While working at Everett Community College you may have an opportunity to interact with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing. If the person with whom you are working is a student, the Center for Disability Services office is responsible for hiring a Sign Language interpreter when the student requests one. Students usually request interpreters for classes, college-related activities, and meetings with various departments on campus. If the student has a brief question, or has not had time to request the interpreter, one may not be available, and the person will communicate through writing or speech reading. This document includes communication tips when working with a person who is deaf, hard of hearing or deaf/blind.

CDS works specifically with students; however, we are able to provide information and referral services to Everett Community College employees if you are seeking or need to hire a Sign Language interpreter for staff, faculty or a member of the public. Please feel free to contact us at any time and we would be happy to assist you with such matters. CDS works with many of the local interpreters, and can provide you with information relevant to your specific situation. Since the interpreters on campus are hired on an hourly basis it is important to keep track of the number of hours they are working. Providing CDS with information about who you may be hiring as well as the number of hours they will be working assists us in tracking the number of hours interpreters are working each month.

Meeting a person who is deaf or has a hearing impairment:

- Be sure you have the person’s attention before you begin to communicate.

- To find out how you can best communicate, ask. Some people who are deaf read lips (speech-reading). Others use Sign Language. Writing can also be a good way to communicate.

- If you are having trouble communicating, ask for suggestions. This may be your first time communicating with a person who is deaf, but chances are he or she has had lots of practice communicating with people who aren’t!

- In a discussion where one or more people are deaf, be sure only one person speaks at a time. It’s very difficult to speech read or interpret when more than one person is speaking, or when people interrupt each other.

- Look directly at the person who has a hearing impairment, make sure your mouth is visible, and speak in a normal tone and at a normal speed.
• Use gestures, body language and facial expressions just as when you speak with a person who can hear.

**Working with a Sign Language Interpreter:**

Sometimes a person who is deaf is accompanied by a Sign Language interpreter. When this is the case:

• During an oral presentation or meeting with a person who is deaf, the interpreter should be positioned near the speaker so the person who is deaf can see both the speaker and the interpreter simultaneously. Work directly with the interpreter and the person who is deaf to determine the best seating arrangement during the meeting.

• Face the person who is deaf, direct your comments to them and speak in a normal manner. There is no need to ask the interpreter to “Tell him this....”

• The interpreter is required to sign anything you say—including anything you say directly to the interpreter. Do not make comments to the interpreter that you do not intend to have interpreted to the deaf person, even if the deaf person’s back is turned.

• Interpreters must follow a strict code of ethics, and are not allowed to share information discussed while they are interpreting. The interpreter is present only to facilitate communication and will not participate in the meeting or answer questions you may pose to them about the deaf person before or after the meeting.

• Remember that the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker. Please give the interpreter time to finish before you ask questions.

• During large group discussions please try to permit only one person to speak at a time, as it is very difficult for an interpreter to relay the correct information when several people are speaking at once.

• Speak clearly and in a normal tone when using an interpreter. Do not rush through the information. If the interpreter did not understand, or did not hear what was said, he or she may ask the speaker to slow down or restate the information given.

• Allow time to for the person who is deaf to review any handouts you may be providing in the meeting before continuing the conversation. A person who is deaf cannot watch the interpreter and study written information at the same time.

**Speechreading:**

• Speechreading is all about anticipation and guessing. When someone is speechreading your lips:
  • Do not speak with anything in your mouth, such as gum, cigarettes or food.
  • Look directly at the person who is deaf, and don’t obscure your mouth.
  • Mirror the language that they use (repeat statements), and avoid jargon whenever possible.
• When you are not understood, try re-phrasing using different words. For example, the word “doctor” is easier to speechread than “physician.”

Using Sign Language.

• If you know Sign Language, use it even if your skills are not high. Your attempts will be appreciated, and you’ll get some practice!

• If you don’t understand what is being signed, say so, rather than giving the impression that you understand.

• Make sure you can be clearly seen, and avoid standing directly in front of a light source.

• Do not walk between two people using Sign Language; you’ll interrupt their conversation.

When meeting a person who is deaf-blind:

• If you know how to use Sign Language or fingerspell use it. If you don’t, and an interpreter is not available, you can print capital letters with your index finger in the palm of the person’s hand, pausing between each word.

• Offer your arm when walking with a person who is deaf-blind. Pause briefly before going up or down stairs as a signal that the terrain is about to change.

• When helping to seat a person who is deaf-blind, place their hand on the back of the chair so they can judge its position.

If you have any questions, or want to arrange for an interpreter, you may contact the CDS office. We are located in Parks 267, right across from the bookstore. We can also be reached at 388-9272, or through email at cds@everettcc.edu.

Everett Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, or veteran status.

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