



RIGHTS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE ACCESSING SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

If you are DEAF, DEAFBLIND, or HARD OF HEARING, you have a right to **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION** with any public accommodation that is providing you services. Public accommodations include women's shelters and other services for any victim of domestic violence.

What Is Effective Communication?

- Sufficient Communication to Provide the Same Level of Services as Those Received by Hearing People.
- Applies to Important Conversations, including conversations that may be confidential.

Examples of Important Conversations Include:

- Intake at a shelter
- Medical or psychiatric History
- Discussing options and available resources
- Informed consent for treatment
- Individual or group talk therapy
- Discharge planning
- Financial arrangements
- Evaluations
- Safety planning

Providers do not necessarily have to provide a specific device or service that you request if another aid or service that is more cost effective will still enable clear, effective communication. However, they cannot assume a specific accommodation will work for you without your input into the decision.

How Can You Help Ensure Good Communication?

- Request the accommodation you need. This will allow staff to arrange for what you need. Of course, in an emergency you request what you need as soon as you can.
- Ask for exactly what you need and explain why that accommodation will work best for you. Staff will be more likely to give you what you need if they understand what you are talking about.
- If possible, give contact information for arranging for the accommodation you need to your provider. Sometimes staff do not provide what you need because they don't know where to get it.
Pennsylvania law requires that an interpreter provided to you must be certified unless you fill out a form to request the use of a non-certified interpreter. Staff cannot make you use someone who is not certified unless you agree and complete the appropriate form required by the Pennsylvania Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. You can revoke your request to use a non-certified interpreter at any time by filling out a revocation form and giving it to the provider and/or the interpreter. Forms can be found on the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing website at -
<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/interpreters/10373/forms/552265>.

If you believe you have been discriminated against by shelter or domestic violence services staff you may file a complaint with:

- Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights at –
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/complaints/>
- Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Disability Rights Section – NYA, Washington, DC 20530
- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission at –
http://www.phrc.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/file_a_complaint/18976

Contact Information

If you need more information or need help, please contact the intake unit of Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP) at 800-692-7443 (voice) or 877-375-7139 (TDD). The email address is: intake@disabilityrightspa.org.

The mission of Disability Rights Pennsylvania is to advance, protect, and advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of Pennsylvanians with disabilities. Due to our limited resources, Disability Rights Pennsylvania cannot provide individual services to every person with advocacy and legal issues. Disability Rights Pennsylvania prioritizes cases that have the potential to result in widespread, systemic changes to benefit persons with disabilities. While we cannot provide assistance to everyone, we do seek to provide every individual with information and referral options.

IMPORTANT: This publication is for general informational purposes only. This publication is not intended, nor should be construed, to create an attorney-client relationship between Disability Rights Pennsylvania and any person. Nothing in this publication should be considered to be legal advice.

PLEASE NOTE: For information in alternative formats or a language other than English, contact Disability Rights Pennsylvania at 800-692-7443, Ext. 400, TDD: 877-375-7139 or intake@disabilityrightspa.org.