Department of Revenue Services

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING POPULATION

At some time in your career at DRS you may have the opportunity to work with a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person. There are specific laws and general guidelines that should be adhered to when working with this population.

Legal Requirements

Deaf and hard of hearing people are entitled to effective communication with state and local government agencies. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. ŠŠ12131-12134, forbids discrimination by any public entity.

Under the ADA, local and state agencies are required to give equal access and equally effective services to people with disabilities. 28 C.F.R. 35.130. They may not deny people an opportunity to participate in their programs or give them an opportunity that is less effective than the opportunity given to others. Often, the public entity must provide qualified interpreters, Text Telephone (TTs), visible warning devices, or captioned materials and other auxiliary aids to ensure effective communication with deaf and hard of hearing people.

Practice Standards for DRS Employees

You may encounter situations where someone from the public requires assistance through an auxiliary aid or service relating to a hearing loss disability. Please be aware of the following:

1. When requested or needed, DRS can obtain sign language, oral, and cued speech interpreters.
2. Sign language, oral, and cued speech interpreters can be obtained within a short period of time when necessary. Advance notice of ten days is requested. Please contact the Office of Diversity & Equity at (860) 297-5709 if you need an interpreter.
3. It is generally inappropriate to request family members and companions of a deaf or hard of hearing person to serve as sign language interpreters. If a family member volunteers or indicates that they will interpret, it is ok to allow them to do that with the permission of the taxpayer.
4. Deaf persons requesting interpreters will not be charged for the cost of the interpreter.
5. If applicable, DRS' decision to deny an interpreter based upon undue financial and administrative burden will be made after considering all resources available for use in funding the operation of the program and will be accompanied by a written statement of the reasons for reaching the conclusion.
6. In any instance where the provision of an interpreter would result in an undue financial and administrative burden to DRS, DRS will take any other action that would not result in an undue financial and administrative burden but would nevertheless ensure that the individual with a disability receives the benefits or services provided.

7. Primary consideration will be given to the requests of the person with a disability when determining what type of auxiliary aid or service to provide.

Ways to Communicate with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individual

Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals can use a variety of communication to include ASL – American Sign Language, Oral – lip reads and uses voice, PSE- Pidgin Signed English, Signed English, MLS – Minimal Language Skills or Gestural, Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), and Text Telephone (TTY).

When a member of the Public requests an Auxiliary Aid or Service

1. Always try to obtain the individual's preferred mode of communication.

   If the individual requests an interpreter:

   a. Request a certified interpreter through the Office of Diversity and Equity. Include your supervisor and manager on the request. (The Office of Diversity & Equity will work with the Business Office to engage an interpreter. The Business Office will obtain the necessary confidentiality agreement from the vendor providing the interpretation services.)

   b. Try to schedule interpreting services two weeks in advance. Interpreter services are available on an emergency basis.

   c. There are different types of interpreters for different uses. Interpreters are certified nationally at different skill levels (medical, legal). Some situations may require the use of more than one interpreter to ensure effective communication between all parties.

2. Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), Text Telephone (TT), Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), TeleTYpe (TTY) Systems

   These acronyms are used interchangeably to refer to text based telecommunications systems.

   The following options are available for use with the following protocol:

   a. Incoming calls: The DRS incoming phone number for DRS TDD/TT Users only is 860 297-4911. This is located in the Business Tax Walk In Team Office (Fabiana Espinoza).

      1. Utilize the same caller identity verification process utilized with standard voice calls.

   b. Outgoing calls: Talk directly to a member of the public without a relay service or an interpreter using the DRS TDD/TT line in item a. above. The keyboard is similar to a standard computer keyboard. There is TT etiquette you need to follow. Type "GA", which means go ahead, at the end of your sentence to inform the other person it is their turn. Also watch for "GA" which means it is your turn to talk. Type "SK" to end the conversation.

1. Utilize the same caller identity verification process utilized with standard voice calls.

c. A member of the public may call using a TRS, TT, TDD, or TTY system which incorporates a relay operator. Remember to use "go ahead" and "SK" just as you would with using a TTY (see 2.b). Please speak directly to the individual, not the operator.

1. If a call is tax account related, begin the conversation by stating the following: "Since you have placed this call with the assistance of a Relay Service Operator (RSO), we assume that in doing so you have consented to the disclosure of your return information to the Relay Services Operator to the extent necessary to assist you with your question."

2. NOTE: If the customer does not give oral consent, apologize to the customer (through the RSO) for the inconvenience. Because of disclosure rules, we cannot provide the requested information through this connection without oral consent. These rules were established to protect the privacy of all taxpayers.

3. If the caller does not "consent to the disclosure of your return information to the Relay Services Operator to the extent necessary to assist you with your question" suggest the caller call the DRS TTY/TDD line (item 2.a) or use secure email, where the issue of relay service operator is mitigated.

d. Call 711 for relay services. Tell the 711 operator the number you wish to call. The relay operator will dial it and then communicate using a TTY with the individual. Remember to use "go ahead" and "SK" just as you would with using a TTY (see 2.b). Please speak directly to the individual, not the operator.

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Things to Know About the Deaf Culture

There are many barriers to effective communication and they may not all be apparent to you. Try to be mindful of your body language, facial expression, and maintaining eye contact with the deaf individual. When an interpreter is present, look and speak to the individual, not the interpreter.

There is also a resource guide at the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Impaired site.

Questions?
Please contact the Office of Diversity and Equity at 860-297-5709.