

Considerations for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Survivors

It is important to recognize that many individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing do not identify with having a disability. **Deaf culture** is an entity in its own with its own identity, social values, and language and should be respected as such.

As always, allow the individual survivor the right to identify in their own way that may be the same or different that other members of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing communities.

- If the survivor signs, always call for a certified ASL interpreter or Deaf Interpreter.
- Speak directly to the person who is Deaf, not the sign language interpreter.
- Make eye-contact and speak to the survivor directly, even if you are using an ASL interpreter.
- You can try using notes or lip reading until an interpreter is available, if this is okay with the survivor, but be aware that not all Deaf people read lips and that lip reading is not an accurate method of communication.
- If you are using lip reading: look at the person, don't turn away mid-sentence, don't eat or cover your mouth. There is no need to speak loudly or exaggerate your annunciation for lip reading.
- Ask the person to repeat themselves if you do not understand.

- Use facial expressions, body language, and pantomime.
- Explain any interruptions (such as a cell phone ringing) before attending to it.
- The Deaf community is often like a small town – many people know one another. This may mean that the survivor might be concerned about confidentiality or privacy.
- Be respectful that when giving resources, many Deaf survivors want to maintain social circles in the Deaf community and would rather receive services within the Deaf community.
- Isolation of Deaf people within the hearing community may make reporting difficult.

(obtained, in part, from CALCASA: Supporting Survivors of Sexual Assault with Disabilities, 2010)