silent Messenger</i> . Coordinates celebrations for International Week of Deaf Persons (Deaf Pride) in NSW. Starting Deaf Youth Group late 2002.	
Voice	(02) 9286 3944	Suite 513, Level 5 149 Castlereagh St Sydney NSW 2000 PO Box 3991 Parramatta NSW 2124
TTY	(02) 9286 3911	
Fax	(02) 9286 3955	
Email	nswad@bigpond.com	
<b>NSW Deaf Senior Citizens Association</b>	Mutual support group for Deaf people over 55. (Branches in Newcastle, Sydney, and Wollongong)	
TTY	(02) 9797 0402	PO Box 108 Croydon Park NSW 2133
Fax	(02) 9799 3784	
<b>Parent Council for Deaf Education (PCDE)</b>	Mutual support group and lobbyist for parents of deaf/hearing impaired children focussing on education.	
Voice/TTY	(02) 9871 3049	PO Box 4748 North Rocks NSW 2151
Fax	(02) 9871 3092	
Email	pcde@bigpond.com.au	
<b>Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children</b>	Education service for Deaf and Blind children. Refer to Renwick College.	
Voice	(02) 9871 1233	361 North Rocks Road North Rocks NSW 2151 Private Bag 29 Parramatta NSW 2124 <b>www.ridbc.org.au</b>
TTY	(02) 9871 1233	
Fax	(02) 9871 2196	
Email	mail@ridbc.org.au	