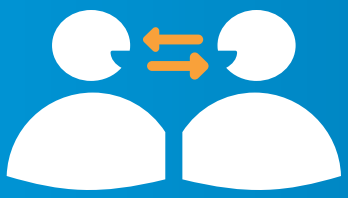
L.A. Care HEALTH PLAN®

For A Healthy Life



Section B: Interaction with a Diverse Patient Base

Section B: Interaction with a Diverse Patient Base

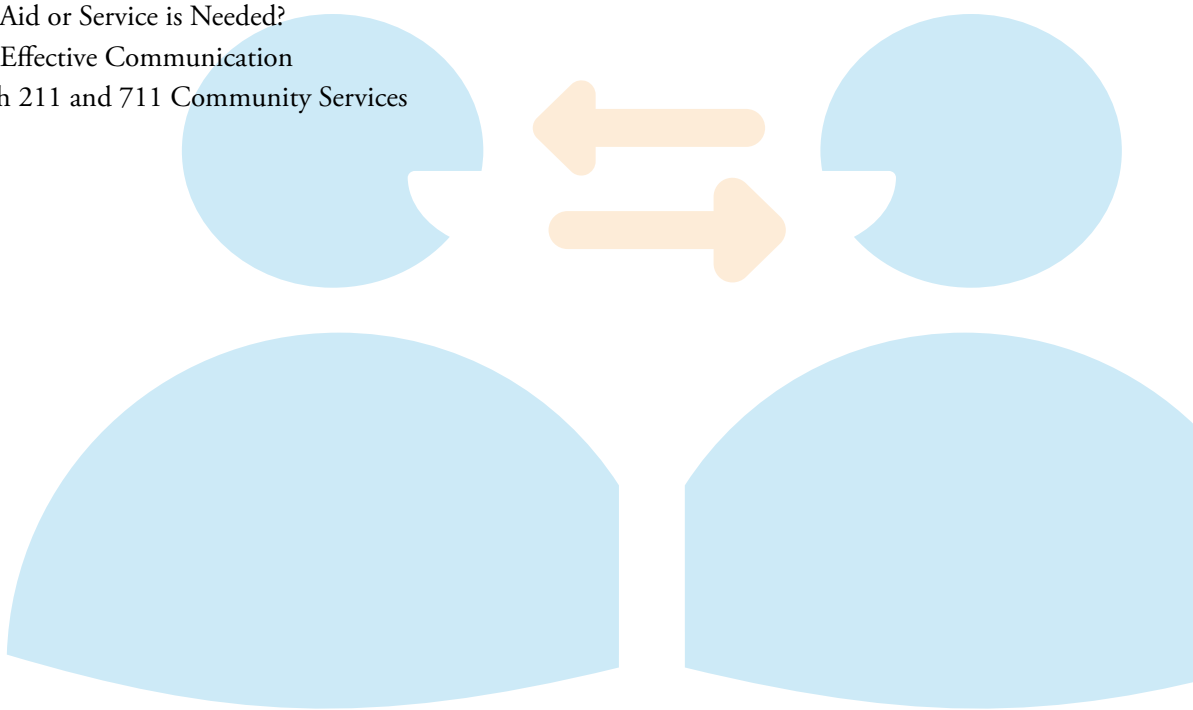
The communication strategies suggested in this section are intended to minimize patient-provider, and patient-office staff miscommunications, and foster an environment that is non-threatening and comfortable for the patient.

We recognize that every patient encounter is unique. The goal is to eliminate cultural barriers that inhibit effective communication, diagnosis, treatment and care. The suggestions presented are intended to guide providers and build sensitivity to cultural differences and styles. By enhancing your cultural sensitivity and ability to tailor the delivery of care to your patients' needs you will:

- Enhance communication
- Decrease repeat visits
- Decrease unnecessary lab tests
- Increase compliance
- Avoid Civil Rights Act violations

The following materials are available in this section:

- Working with Diverse Patients: Tips for Successful Patient Encounters
- Partnering with Diverse Patients: Tips for Office Staff to Enhance Communication
- Non-verbal Communication and Patient Care
- "Diverse" A Mnemonic for Patient Encounters
- Tips for Identifying and Addressing Health Literacy Issues
- Interview Guide for Hiring Office/Clinic Staff with Diverse Awareness
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requirements
  - Effective Communication
  - Auxiliary Aids and Services
  - Effective Communication Provisions
  - Tips for Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - Companions
  - Use of Accompanying Adults or Children as Interpreters
  - Who Decides Which Aid or Service is Needed?
- ADA Requirements for Effective Communication
- Supporting Patients with 211 and 711 Community Services



Working with Diverse Patients: Tips for Successful Patient Encounters

To enhance patient/provider communication and to avoid being unintentionally insulting or patronizing, be aware of the following:

Styles of Speech

People vary greatly in length of time between comment and response, the speed of their speech, and their willingness to interrupt.

- Tolerate gaps between questions and answers, impatience can be seen as a sign of disrespect.
- Listen to the volume and speed of the patient's speech as well as the content. Modify your own speech to more closely match that of the patient to make them more comfortable.
- Rapid exchanges, and even interruptions, are a part of some conversational styles. Don't be offended if no offense is intended when a patient interrupts you.
- Stay aware of your own pattern of interruptions, especially if the patient is older than you are.

Eye Contact

The way people interpret various types of eye contact is tied to cultural background and life experience.

- Most Euro-Americans expect to look people directly in the eyes and interpret failure to do so as a sign of dishonesty or disrespect.
- For many other cultures direct gazing is considered rude or disrespectful. Never force a patient to make eye contact with you.
- If a patient seems uncomfortable with direct gazes, try sitting next to them instead of across from them.

Body Language

Sociologists say that 80% of communication is non-verbal. The meaning of body language varies greatly by culture, class, gender, and age.

- Follow the patient's lead on physical distance and touching. If the patient moves closer to you or touches you, you may do the same. However, stay sensitive to those who do not feel comfortable, and ask permission to touch them.
- Gestures can mean very different things to different people. Be very conservative in your own use of gestures and body language. Ask patients about unknown gestures or reactions.
- Do not interpret a patient's feelings or level of pain just from facial expressions. The way that pain or fear is expressed is closely tied to a person's cultural and personal background.

Gently Guide Patient Conversation

English predisposes us to a direct communication style; however other languages and cultures differ.

- Initial greetings can set the tone for the visit. Many older people from traditional societies expect to be addressed more formally, no matter how long they have known their physician. If the patient's preference is not clear, ask how they would like to be addressed.
- Patients from other language or cultural backgrounds may be less likely to ask questions and more likely to answer questions through narrative than with direct responses. Facilitate patient-centered communication by asking open-ended questions whenever possible.
- Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Research indicates that when patients, regardless of cultural background, are asked, "Do you understand," many will answer, "yes" even when they really do not understand. This tends to be more common in teens and older patients.
- Steer the patient back to the topic by asking a question that clearly demonstrates that you are listening.

Partnering with Diverse Patients: Tips for Office Staff to Enhance Communication

1. Build rapport with the patient.

- Address patients by their last name. If the patient's preference is not clear, ask, "How would you like to be addressed?"
- Focus your attention on patients when addressing them.
- Learn basic words in your patient's primary language, like "hello" or "thank you".
- Recognize that patients from diverse backgrounds may have different communication needs.
- Explain the different roles of people who work in the office.

2. Make sure patients know what you do.

- Take a few moments to prepare a handout that explains office hours, how to contact the office when it is closed, and how the PCP arranges for care (i.e. PCP is the first point of contact and refers to specialists).
- Have instructions available in the common language(s) spoken by your patient base.

3. Keep patients' expectations realistic.

- Inform patients of delays or extended waiting times. If the wait is longer than 15 minutes, encourage the patient to make a list of questions for the doctor, review health materials or view waiting room videos.

4. Work to build patients' trust in you.

- Inform patients of office procedures such as when they can expect a call with lab results, how follow-up appointments are scheduled, and routine wait times.

5. Determine if the patient needs an interpreter for the visit.

- Document the patient's preferred language in the patient chart.
- Have an interpreter access plan. An interpreter with a medical background is preferred to family or friends of the patient.
- Assess your bilingual staff for interpreter abilities. (See Employee Language Skills SelfAssessment Tool.)
- Possible resources for interpreter services are available from health plans, the state health department, and the Internet. See contracted health plans for applicable payment processes.

6. Give patients the information they need.

- Have topic-specific health education materials in languages that reflect your patient base. (Contact your contracting health plans/contracted medical groups for resources.)
- Offer handouts such as immunization guidelines for adults and children, screening guidelines, and culturally relevant dietary guidelines for diabetes or weight loss.

7. Make sure patients know what to do.

- Review any follow-up procedures with the patient before he or she leaves your office.
- Verify call back numbers, the locations for follow-up services such as labs, X-ray or screening tests, and whether or not a follow-up appointment is necessary.
- Develop pre-printed simple handouts of frequently used instructions, and translate the handouts into the common language(s) spoken by your patient base. (Contact your contracting health plans/contracted medical groups for resources.)

Non-Verbal Communication and Patient Care

Non-verbal communication is a subtle form of communication that takes place in the **initial three seconds** after meeting someone for the first time and can continue through the entire interaction. Research indicates that non-verbal communication accounts for approximately **70%** of a communication episode. Non-verbal communication can impact the success of communication more acutely than the spoken word. Our culturally informed unconscious framework evaluates gestures, appearance, body language, the face, and how space is used. Yet, we are rarely aware of how persons from other cultures perceive our nonverbal communication or the subtle cues we have used to assess the person.

The following are case studies that provide examples of non-verbal miscommunication that can sabotage a patient-provider encounter. Broad cultural generalizations are used for illustrative purposes. They should not be mistaken for stereotypes. A stereotype and a generalization may appear similar, but they function very differently. A **stereotype** is an ending point; no attempt is made to learn whether the individual in question fits the statement. A **generalization** is a beginning point; it indicates common trends, but further information is needed to ascertain whether the statement is appropriate to a particular individual.

Generalizations can serve as a guide to be accompanied by individualized in-person assessment. As a rule, ask the patient, rather than assume you know the patient's needs and wants. If asked, patients will usually share their personal beliefs, practices and preferences related to prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Eye Contact

Ellen was trying to teach her Navaho patient, Jim Nez, how to live with his newly diagnosed diabetes. She soon became extremely frustrated because she felt she was not getting through to him. He asked very few questions and never met her eyes. She reasoned from this that he was uninterested and therefore not listening to her.[1]

It is rude to meet and hold eye contact with an elder or someone in a position of authority such as health professionals in most Latino, Asian, American Indian and many Arab countries. It may be also considered a form of social aggression if a male insists on meeting and holding eye contact with a female.

Touch and Use of Space

A physician with a large medical group requested assistance encouraging young female patients to make and keep their first well woman appointment. The physician stated that this group had a high noshow rate and appointments did not go as smoothly as the physician would like.

Talk the patient through each exam so that the need for the physical contact is understood, prior to the initiation of the examination. Ease into the patients' personal space. If there are any concerns, ask before entering the three-foot zone. This will help ease the patient's level of discomfort and avoid any misinterpretation of physical contact. Additionally, physical contact between a male and female is strictly regulated in many cultures. An older female companion may be necessary during the visit.

[1] Galanti, G. (1997). Caring for Patients from Different Cultures. University of Pennsylvania Press.
Hall, E.T. (1985). Hidden Differences: Studies in International Communication. Hamburg: Gruner & Jahr.
Hall, E.T. (1990). Understanding Cultural Differences. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Gestures

An Anglo patient named James Todd called out to Elena, a Filipino nurse: "Nurse, nurse." Elena came to Mr. Todd's door and politely asked, "May I help you?" Mr. Todd beckoned her to come closer by motioning with his right index finger. Elena remained where she was and responded in an angry voice, "What do you want?" Mr. Todd was confused. Why had Elena's manner suddenly changed?[2]

Gestures may have dramatically different meanings across cultures. It is best to think of gestures as a local dialect that is familiar only to insiders of the culture. Conservative use of hand or body gestures is recommended to avoid misunderstanding. In the case above, Elena took offense to Mr. Todd's innocent hand gesture. In the Philippines (and in Korea) the "come here" hand gesture is used to call animals.

Body Posture and Presentation

Carrie was surprised to see that Mr. Ramirez was dressed very elegantly for his doctor's visit. She was confused by his appearance because she knew that he was receiving services on a sliding fee scale. She thought the front office either made a mistake documenting his ability to pay for service, or that he falsely presented his income.

Many cultures prioritize respect for the family and demonstrate family respect in their manner of dress and presentation in public. Regardless of the economic resources that are available or the physical condition of the individual, going out in public involves creating an image that reflects positively on the family – the clothes are pressed, the hair is combed, and shoes are clean. A person's physical presentation is not an indicator of their economic situation.

Use of Voice

Dr. Moore had three patients waiting and was feeling rushed. He began asking health related questions of his Vietnamese patient Tanya. She looked tense, staring at the ground without volunteering much information. No matter how clearly he asked the question he couldn't get Tanya to take an active part in the visit.

The **use** of voice is perhaps one of the most difficult forms of non-verbal communication to change, as we rarely hear how we sound to others. If you speak too fast, you may be seen as not being interested in the patient. If you speak too loud, or too soft for the space involved, you may be perceived as domineering or lacking confidence. Expectations for the use of voice vary greatly between and within cultures, for male and female, and the young and old. *The best suggestion is to search for non-verbal cues to determine how your voice is affecting your patient.*

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[2] Galanti, G. (1997). *Caring for Patients from Different Cultures*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
Hall, E.T. (1985). *Hidden Differences: Studies in International Communication*. Hamburg: Gruner & Jahr.
Hall, E.T. (1990). *Understanding Cultural Differences*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

"Diverse" A Mnemonic for Patient Encounters

A mnemonic will assist you in developing a personalized care plan based on cultural/diversity aspects. Place in the patient's chart or use the mnemonic when gathering the patient's history on a SOAP progress note.

	Assessment	Sample Questions	Assessment Information/ Recommendations
D	**Demographics-** *Explore regional background, level of –acculturation, age and sex as they influence health care behaviors.*	Where were you born? Where was "home" before coming to the U.S.? How long have you lived in the U.S.? What is the patient's age and sex?	
I	**Ideas-** *ask the patient to explain his/her ideas or concepts of health and illness.*	What do you think keeps you healthy? What do you think makes you sick? What do you think is the cause of your illness? Why do you think the problem started?	
V	**Views of health care treatments-** *ask about treatment preference, use of home remedies, and treatment avoidance practices.*	Are there any health care procedures that might not be acceptable? Do you use any traditional or home health remedies to improve your health? What have you used before? Have you used alternative healers? Which? What kind of treatment do you think will work?	
E	**Expectations-** *ask about what your patient expects from his/her doctor?*	What do you hope to achieve from today's visit? What do you hope to achieve from treatment? Do you find it easier to talk with a male/female? Someone younger/older?	
R	**Religion-** *asks about your patient's religious and spiritual traditions.*	Will religious or spiritual observances affect your ability to follow treatment? How? Do you avoid any particular foods? During the year, do you change your diet in celebration of religious and other holidays?	
S	**Speech-** *identifies your patient's language needs including health literacy levels. Avoid using a family member as an interpreter.*	What language do you prefer to speak? Do you need an interpreter? What language do you prefer to read? Are you satisfied with how well you read? Would you prefer printed or spoken instructions?	
E	**Environment-** *identify patient's home environment and the cultural/diversity aspects that are part of the environment. Home environment includes the patient's daily schedule, support system and level of independence.*	Do you live alone? How many other people live in your house? Do you have transportation? Who gives you emotional support? Who helps you when you are ill or need help? Do you have the ability to shop/cook for yourself? What times of day do you usually eat? What is your largest meal of the day?	

Tips for Identifying and Addressing Health Literacy Issues

Low Health Literacy Can Prevent Patients from Understanding Their Health Care Services.

Health Literacy is defined by the National Health Education Standards1 as "*the capacity of an individual to obtain, interpret, and understand basic health information and services and the competence to use such information and services in ways which are health-enhancing.*"

This includes the ability to understand written instructions on prescription drug bottles, appointment slips, medical education brochures, doctor's directions and consent forms, and the ability to negotiate complex health care systems. Health literacy is not the same as the ability to read and is not necessarily related to year of education. A person who functions adequately at home or work may have marginal or inadequate literacy in health care environment.

Possible Signs of Low Health Literacy

Your patients may frequently say:

- I forgot my glasses.
- My eyes are tired.
- I'll take this home for my family to read.
- What does this say? I don't understand this.

Your patients' behaviors may include:

- Not getting their prescriptions filled, or not taking their medications as prescribed.
- Consistently arriving late to appointments.
- Returning forms without completing them.
- Requiring several calls between appointments to clarify instructions.

Barriers to Health Literacy

- The ability to read and comprehend health information is impacted by a range of factors including age, socioeconomic background, education and culture.
- A patient's culture and life experience may have an effect on their health literacy.
- An accent, or a lack of accent, can be misread as an indicator of a person's ability to read English.
- Different family dynamics can play a role in how a patient receives and processes information.
- In some cultures, it is inappropriate for people to discuss certain body parts or functions leaving some with a very poor vocabulary for discussing health issues.
- In adults, reading skills in a second language may take 6-12 years to develop.

Tips For Dealing With Low Health Literacy[3]

- Use simple words and avoid jargon.
- Never use acronyms.
- Avoid technical language (if possible).
- Repeat important information – a patient's logic may be different from yours.
- Ask patients to repeat back to you important information.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Use medically trained interpreters familiar with cultural nuances.
- Give information in small chunks.
- Articulate words.
- "Read" written instructions out load. I Speak slowly (don't shout).
- Use body language to support what you are saying.
- Draw pictures, use posters, models or physical demonstrations.
- Use video and audio media as an alternative to written communications.

Additional Resources

Use **Ask Me 3®**[2]. Ask Me 3® is a program designed by health literacy experts intended to help patients become more active in their health care. It supports improved communication between patients, families and their health care providers.

Patients who understand their health have better health outcomes. Encourage your patients to ask these three specific questions:

1. What is my main problem?

2. What do I need to do?

3. Why is it important for me to do this?

Asking these questions is proven to help patients better understand their health conditions and what they need to do to stay healthy.

For more information or resources on Ask Me 3® and to view a video on how to use the questions, please visit **www.npsf.org/?page=askme3**. Ask Me 3 is a registered trademark licensed to the National Patient Safety Foundation (NPSF).

American Medical Association (AMA)

The AMA offer multiple publications, tools and resources to improve patient outcomes. For more information, visit: **www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/ama-foundation**

[3]Joint Committee on National Education Standards, 1995

Interview Guide for Hiring Office/Clinic Staff with Diverse Awareness

The following set of questions is meant to help you determine whether a job candidate will be sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs of your patient population. By integrating some or all of these questions into your interview process, you will be more likely to hire staff that will help you create an office/clinic atmosphere of openness, affirmation, and trust between patients and staff. Remember that bias and discrimination can be obvious and flagrant or small and subtle. Hiring practices should reflect this understanding.

Interview Questions

Q. What experience do you have in working with people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities? The experiences can be in or out of a health care environment.

The interviewee should demonstrate understanding and willingness to serve diverse communities. Any experience, whether professional or volunteer, is valuable.

Q: Please share any particular challenges or successes you have experienced in working with people from diverse backgrounds.

You will want to get a sense that the interviewee has an appreciation for working with people from diverse backgrounds and understands the accompanying complexities and needs in an office setting.

Q. In the health care field we come across patients of different ages, language preference, sexual orientation, religions, cultures, genders, and immigration status, etc. all with different needs. What skills from your past customer service or community/healthcare work do you think are relevant to this job?

This question should allow a better understanding of the interviewees approach to customer service across the spectrum of diversity, their previous experience, and if their skills are transferable to the position in question. Look for examples that demonstrate an understanding of varying needs. Answers should demonstrate listening and clear communication skills.

Q. What would you do to make all patients feel respected? For example, some Medicaid or Medicare recipients may be concerned about receiving substandard care because they lack private insurance.

The answer should demonstrate an understanding of the behaviors that facilitate respect and the type of prejudices and bias that can result in substandard service and care.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requirements

The following information is excerpts from the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section. For complete information, please visit the website **www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm**.

The Department of Justice published revised final regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for Title II (state and local government services) and Title III (public accommodations and commercial facilities) on September 15, 2010, in the Federal Register. These requirements, or rules, clarify and refine issues that have arisen over the past 20 years and contain new, and updated, requirements, including the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design (2010 Standards).

Effective Communication

Overview

People who have vision, hearing, or speech disabilities ("communication disabilities") use different ways to communicate. For example, people who are blind may give and receive information audibly rather than in writing and people who are deaf may give and receive information through writing or sign language rather than through speech.

The ADA requires that Title II entities (state and local governments) and Title III entities (businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

This publication[4] is designed to help title II and title III entities ("covered entities") understand how the rules for effective communication, including rules that went into effect on March 15, 2011, apply to them.

- The purpose of the effective communication rules is to ensure that the person with a vision, hearing, or speech disability can communicate with, receive information from, and convey information to, the covered entity.
- Covered entities must provide auxiliary aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.
- The key to communicating effectively is to consider the nature, length, complexity, and context of the communication and the person's normal method(s) of communication.
- The rules apply to communicating with the person who is receiving the covered entity's goods or services as well as with that person's parent, spouse, or companion in appropriate circumstances.

[4] www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm

Auxiliary Aids and Services

The ADA uses the term "auxiliary aids and services" ("aids and services") to refer to the ways to communicate with people who have communication disabilities.

- For people who are blind, have vision loss, or are deaf-blind, this includes providing a qualified reader; information in large print, Braille, or electronically for use with a computer screenreading program; or an audio recording of printed information. A "qualified" reader means someone who is able to read effectively, accurately, and impartially, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.
- For people who are deaf, have hearing loss, or are deaf-blind, this includes providing a qualified note taker; a qualified sign language interpreter, oral interpreter, cued-speech interpreter, or tactile interpreter; real-time captioning; written materials; or a printed script of a stock speech (such as given on a museum or historic house tour). A "qualified" interpreter means someone who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively (i.e., understanding what the person with the disability is saying) and expressively (i.e., having the skill needed to convey information back to that person) using any necessary specialized vocabulary.
- For people who have speech disabilities, this may include providing a qualified speechtospeech transliterator (a person trained to recognize unclear speech and repeat it clearly), especially if the person will be speaking at length, such as giving testimony in court, or just taking more time to communicate with someone who uses a communication board. In some situations, keeping paper and pencil on hand so the person can write out words that staff cannot understand or simply allowing more time to communicate with someone who uses a communication board or device may provide effective communication. Staff should always listen attentively and not be afraid or embarrassed to ask the person to repeat a word or phrase they do not understand.

In addition, aids and services include a wide variety of technologies including
1. Assistive listening systems and devices
2. Open captioning, closed captioning, real-time captioning, and closed caption decoders and devices
3. Telephone handset amplifiers, hearing-aid compatible telephones; text telephones (TTYs), videophones, captioned telephones, and other voice, text, and video-based telecommunications products
4. Videotext displays
5. Screen reader software, magnification software, and optical readers
6. Video description and secondary auditory programming (SAP) devices that pick up videodescribed audio feeds for television programs
7. Accessibility features in electronic documents and other electronic and information technology that is accessible (either independently or through assistive technology such as screen readers)

Effective Communication Provisions

Covered entities must provide aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The key to deciding what aid or service is needed to communicate **effectively** is to consider the nature, length, complexity, and context of the communication as well as the person's normal method(s) of communication.

Some easy solutions work in relatively simple and straightforward situations.

- In a lunchroom or restaurant, reading the menu to a person who is blind allows that person to decide what dish to order.
- In a retail setting, pointing to product information or writing notes back and forth to answer simple questions about a product may allow a person who is deaf to decide whether to purchase the product.
- Other solutions may be needed where the information being communicated is more extensive or complex.

For example:
In a law firm, providing an accessible electronic copy of a legal document that is being drafted for a client who is blind allows the client to read the draft at home using a computer screen-reading program. In a doctor's office, an interpreter generally will be needed for taking the medical history of a patient who uses sign language or for discussing a serious diagnosis and its treatment options.

A person's method(s) of communication is also key.

- Sign language interpreters are effective only for people who use sign language.
- Other methods of communication, such as those described above, are needed for people who may have lost their hearing later in life and does not use sign language.
- Similarly, Braille is effective only for people who read Braille.
- Other methods are needed for people with vision disabilities who do not read Braille, such as providing accessible electronic text documents, forms, etc. that can be accessed by the person's screen reader program.

Covered entities are also required to accept telephone calls placed through Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) and Video Relay Services (VRS), and staff that answers the telephone must treat relay calls just like other calls. The communications assistant will explain how the system works if necessary.

Remember, the purpose of the effective communication rules is to ensure that the person with a communication disability can receive information from, and convey information to, the covered entity.

Tips for Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Myths About Deaf or Hard of Hearing Persons

- All hearing losses are the same.
- All deaf people are mutes.
- All deaf people use hearing aids.
- Hearing aids restore hearing.
- All deaf people use sign language.
- Sign language is universal.
- All deaf people can read lips.
- Deaf people are less intelligent.

Issues to be aware of

- Some Deaf individuals have very limited English language skills as it is their second language, and will require an interpreter to ensure comprehension of the message.
- There are literacy levels and language use differences among deaf individuals and groups of deaf individuals.
- Problems with the varying quality, experience and knowledge of interpreters in these critical settings.
- Words like "right" or "silent" have contextual meanings, are abstract, and when signed by different interpreters, could result in completely different meanings.
- Regardless of educational level, many individuals who are deaf have not been exposed to mainstream culture through mass media based on sound. Media exposure is the source for the general public for its information

Tips for Communicating with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Persons

- Face the deaf person and maintain eye contact. Deaf individuals often rely on visual cues to determine your message as much as your words. Give the deaf person as many visual cues as possible.
- Speak directly to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Person. Focus your attention on the deaf person, not the interpreter. Avoid using phrases such as "Tell him/her" or "Can he/she read lips?
- Speak clearly and at your normal, natural pace. The interpreter will let you know if you are speaking too fast. Enunciate your words. Do not exaggerate.
- Remember, talking louder does not help the deaf person understand better.
- Avoid asking the interpreter for his/her opinion. You are speaking with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Person.
- Consider your choice of words. Some words are easier to lip-read than others.
- If the deaf person does not understand, re-phrase instead of repeating the same words.
- Apply "Tips for Working with Interpreters" when using sign language interpreters to communicate with your patients.

Companions

In many situations, covered entities communicate with someone other than the person who is receiving their goods or services. For example:

- School staff usually talk to a parent about a child's progress;
- Hospital staff often talks to a patient's spouse, other relative, or friend about the patient's condition or prognosis.

The rules refer to such people as "companions" and require covered entities to provide effective communication for companions who have communication disabilities.

The term "companion" includes any family member, friend, or associate of a person seeking or receiving an entity's goods or services who is an appropriate person with whom the entity should communicate.

Use of Accompanying Adults or Children as Interpreters

Historically, many covered entities have expected a person who uses sign language to bring a family member or friend to interpret for him or her. These people often lacked the impartiality and specialized vocabulary needed to interpret effectively and accurately. It was particularly problematic to use people's children as interpreters.

The ADA places responsibility for providing effective communication, including the use of interpreters, directly on covered entities. They cannot require a person to bring someone to interpret for him or her. A covered entity can rely on a companion to interpret in only two situations.

(1) In an emergency involving an imminent threat to the safety or welfare of an individual or the public, an adult or minor child accompanying a person who uses sign language may be relied upon to interpret or facilitate communication only when a qualified interpreter is not available.

(2) In situations **not** involving an imminent threat, an adult accompanying someone who uses sign language may be relied upon to interpret or facilitate communication when a) the individual requests this, b) the accompanying adult agrees, and c) reliance on the accompanying adult is appropriate under the circumstances. This exception does **not** apply to minor children.

Even under exception (2), covered entities may **not** rely on an accompanying adult to interpret when there is reason to doubt the person's impartiality or effectiveness. For example:

- It would be inappropriate to rely on a companion to interpret who feels conflicted about communicating bad news to the person or has a personal stake in the outcome of a situation.
- When responding to a call alleging spousal abuse, police should never rely on one spouse to interpret for the other spouse.

Who Decides Which Aid or Service is Needed?

When choosing an aid or service, Title II entities are required to give primary consideration to the choice of aid or service requested by the person who has a communication disability. The state or local government must honor the person's choice, unless it can demonstrate that another equally effective means of communication is available, or that the use of the means chosen would result in a fundamental alteration or in an undue burden (see limitations below).

If the choice expressed by the person with a disability would result in an undue burden or a fundamental alteration, the public entity still has an obligation to provide an alternative aid or service that provides effective communication if one is available.

Title III entities are **encouraged** to consult with the person with a disability to discuss what aid or service is appropriate. The goal is to provide an aid or service that will be effective, given the nature of what is being communicated and the person's method of communicating.

Covered entities may require reasonable advance notice from people requesting aids or services, based on the length of time needed to acquire the aid or service, but may not impose excessive advance notice requirements. "Walk-in" requests for aids and services must also be honored to the extent possible.

For more information about the ADA, please visit the website or call the toll-free number: www.ada.gov
ADA Information Line: 800-514-0301 (Voice) and 800-514-0383 (TTY)

ADA Requirements for Effective Communication

The purpose of the effective communication rules is to ensure that the person with a vision, hearing or speech disability can communicate with, receive information from, and convey information to, the covered entity (physician office, clinic, hospital, nursing home, etc.).

Covered entities must provide auxiliary aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The person with the disability can choose the type of aid/service.

Your patient may need assistance because ...	These are some options we can provide for you...
I am blind or have vision impairments that keep me from reading	• Large print materials • Physician can complete form for talking books through National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped • www.loc.gov/nls/pdf/application.pdf • Physician can complete form for Vision enabled telephone www.californiaphones.org/application • Check with health plans to see what they have available (audio recordings of printed materials, etc.)
I am hard of hearing and have trouble hearing and understanding directions, or answering the doorbell	• Amplifier/ Pocket Talker • Written materials • Qualified sign language interpreter • Qualified note taker • Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) 7-1-1 • Have physician dictate into voice-recognition software and patient can type answers back
I have difficulty speaking clearly and making myself understood	• Allow for extra time and attentive listening • Qualified note taker • Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) 7-1-1 • Communication board or paper and pencil • Have physician dictate into voice-recognition software and patient can type answers back

* All requirements also apply to individual's companion or caregiver when communication with that person is appropriate. An individual's companion or caregiver should not be relied on to act as the qualified interpreter.

Resources

- The Gerontological Society of America: aging.arizona.edu/sites/aging/files/activity_1_reading_1.pdf
- American Speech Language Hearing Association: www.asha.org
- Administration for Community Living DHHS: www.acl.gov
- The Look Closer, See Me Generational Diversity and Sensitivity training program nursing.uc.edu/content/dam/nursing/docs/CFAWD/LookCloserSeeMe/Module%204_GDST_Reference%20Guide.pdf
- U.S. Department of Justice – ADA requirements for Effective Communication www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm

Supporting Patients with 211 and 711 Community Services

211 and 711 are free and easy to use services that can be used as resources to support patients with special needs. Each of these services operates in all States and is offered at no cost to the caller 24 hours a day/7 days a week.

211
211 is a free and confidential service that provides a single point of contact for people that are looking for a wide range of health and human services programs. With one call, individuals can speak with a local highly trained service professional to assist them in finding local social services agencies and guide them through the maze of groups that specialize in housing assistance, food programs, counseling, hospice, substance abuse and other aid.

For more information, look for your local 211.org.

711
711 is a no cost relay service that uses an operator, phone system and a special teletypewriter (TDD or TTY) to help people with hearing or speech impairments have conversations over the phone. The 711 relay service can be used to place a call to a TTY line or receive a call from a TTY line. Both voice and Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) users can initiate a call from any telephone, anywhere in the United States, without having to remember and dial a seven or ten-digit access number.

Simply dial 711 to be automatically connected to a TRS operator. Once connected the t TRS operator will relay your spoken message in writing and will read responses back to you.

In some areas, 711 offers speech impairment assistance. Special trained speech recognition operators available to help facilitate communication with individuals that may have speech impairments.

For more information, visit **ddtp.cpuc.ca.gov/homepage.aspx**