Myths about Deafness

Similar to other smaller cultures, people who are deaf experience stereotyping by those who do not know and understand their culture. A number of myths circulate widely in our society and interfere with understanding people who are deaf.

# *Myth*: People who are deaf lead totally different lives than other people.

Fact: In general, people who are deaf occupy their time just as anyone else. They work, marry, raise families, drive cars, use the phone, go shopping and pay taxes. Of course, individual differences may exist. But chances are when you meet a person who is deaf, you may share several similar interests.

# *Myth*: All people who are deaf can read lips.

Fact: Some people who are deaf are very skilled speechreaders, but many are not. Only 30% of spoken English is visible on the lips. This is because many speech sounds have identical mouth movements. For example: p and b look exactly alike on the lips.

# *Myth*: All people who are deaf are mute.

Fact: People who are deaf have the physical ability to produce sound. Some speak very well while others choose not to use their voice if they think that they are difficult to understand. It is difficult for most people who are deaf to gauge the pitch or volume of their voice.

# *Myth*: People who are deaf are less intelligent.

Fact: The inability to hear is unrelated to intelligence. As with the hearing population there are some people who are deaf who have an intellectual disability. Many people who are deaf enroll in post-secondary education and hold responsible positions in professional jobs. Hearing people’s lack of knowledge about deafness, however, has often limited educational and occupational opportunities for people who are deaf.

# *Myth*: People who are deaf are “deaf and dumb,” or “deaf and mute.”

Fact: The inability to hear affects neither intelligence nor the physical ability to produce sounds. People who are deaf find these labels particularly offensive.

# *Myth*: All people who are deaf use sign language to communicate.

Fact: American Sign Language (ASL) is the language of many people who are deaf. Some people who are deaf use one or more of a variety of communication systems based on the English language.

# *Myth*: People who are deaf can't use the telephone.

Fact: Communication through the telephone has greatly improved by the use of internet, videophones (VP) and text and/or video-based wireless devices. Because of this, the use of TTYs is becoming obsolete.

# *Myth*: All people who are deaf use hearing aids.

Fact: Some people who are deaf benefit considerably from hearing aids; others may only be able to hear loud environmental sounds such as a fire alarm or a car horn. Still others may not benefit at all from their use.

# *Myth*: Hearing aids restore hearing.

Fact: Hearing devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and implantable hearing aids may enable or enhance an individual’s hearing, but may not make their hearing functionally equivalent to “normal” hearing.

# *Myth*: People who are deaf cannot appreciate the arts because they can’t hear music, movies, etc.

Fact: Deaf theater and ASL films are an intricate part of the deaf community. Interpreters and advanced technology provide access to the performing arts. Many television shows and movies are closed captioned.

This information is in accessible formats for individuals with disabilities by calling 651-431-5940 or by using your preferred relay service.  Additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs is available.

**Contact Information: (651) 431-5940 ⦁ (800) 456-7589 V ⦁ (651) 964-1514 VP ⦁ (651) 431-5976 TTY**

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