

## Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is the primary state agency that promotes equal communication access and accommodations in statewide and community systems for over 500,000 people in Wisconsin of all ages who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. The Office's Regional Coordinators provide a wide variety of services including information, referral, education, training, technical assistance, and consultation to individuals and any public or private organization about communication access issues for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

### *Who Does the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Work With?*

- **Individuals:** deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind; parents of children who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing; senior citizens and others who are experiencing hearing loss; people who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing with other developmental, mental or physical disabilities
- **Legal systems:** correctional and juvenile facilities and law enforcement personnel; criminal, civil and small claims court systems
- **Medical, emergency care and mental health systems:** hospitals, clinics, health care and service providers; emergency medical systems; safety

programs; mental health care providers

- **Educational systems:** Birth-to-3 programs; K-12 settings; transitional services; universities, colleges and technical colleges
- **Long-term care systems:** elderly living and assisted living facilities; respite care and community-based services for senior citizens and severely disabled persons who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing
- **Governmental systems:** city, county and state government offices and agencies, including human services, tribal and aging; other community service agencies
- **Employment and vocational systems:** employers, job service and job training agencies; placement services
- **Private and public commercial systems:** financial institutions, law offices, theatres, lodging facilities, community recreation centers

### *What Does the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Do?*

- Maintains a website ([dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory)) with links on:
  - interpreters and interpreting service agencies
  - real-time captioning service agencies
  - interpreter and captioner qualifications
  - sign language classes
  - communication tips
  - hearing aid and hearing health information
  - deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing community services and organizations

- Provides information about issues, cultural awareness, programs, services, resources, and technologies available to people who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing
- Makes referrals to community services, regarding communication and technology resources
- Supports individuals and organizations in obtaining appropriate information about available services
- Offers the Wisconsin Interpreting/Transliterating Assessment (WITA) to evaluate and verify interpreting and transliterating skills
- Provides information about federal and state laws about communication access and the rights of people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing
- Manages the state-funded Telecommunication Assistance Program (TAP) that helps eligible, low-income deaf, deafblind and severely hard of hearing persons to meet the co-payment requirement of the Public Services Commission's Telecommunication Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) to buy telecommunication devices (TTY, visual alerting devices, amplifiers)

### *What Kind of Training Does the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Offer?*

The Regional Coordinators offer training in various formats (presentations, discussions, and/or hands-on). On request, these Regional Coordinators can modify the training to meet your needs. Training topics can include:

- Basic introduction to hearing loss and its impact on communication
- Strategies to make the environment more communication accessible in the workplace, service or program setting
- Information on appropriate accommodations under federal and state laws that protect the rights of deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing persons, such as:
  - The Americans with Disabilities Act (federal)
  - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (federal)
  - The Telecommunications Act of 1996 (federal)
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (federal)
- Strategies to work with deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing employees; assisting deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing employees to develop self-advocacy skills
- Information on communication used by deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing persons:
  - American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf culture
  - Communication strategies used by hard of hearing people

- Special communication needs of people who are deafblind
- Sign language interpreting services
- Communication and assistive technology (TTYs, relay system, real-time captioning)
- Differences between people who are deaf and those who are hard of hearing
- Strategies to work with deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind people in various program and service settings
- Resources at the regional, state, and national levels
- Hearing loss in later years

***What kind of technical assistance and consultation does the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing offer?***

The Regional Coordinators provide technical assistance and consultation to agencies, organizations and other groups on the communication access aspect of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as other, related federal and state laws. They also provide technical assistance and consultation on the development, modification, and implementation of programs, services and information for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people. Examples include: using an interpreter in a meeting; communicating with a TTY user; using an assistive listening device with a hard of hearing person; assessing a workplace or service site to implement or ensure a visual emergency system is in place.

***What is Equal Access for Persons Who Are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing?***

Equal access is effective communication made possible through auxiliary aids and services so that deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing persons can participate in and benefit from services, programs and other opportunities. The Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal and state laws require most organizations to provide equal access to services or make communication modifications. Examples of possible auxiliary aids include:

- Sign language interpreting services
- Tactile communication services for deafblind persons
- Use of assistive listening devices in meeting rooms or in one-to-one interactions or services
- Communication technology (real time captioning, TTYs, pagers)
- Installation and maintenance of visual alarm systems in public places
- Notetaking services
- Prepared, written materials
- Amplified telephone headsets

If you have questions about communication access and compliance to federal and state laws, please contact the Regional Coordinator in your region.

**Wisconsin Department of Health Services  
Division of Long Term Care  
Office for the Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing Regional Offices**

**SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE**

1 W. Wilson St., Room 451  
Madison, WI 53707-7851  
(888) 241-9428 TTY (608) 261-7823

**SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE**

141 NW Barstow Street, Room 104  
Waukesha, WI 53188-3789  
(888) 701-1246 TTY (262) 521-5128

**NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE**

555 Country Club Road  
Green Bay, WI 54313-4908  
(888) 241-9430 TTY (920) 490-0500, ext 107

**WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE**

610 Gibson St., Suite 1  
Eau Claire, WI 54701  
(715) 836-2107 (888) 701-1254 TTY

**NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE**

3262 Church St, Suite 1  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 344-4210 (800) 382-8484

For non-TTY users, please dial ‘711’ (Relay Center) to call a TTY number.

For an alternate format, please contact:  
ODHH Central Office, 1 W. Wilson St. Rm 451  
Madison, WI 53707-7851  
608-261-7823 866-701-1255 TTY  
[dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory)

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH SERVICES

DIVISION OF LONG TERM CARE



**Office for the  
Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing  
Services**

***Did you know that:***

- *American Sign Language is a fully developed language, and is not patterned after, or derived from, English or any other spoken language.*
- *People can lose hearing at any age because of heredity, noise, illness, or accident.*
- *In the U.S. 1 in every 22 infants is deaf or hard of hearing, and more than one-third of the population is deaf or hard of hearing by age 65.*
- *Communication between deaf and hard of hearing people and other people is now possible because of advancing technology.*