

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Definitions

Minnesota Department of Human Services

<https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/services/deaf-hard-of-hearing/resources/>

A

Adventitious hearing loss – Hearing loss in individuals who were born with normal hearing but at some point lost some or all of their hearing through illness or accident.

American Sign Language (ASL) – ASL is the natural, visual language of people who are deaf. ASL has its own syntax and grammatical structure and is one of the most commonly used foreign languages in the U.S.

Audiogram (threshold audiogram) – A graph which plots the type and degree of a person's hearing loss. It reflects the frequency (pitch) and intensity (loudness) marked in decibel units.

Audiologist – A healthcare professional who evaluates hearing and prescribes hearing aids. A Minnesota licensed audiologist has a current certificate of clinical competency (CCC) issued by the American Speech and Hearing Association and/or current board certification from the American Board of Audiology.

C

Cochlear implant – An electronic device surgically placed in the inner ear and under the skin behind the ear providing useful sound perception via direct electrical stimulation of the auditory nerve.

Congenital hearing loss – Hearing loss which occurred before or at birth.

Cued speech –Visual communication that uses eight hand shapes and placements to augment the visible lip movements of speech.

D

Deaf – Having a hearing loss of such severity that communication and learning is primarily by visual methods (i.e., manual communication, writing, speechreading, and gestures).

DeafBlind – Having a dual sensory loss that interferes with the ability of a person to function effectively in the "hearing-sighted" world. This term does not necessarily mean total lack of hearing and vision.

F

Fingerspelling – Using the manual alphabet to spell words. The manual alphabet is 26 single hand positions representing the 26 letters of the alphabet.

G

Gallaudet University – Located in Washington, D.C., it is the only liberal arts university in the world designed for deaf and hard of hearing undergraduate students. It also offers graduate programs, research related to deafness, and national demonstration elementary and secondary education programs.

H

Hard of hearing –Having some degree of hearing loss ranging from mild to profound. People who are hard of hearing may benefit from the use of hearing aids or other assistive listening devices. They depend primarily upon spoken English in communicating with others.

Hearing aid – A device that amplifies sound. It does not discriminate between wanted sounds (the message) and unwanted sound (background noise or competing messages).

I

Interpreter – A sign language interpreter facilitates communication between people who are deaf and hearing by signing what is said and speaking what is signed. An oral interpreter provides a similar service but uses oral communication (speech reading) instead of sign language.

L

Late deafened – Having a severe to profound hearing loss, which occurred after the development of speech and language. People who are late deafened can benefit from the use of visual display technology, but usually very little from hearing aids or other listening technology.

M

Meniere's Disease – A disease characterized by sudden attacks of dizziness, ringing in the ear, vomiting and possible hearing loss in one or both ears.

O

Oralism, oral training – A method of training or educating people with a hearing loss to communicate through speech and speech reading, without using sign language or fingerspelling.

P

Postlingual deafness – Deafness which occurs after the age at which spoken English is normally acquired, about age three.

Prelingual deafness – Deafness which occurs before the age at which spoken English is normally acquired. This loss usually exists at birth or occurs shortly afterwards up to age three.

Presbycusis – Hearing loss due to the aging process.

S

Speechreading – Attempting to understand the oral language or speech of a person by observing lip movements and facial expressions. This skill widely known as lipreading is correctly referred to as speechreading. Only about 30 percent of spoken English can be understood through speechreading.

T

Telephone relay service – A live telephone link that connects deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired people who use special telephone equipment or software to hearing people who use standard telephones through a third party operator. To use the Relay dial 711.

Tinnitus – Noise perceived by the brain when no external sound is present. People with loud or persistent tinnitus hear noises varying from a low roar to a high pitch. The severity of the symptoms can vary from day to day. Most people from time to time notice a slight ringing sound in their ears; this is normal.

TTY/TDD/TT (text telephone) – This device transmits and receives typewritten messages over phone lines. It is a means of electronic communication between people who are deaf or between people who are deaf and hearing.

V

Video relay service – A form of telecommunication relay service that involves a TV with a videophone, a mobile wireless device/computer with a web camera, and high speed Internet. An individual who is deaf or hard of hearing and uses sign language to communicate can use this technology to call a hearing party who uses a standard phone. The caller signs to the interpreter on the screen who in turns voices to the hearing party. The interpreter signs back to the caller what the hearing person says. Communication between the two parties is almost simultaneous and this “visual” form of communication is valued by many people who rely on sign language to

communicate. A voice telephone user can also initiate a VRS call by calling a toll-free or direct number of the person being called.

Video remote interpreting – Video conferencing equipment or a television with a video phone is used to allow people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate with people who are hearing at the same location through an interpreter. The interpreter is not physically present, but is available via the video equipment. There is a fee for this service. VRI is a convenient resource for parties in need of interpreter services when or where an interpreter is not available to be present on site.

Videophone – A device with a video camera capable of bi-directional video and audio transmissions for communication between people in real-time. People who are deaf and hard of hearing may call other signers point-to-point or call non-signers using a video relay service.