

Overview

Being proactive is defined as, “taking action to make changes yourself rather than reacting to things that happen.”¹ This approach is especially effective for post-secondary institutions when developing plans for creating campus-wide access for deaf and hard of hearing students. In the past, institutions may have taken a “wait and see” approach to the planning of accommodations for students with disabilities. However, many institutions are taking a proactive stance to planning for how students with disabilities will access the full spectrum of programs and events available on campus.

Initial Meeting

When scheduling an initial meeting with a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, remember to inquire as to their communication preferences for the meeting so appropriate accommodations can be scheduled, if needed. At the initial meeting, it is critical to review with the student their past accommodation preferences as well as what they anticipate needing for the upcoming semester. Past accommodation usage can change dramatically for deaf or hard of hearing students moving from the K-12 environment to the post-secondary setting. Larger class sizes, an increased number of speakers, and the faster pace can require students to request accommodations they have not previously used in order to achieve effective communication.

Policies and Procedures

Developing policies and procedures in advance that outline how access will be provided through the disability support services office is an important step in proactive planning. By having clear policies and procedures in place for students as well as service providers, institutions can potentially avoid misunderstandings that can arise from a lack of written documentation and clear policies. Some areas to consider include:

- How will students request accommodations and how much advance notice will be required?

- How will the institution handle last minute requests?
- What happens if a student receiving access services (e.g., interpreters) has excessive absences?
- What is the process if a student prefers a different interpreter or speech-to-text provider than the one assigned?
- How will student complaints be addressed?



Not having policies in place is the same as not planning. Waiting for a problem to develop before instituting appropriate policies and procedures can have negative consequences for students and the campus community as a whole.

Sign Language Interpreters

Qualified interpreters are often in high demand and can have their schedules fill quickly. A critical component to planning in advance is knowing the resources available in your area. Some questions to consider include:

- Are there interpreter referral agencies in your area; will you need to contract with individual interpreters; or will your institution hire staff interpreters?
- Can you consult with other institutions in your region to locate interpreters and determine prevailing wages?
- Does your state require interpreters to be certified or have specific credentials?
- If the local pool of interpreters is unable to meet institutional demands, how will your institution meet student needs?



Determining available local resources is just the first step in securing interpreters. Institutions also need to determine if the available interpreters are qualified to provide effective communication in the setting in which they will be working. The steps involved in hiring qualified interpreters and determining if an interpreter is qualified can be found in *Fast Facts: Sign Language Interpreters: Hiring Qualified Interpreters*.

Proactive Planning

Speech-to-Text Service Providers

Speech-to-text services is an umbrella term that covers real-time access to information via the written word. The two basic categories are verbatim (CART) and meaning-for-meaning (C-Print© and TypeWell). Maintaining a list of verbatim and meaning-for-meaning speech-to-text providers will allow for greater flexibility in scheduling services. In addition, it can be helpful for institutions to develop policies on how the transcripts from the service provider will be used. Some questions for consideration include:

- Will transcripts generated by the captionist be provided to the student?
- Will faculty or other campus staff be able to utilize these transcripts?



Finally, institutions are responsible for hiring qualified speech-to-text providers to meet the demands of the higher education setting. The steps involved with hiring qualified speech-to-text providers can be found in the *Fast Facts: Speech-to-Text: Hiring Qualified Providers*.

Captioned Media

Offline or post-production captioning has become a hot topic on many campuses. A video must have verbatim, time-synced captions in order to be accessible. At a minimum, all videos should be captioned. This includes not only course-based content but also media on the institution's website or streamed for public access. Many institutions are moving toward ensuring that all media used in courses are captioned, whether or not a student who is deaf or hard of hearing is registered for the course. This prevents incidents of lack of captioned media as well as decreasing the need for last minute jobs to caption materials. In addition,

some institutions have policies in place which require that all media purchases be accessible to students with disabilities.



To learn more about offline or post-production captioning, refer to *Fast Facts: Offline Captioning: Why Captions Provide Equal Access*.

This Fast Fact has presented a few of the considerations for proactively planning for access. Having assistive listening devices available, installing visual fire alarms, and ensuring that other emergency alerts are accessible are additional strategies for planning in a proactive manner. The resources provided here should help with proactive planning in all of these areas.

Resources

Fast Facts: Visual Fire Alarms

<https://dcmp.org/learn/563-visual-fire-alarms>

Assistive Listening Systems 101

<https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/als101>

Fast Facts: Offline Captioning: Creating Captioning

<https://dcmp.org/learn/551-offline-captioning-creating-captioning>

Disability Services Handbook Templates

<https://dcmp.org/learn/481-disability-services-handbook-templates>

References

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Cambridge Dictionaries On-Line. Retrieved from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/proactive>

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