

Tele-Health & Accessibility for People living with Hearing Loss

By: Duncan Floyd, Janine Verge, & Krista Yuskow

Listening Environment:

Ensure the lighting allows for a good image of your face.

Avoid backlighting or strong lighting from above which results in shadows on the face.

Reduce the background noise in your immediate environment! Eliminate sound such as fans, music, children, pets, motor vehicles etc. The room that you're in should be as quiet as possible.

Professional attire is recommended; ensure that the background is professional and visually unobtrusive.

Communication Skills & Family-Centered Care:

Provide adequate language access if needed (e.g. ASL/LSQ interpreter services.)

Be careful of your rate of speech; make sure your speech is articulated clearly and at a measured rate.

Ensure that your face is visible to allow for maximum speech reading. Don't cover your mouth with the mic. Try to face the camera head on; don't turn away from the camera and speak.

Avoid jargon or technical language; use everyday speech.

Include a family member in the session to ensure understanding.

Seek feedback about comprehension and encourage self-advocacy.

Assistive Technology:

Use a boom microphone on a headset or a tabletop microphone to get the mic close to the mouth. This will allow for a clearer speech signal. Avoid using the computer's built-in microphone if possible.

If doing group sessions, ensure that only the speaker's microphone is active, and all others are muted.

Ensure the use of hearing aids if your patient/client has them.

Use a speech-to-text captioning if available with the on-line platform you are using.

Encourage hearing aid users to plug connect with personal FM/DM systems directly to computer if they have them.

If there is more than one listener who needs to hear directly from the computer, consider suggesting the use of a 3.5 to 3.5 stereo audio splitter.

Captions & Print:

If showing any videos during your session, make sure to enable the auto-captioning if possible.

If captioning is not available, consider using a separate captioning program (e.g. www.webcaptioner.com)

Consider real-time captioning either through a relay service or an on-line platform with speech to text captioning (e.g. Streamer).

Provide learning materials in print.

Provide notes or summaries of your conversation in print following your session.

E-mail or text questions ahead of time or during session to repair communication breakdowns.

Telephone Only:

Consider using a speech to text app (e.g., my call to text).

Consider whether a relay service would be beneficial.

Suggest connecting directly to telephone with streaming device or t-coil, if available.

On-line Platforms:

Consider the use of a whole screen capture program to simultaneously record the screen, closed captions, and a video of your face (e.g., Screencastify and Loom).

Ensure that your system setup adheres to the regulatory requirements of your place of employment and province/territory.



Obtained consent for the process can be written or verbal and should be documented.

The patient/client should be informed that audio/visual information is being transmitted and there is a risk of interception.

You may need a business-associate account with the platform you're using in order to achieve HIPAA compliance.

Resources:

Alternative Delivery: Ensuring Accessibility for People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Listening to Electronic Devices with Hearing Technologies

Whole-Screen Capture Programs