

Successful Approaches to Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community



Jennifer Anderson and Stacie Heckendorf
Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



May 5, 2025

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

What Will You Learn Today? (1)

The Department of Health Services (DHS) Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) has been working with multiple state and community partners to raise awareness related to the risk of dementia for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

2

What Will You Learn Today? (2)

Five-year partnership between ODHH and the Wisconsin statewide Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Disease grant

- Communication tips
- Assistive technology
- Resources to minimize the impact of untreated hearing loss

To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

3

Hearing Loss is Invisible!

Some may like to keep it invisible as much as possible.



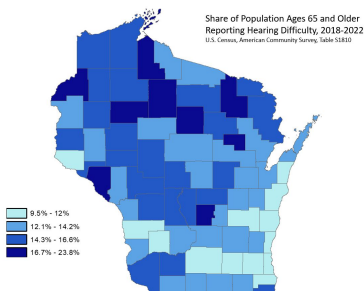
To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

4

Age	Total	Ratio
Under 5 years:	309,221	
With a hearing difficulty	1,151	0.40%
No hearing difficulty	308,070	
5 to 17 years:	931,713	
With a hearing difficulty	5,967	0.60%
No hearing difficulty	925,746	
18 to 34 years:	1,282,872	
With a hearing difficulty	12,128	0.90%
No hearing difficulty	1,270,744	
35 to 64 years:	2,230,755	
With a hearing difficulty	58,630	2.60%
No hearing difficulty	2,172,125	
65 to 74 years:	651,514	
With a hearing difficulty	53,288	8.20%
No hearing difficulty	598,226	
75 years and over:	425,378	
With a hearing difficulty	82,695	19.40%
No hearing difficulty	342,677	
Total	5,831,451	
With a hearing difficulty	213,860	3.70%
No hearing difficulty	5,617,591	

To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

5



To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

6

Impact of Age-Related Hearing Loss

- Presbycusis
- Loss of ability to distinguish high frequency sounds
- Trouble with speech discrimination
- Trouble hearing the telephone or TV
- Visual acuity
- Denial and blame
- Depression, isolation, and withdrawal
- “Selective hearing”



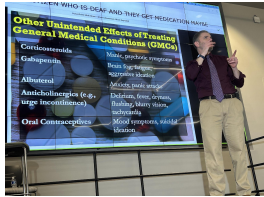
Dementia Day—July 22, 2023

MJ Grant



Dementia Live Experience

Wellness Day Keynote—April 13, 2024 Dr. Jamie Wilson



To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

10

Dementia Videos



To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

11

Dementia Video



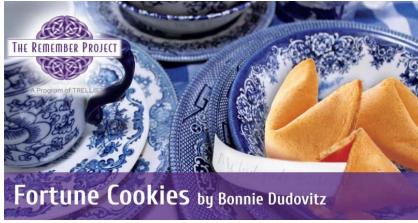
QR Code
Dementia Video
Feedback Survey

Video: [What is Dementia?](#)

To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

12

Remember Project



October 5, 2024

April 12, 2025

May 15, 2025

Remember Project: "Fortune Cookies" by Bonnie Dudovitz



Fortune Cookie Actors



What Form of Communication is the **Best**?

- The deaf and hard of hearing person knows what form of communication is most effective for them.
- Try to respect their preferred mode of communication whenever possible.

Effective Communication is a Shared Responsibility

- Don't assume that people with hearing loss use the same mode of communication.
- Communication access must be considered on an individual basis.
- Ask when you are not sure what to do.



Communication Supports

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Lipreading | ▪ Captioned telephones |
| ▪ Writing | ▪ Computer Assisted |
| ▪ Natural gestures | Realtime Transcription |
| ▪ Sign language | (CART) services |
| ▪ Interpreters | ▪ Assistive listening devices |
| ▪ Videophone and video relay service (VRS) | |

Communication Tips



Don't assume that all Deaf and hard of hearing people use the same mode of communication. Ask the individual about their preferences.



Get the person's attention before speaking.

19

Communication Tips (2)



State the topic of the discussion first.



Speak slowly and clearly.



Do not exaggerate your speaking style or mouth movements.



Reduce background noise, if possible.

20

Communication Tips (3)



Look directly at the Deaf or hard of hearing person when speaking, as eye contact is a sign of respect.



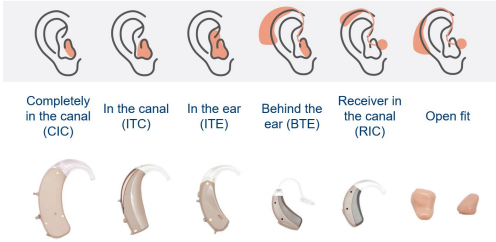
Do not place anything in your mouth while speaking.



Use pen and paper to communicate only if the individual desires to do so.

21

Hearing Aids



To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

22

Cochlear Implants

Off-the-ear speech processor



Behind-the-ear speech processor



To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

23

Benefits of Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

- Make soft sounds and speech audible
- Work best in one-on-one or small group quiet environments
- Can mask tinnitus
- Reduce listening fatigue
- Decrease social isolation
- Improve communication access

To protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin

24

Limitations of Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

- Do not restore normal hearing
- Can reduce but not eliminate background noise
- Challenges hearing and understanding speech on the phone
- Television and music can be difficult to understand

About the BHI



[Behavioral Health Initiative Website](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/bhi.htm)
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/bhi.htm>

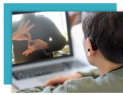
Tracks



[Community](#)



[Clinicians](#)




[Interpreters](#)

Clinician Videos

- [Language Dysfluency and Differential Diagnosis with Deaf Patients](#)
- [Legal and Ethical Responsibilities When Serving Deaf Patients](#)
- [Social Fundamentals](#)
- [Fund of Information and Serving Deaf Individuals](#)
- [Mental Status Exams with Deaf Patients](#)
- [Working Effectively in Partnership with Language Interpreters](#)

Resources

[P-02764, Interacting with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)



Interacting with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
For health departments, clinics and other providers

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing must be provided access to effective and appropriate **communication** by **language interpretation and textual English communication**.

Methods of communication

Be aware that there are multiple communication methods in the world that certain services are responsible to deliver during general operations.

- In-person sign language interpretation
- Speech-to-text apps (may not be accessible in some environments)
- Captioning or communication access real-time translation (CART)
- Written communication (only for deaf or simple communication)
- Video remote interpreting (VRI)
- Text messaging that offers a reliable form of communication

Communicating with people who do not use sign language

- Communication is difficult by writing down a few words and phrases
- Use a computer or other device as a communication tool
- Use the individual's name if they do not understand any, type and allow the person to see the screen

Communicating with people who use sign language

- When meeting with an interpreter, speak directly to the person who is Deaf
- Make sure the person who is Deaf has a clear line of vision to the interpreter
- Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to assist with communication

Page 1 of 2

Resources

[P-03492 Interpretation for Medicaid Services](#)



Interpretation for Medicaid Services

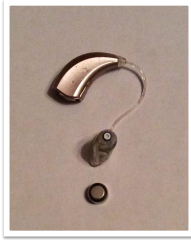
If you or a family member have Wisconsin Medicaid and use a language other than English, you may be eligible for an interpreter. A trained sign language interpreter can help you understand and communicate with your healthcare provider.

FAST FACTS

- **What will the interpreter do?**
Once your Provider has chosen an interpreter for you, the interpreter will:
 - Attend the health care appointment with you in person, over the phone, or via a computer or mobile device.
 - Interpret the conversation between you and the provider, not replace you in the conversation.
- **Why should I use an interpreter?**
 - You can communicate in the language that is most comfortable for you.
 - You keep your health information private: interpreters must follow the same confidentiality laws as the provider.
 - An interpreter will be familiar with medical terms used by the provider.
 - You can use an interpreter at no cost to you.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Any Questions



Thank you!

Stacie Heckendorf
AnastasiaL.Heckendorf@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Jennifer Anderson
JenniferJ.Anderson@dhs.wisconsin.gov
