



COMMUNICATION TIPS AND ETIQUETTE

Communication breakdowns are frustrating—for both speaker and listener. They can be dangerous in an emergency or crisis. Here are some tips on how to communicate with people who have hearing, speech, and cognitive-communication impairments.

HEAR AND BE HEARD

- Reduce background noise or move to a quieter location.
- Be sure your face is adequately lit.
- Face the person directly when speaking.
- Move closer to the person and speak at his/her eye level.
- Keep your face and mouth visible—don't turn your head or cover your mouth.
- Only one person should speak at a time.
- Use an assistive listening device if available.

BE UNDERSTOOD

- Use simple words.
- Use short sentences.
- Slow down your speech slightly.
- Speak slightly louder but don't shout or exaggerate mouth movements.
- Give the person a cue when changing subjects—give key words for new topic (e.g., say "Parking" before describing parking locations).

BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

- Indicate when you can't understand—ask the speaker to repeat or rephrase.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Verify information.
 - Repeat back what you think was said or pointed to.
 - Ask a question to see if you have been understood.
- Ask Yes/No questions that allow a headshake response.
- Rephrase—use other words with the same meaning.
- Write down information or key words.

MAKE USE OF COMMUNICATION AIDS

- Use written notes and information.
- Provide maps and listings of services.
- Use meaningful gestures and eye contact.
- Use an alphabet board or picture aids.

ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Talk to the person—not to the interpreter or companion.
- Be patient.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect; most people can communicate if you give them the opportunity.
- Let the person know by your manner and actions that you are listening.