STANDARDS OF ETIQUETTE

1. INTERACTING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF

- Individuals who are Deaf have many different communication needs. The way a person communicates varies depending on many different factors. The best way to figure out what their communication preferences are is to ask them directly what they are most comfortable with. Also keep in mind that hearing loss does not equate to intelligence. Most often the reality is not that those with hearing loss fail to have the capacity to comprehend, the problem is they cannot hear what is being said aloud.

- Some individuals use American Sign Language (ASL) or other sign language; some read lips and speak as their primary means of communication; some use Signed Exact English (SEE), where every word is signed in the exact sequence it is spoken in English, and there is a vocabulary which has a one-to-one relationship to English words. People who became deaf later in life may never have learned either sign language or lip-reading. Although they may pick up some sign and try their best to read lips, their primary means of communicating may be reading or writing.

- Lip-reading ability varies greatly from person to person and from situation to situation. Only 30% of what is actually spoken is discernable on the lips. The best speech reader (aka Lip reader) is still only going to get every third word. Lip reading is greatly hindered by people who do not enunciate clearly, have mustaches shielding the lips, do not speak or look directly at the person, or that speaks with an accent affecting the way words appear on their lips. Therefore, when speaking with a person who reads lips, look directly at the person while speaking, make sure you are in good light source, and keep your hands, gum and food away from your mouth while you are speaking.

- When to Use Interpreters: Since communication is vital in the workplace and in service delivery, and the person who is deaf knows how he or she communicates best, supervisors and staff should follow the wishes of the person who is deaf regarding communication methods.

- In casual situations and during initial contact, it is often acceptable to write notes to determine what the person needs. However, Department policy is to use nothing less than a qualified interpreter for service delivery. The need for a more skilled interpreter depends not only on the complexity and importance of the information being communicated, but also on the ability of the interpreter to translate the particular sign language used by the individual, and the speed.
2. INTERACTING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE HARD-OF-HEARING

Persons who are hard-of-hearing may or may not know how to sign, and their means of communication will depend on the degree of hearing loss, when they became hard-of-hearing, etc. A person who is hard-of-hearing may or may not wear a hearing aid. Employees should be aware that many people who are hard-of-hearing will not admit having a hearing loss, so it is important employees be alerted to the signs of hearing loss:

- The person asks you to repeat yourself several times; and
- The person does not respond appropriately, especially if you have been talking with your back to them.

The key to communication with a person who is deaf or hard-of-hearing – as with all people – is patience and sensitivity. Please use the following guidelines:

- Ask the person how he or she prefers to communicate.
- If you are using an interpreter, the interpreter may lag a few moments behind what is being said, so pause occasionally to allow time for a complete translation.
- When using an interpreter, talk directly to the person, not the interpreter. However, the person will look at the interpreter and may not make continuous eye contact with you during the conversation.
- Before you speak, make sure you have the attention of the person you are addressing.
- Speak clearly and distinctly at a moderate pace in a normal tone of voice, unless asked to raise your voice. Do not shout or exaggerate your words.
- Look directly at the person. Most people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing need to watch a person’s face to help them understand what is being said. Do not turn your back or walk around while talking. If you look away, the person may assume the conversation is over.
- Periodically, ask the person to rephrase what you have said. This will show that you want them to understand everything and of your interest in their situation. Watch for signs of bluffing (nodding head, agreeing) rather than a pertinent response.
- If the person does not understand after repeating, try rephrasing or using different words.
- Do not put obstacles in front of your face.
- Do not have objects in your mouth, such as gum, cigarettes, or food.
- Do not turn to another person in their presence to discuss them and their problems.
- Write notes back and forth, if feasible.
- Use facial expressions and gestures.
- Do not talk while writing, as the person cannot read your note and attempt to read your lips at the same time.
- Use a computer, if feasible, to type messages back and forth.
- Offer to provide an assistive listening device.
- If the person has a service animal, such as a dog, do not divert the animal’s attention. Do not pet or speak to the animal.

This section is Attachment 6 to CFOP 60-10 Ch. 3.