

Deaf Culture Access to Legal Processes

Hearing, Speech
& Deafness Center

HSDC Services

- Advocacy
- Information and Referral
- Consultation
- Technology
- Education Programs
- System Advocacy

Key Concepts for representing Deaf Clients

- American Sign Language is a foreign language
- Written English most often results in miscommunication
- Deaf people have limited access to system knowledge
- Double-burden of access
- Deaf behaviors are likely cultural rather than misbehavior

American Sign Language (ASL)

- Foreign Language to English
- There are over 200 Sign Languages around the world
- Written English is still using English as a Second Language
- ASL is a natural language with a rich and complex structure and grammar
- Grammar is controlled by the face and body
- Some Deaf people grew up without sign language or a different sign language

Written English

- Written English is still using English as a Second Language
- Writing in one's second language often does not help
- Written notes as evidence
 - Look for miscommunication (may need to ask for the notes to be discarded)
 - They are evidence of a Deaf person accommodating a hearing person

System Information is Inaccessible

- Overhearing is how we learn about how systems work
- Deaf people are largely born into hearing families who don't think share system information
- They may not understand what is expected of them
- Expectations must be bluntly explained or they will likely not know how to comply (Do not imply what you mean)
- We are a resource to you to help clarify with clients and help them follow through.

Double Burden of Access

- Deaf people are always a surprise to hearing people
- Often Deaf must choose between access or getting services
- Requesting Interpreter might cause delay or they might be seen as “difficult”
- Deaf people are used to less access so they may not assert their rights
- We are a resource for effective solutions

Deaf Culture is not misbehavior

- Language (facial expressions and body movement)
 - Looks angry or aggressive but is just grammar
 - If restrained they will try to communicate with their arms
- Being Polite
 - Physical touching/Calling out
 - Sharing all information
 - Bluntness
 - Eye contact
- Deaf people are expert observers of visual information
- Deaf don't ask for interpreters for good reasons
- We are a resource to you to uncover Cultural factors in a case

Contact Us

Hearing, Speech & Deaf Center (HSDC)

114 W. Magnolia Suite 106

Bellingham, WA 98225

360-647-0910

360-255-7166

www.hsdcc.org

Hearing, Speech
& Deafness Center