

Assistive Technology Considerations for Employees Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Jill S. Pleasant, MA, OTR/L, Heidi Lervik, MA, CRC

The ability to communicate at work is a fundamental skill expected of all employees. However, employment related communication can be complicated for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. As a result, there is usually a need for reasonable accommodations in the form of assistive technologies to eliminate or reduce the communication barriers encountered by the employee with the hearing loss and his or her communication partners.



the assistive technology devices that are available.

Choosing the right technologies involves a decision-making process that takes into consideration a constellation of factors based on the person, the work environment(s), the communication tasks the employee is expected to perform and the features and capabilities of

A thorough assessment will provide information about the person: the type and degree of hearing loss, his or her preferred modalities of communication such as speech, lip reading, sign language, and, technologies that the employee already uses or has had experience with such as hearing aids, looping systems, assisted listening devices and alerting equipment that substitutes light or vibration for sound.

Matching technology to employment needs also includes understanding the physical work environment such as noise levels, location of the employee's work station – private office, open cubicle, factory floor, and whether the employee works at different areas within a building or in multiple community locations. Computer and phone system networks should be taken into account to make sure that devices recommended are compatible with existing work place technology systems and if not, what alternatives are available.

The assistive technology choices will be influenced by the types of communication encountered and expected during the typical work day such as face-to-face conversations, phone contact, email, small and large group meetings, and participation in teleconferences. It is also beneficial to know who the employee is routinely expected to communicate with: supervisors, coworkers, customers and/or the general public. This information will help the employer understand when personal tablet-type communicators such as the UbiDuo are needed for conversations between 2 people, or when sign language interpreters, CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation), or RCC (Relay Conference Captioning) services are necessary for face-to-face interactions or multi-person meetings.

Gathering the information described above results in a more complete picture of the employee's work-related communication needs and helps to clearly identify specific technology features, products and strategies to successfully address these needs and implement solutions that will work for the employee and the employer.

To learn more about specific assistive technologies for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, please contact the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) at askaztap@nau.edu, 602.728.9534, 800.477.9921, or 602.728.9536 (TTY). Additional information about our program is also available on our website at www.aztap.org.

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