



State of Wisconsin

Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities

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Issue: Mask Mandate and Communication

GCPD recognizes the importance of masks in reducing the spread of COVID-19. However, Deaf people and individuals who are hard of hearing are struggling to communicate in certain situations due to the mask mandate. Many individuals with hearing impairments rely heavily on lip reading or facial expressions to understand what is being communicated, and it's important to be able to see the person to communicate effectively.

Recommendations:

- GCPD recommends the publication and distribution of communication cards for use at clinics and hospitals and other facilities where urgent communication about health care takes place with Deaf people or people with hearing impairments, recognizing it may take time to get an accommodation in place to effectively communicate.
- In addition, GCPD recommends the guidance be sent to medical providers stating that if an individual needs to remove a mask to communicate effectively or if an individual needs a medical provider to wear a face shield to communicate effectively that there is a process in place for requesting these accommodations.