

## Tips for Interacting Effectively with People with Hearing Impairment

Consider the following suggestions when interacting with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- When speaking with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, face the person directly. Attract his or her visual attention before starting a conversation. For instance, if you are entering his or her office and the person's back is to you, flicker the room lights. A gentle tap on the shoulder will also help you announce your presence.
- If there is a break down in communication put pencil to paper and write down what you are attempting to convey.
- When speaking to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, use meaningful facial expressions and gestures to emphasize your intent and attitude. This helps to substitute for your tone of voice. Try to find a quiet place away from computers, telephones, and other sources of noise, that has adequate lighting.
- Not all people who are deaf or hard of hearing know or use sign language. Do not assume they need interpreters.
- If using a sign language or oral interpreter, speak directly to the person with the hearing impairment, not the interpreter. Speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face.
- If you cannot understand the person with a hearing impairment, do not be afraid to ask him or her to repeat the message. If this approach does not work, you can ask if it would be helpful to communicate by writing or using a computer terminal.