

Policy and Procedure: Communication with Hearing & Visually Impaired Individuals

Policy Statement

Federal and State law, including the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against qualified members of the public participating in public programs based on disability. Public agencies have a responsibility to provide qualified persons who have speech, hearing or vision disabilities, free of charge, with auxiliary aids and services, including materials in alternative formats to ensure that they can effectively communicate and participate in public programs, services, or activities.

No person will be denied equal access to services based solely on his/her inability to communicate aurally, visually, or verbally.

For individuals who have hearing, visual, or reading limitations, [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] will make every effort to ensure that they have access to and understanding of the services and information to which they are entitled and provide written materials in the alternative format requested.

A [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] staff member will be available to read or help with any documents necessary for individuals to be able to utilize and understand our services.

It is the policy of [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] to have available a TTY/TDD phone line and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for the deaf.

Purpose

To assure that [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] staff are able to effectively communicate and share informational materials with hearing, speech, or visually impaired individuals.

To comply with Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Policy and Procedure Letter (PPL) No. 21-017R regarding Alternate Format Request Requirements.

Implementing Procedure

A. Individuals with Visual Impairment

Whenever an individual requesting services presents as having a **visual impairment**, the [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] intake staff will ensure that the individual is informed of

all basic [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] written information that is commonly distributed to consumers who are requesting services. Staff will notify individuals of the following alternatives upon intake:

1. The majority of written documentation is printed in large print, as a standard. Documents that are not printed in large print on a regular basis will be available to individuals in 20-point Arial Font upon request.
2. Written materials may be read to the individual by a [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] staff member.
3. Written materials can be provided in an Accessible Electronic Format by a [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] staff member reading and recording the content and saving on a thumb drive. If the information requested contains protected health information, the individual will be asked if he/she elects to have documents encrypted (i.e. password protected).
4. Requests for translations into can be made through the following resources:
 - a. [INSERT LOCAL OR STATEWIDE RESOURCES HERE]

B. Individuals with Hearing Impairment

Whenever an individual requesting services presents as having a **hearing impairment**, and the request is for phone contact, the intake staff person should determine if the individual has a TDD/TTY machine to utilize the California Relay Service (CRS). The CRS offers Closed Captioning for individuals with Captioned Telephones and Text-to-Speech and Voice-to-Text for individuals with TDD/TTY machines.

1. If the individual has a TDD/TTY machine, staff must obtain the individual's phone number, then call the relay operator at 711. The relay operator will connect staff with the individual and assist with the call.
2. If the individual with the hearing impairment has a TDD/TTY machine, he or she may also make the call to [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] through 711 to connect with the relay operator for assistance.
3. If assistance is required, a call may be made to the relay service.

If an individual with a **hearing impairment** requires use of an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] staff will utilize one of the following interpreter services:

[INSERT LOCAL OR STATEWIDE RESOURCES HERE]

When scheduling the initial appointment with the individual, staff shall also assure that scheduling times are coordinated to allow the ASL interpreter to also be available.

C. No Cost

Individuals have a right to access these language assistance services for free and will not be charged for requesting these services. Individuals shall be notified of this right by staff and [DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY NAME] informing materials.

D. Written Communication

Written communication needs to consider both alternative format and written language preference (except braille). For example, if an individual's alternative format preference is large print and written language preference is Spanish, then written communication to that beneficiary must be in Spanish and in large print. The selection of braille is inherently the final language in its written preferred format.

E. Tracking Requests

Requests for alternative formats should also be reported to the CMAA Coordinator who will log and track the request.

F. Timeline

Alternative format requests must be fulfilled within two months of the request.