Barriers to Communication with People who are Hard of Hearing

and Guidelines to Help Improve It

# Environmental Barriers to Communication

* Background noise.
* Poor lighting conditions.
* Poor room acoustics.
* Distance from source of sound.
* Distractions.
* Inadequate ventilation.
* Interfering objects.
* Poor angle of vision.
* Seating arrangement prevents seeing speakers’ faces.
* Lack of assistive listening systems.
* Lack of alerting devices.
* Failure to use visual aids (overheads, blackboards).
* Illegible visual aids.

# Guidelines for Speaking to a Hard of Hearing Person

* Get the person’s attention before you speak.
* Do not put obstacles in front of your face.
* Do not have objects in your mouth such as gum, cigarettes, or food.
* Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.
* Use facial expression and gestures.
* Give clues when changing the subject.
* Rephrase when you are not understood.
* Don’t shout.
* Avoid noisy background situations.
* Be patient, positive, and relaxed.
* Talk TO a hard of hearing person, not ABOUT him or her.
* When in doubt, ASK the hard of hearing person for suggestions to improve communication.

# Guidelines for Listeners Who are Hard of Hearing

1. Pick the best spot to communicate by avoiding areas that are poorly lit and very noisy.
2. Anticipate difficult situations and plan how to minimize problems.
3. Tell others how to talk to you best.
4. Pay attention to the speaker.
5. Look for visual cues to what is being said.
6. Ask for written clues of key words, if needed.
7. Provide feedback that you understand or fail to understand.
8. Do not bluff.
9. Arrange for frequent breaks if discussions or meetings are long.
10. Provide feedback to speakers about how well they are communicating.
11. Try not to interrupt too often.
12. Set realistic goals about what you can expect to understand.

From “Communication Issues Related to Hearing Loss” by Samuel Trychin, PhD, Gallaudet University, Copyright 1993.