Effective Communication in Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Supporting Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Individuals



WHY THIS MATTERS

Many mental health and substance use providers may have limited experience serving individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind. This can create communication barriers, delays in care, and reduced access to services.

Providers must understand their legal responsibilities and available communication access options.

COMMUNICATION PLANNING

- Identify preferred communication methods
- Determine needed accommodations
- Plan for accessible communication access
- Reassess communication needs regularly

PROVIDER ACTION STEPS

- ✓ Provide accessible written and visual materials
- ✓ Schedule qualified mental health interpreters when needed
- ✓ Understand virtual interpreting may not meet every individual's needs
- ✓ Do not use family members or friends as interpreters
- ✓ Partner with communication access resources

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Providers **cannot**:

- Deny services due to communication services barriers
- Charge clients for interpreter services
- Ignore accommodation requests

Communication access options may include:

- Qualified Mental Health Interpreters (MHQI)
- Communication Access Realtime Translation Services
- Assistive listening devices
- Tactile communication
- Accessible written materials

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Scan the QR code to access resources, training videos, and communication tools for providers.