



VOLUNTARY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ASSOCIATION MEMBERS OF DEAFNESS FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

Preamble

This Voluntary Code of Practice sets out standards and requirements with which association members of the Deafness Forum of Australia agree to comply.

This Voluntary Code of Practice in no way reduces or replaces the obligations of association members to meet a range of state and federal legal obligations, which may include anti-discrimination laws, corporations' laws, rules of incorporation of associations, fundraising and charitable institutions legislation, privacy legislation, equal employment opportunity principles, occupational health and safety standards, anti discrimination legislation, intellectual property and copyright legislation and other codes of ethics.

Because Deafness Forum and its members seek to advocate against any discrimination towards people who are Deaf or who have a hearing impairment or a chronic ear disorder it is extremely important that Deafness Forum and its members set the best possible examples, and adopt best practices themselves.

Code of Practice

- a) Each signatory association will, at all times, seek to apply all approved Deafness Forum Position Statements to their own practices.
- b) Each signatory association will at all times work for the good of the Deafness Forum and actively support its objectives as defined in the Constitution of the Deafness Forum.

Complaints

If Deafness Forum is made aware of the fact that a complaint against a member Association are proven, Deafness Forum reserves the right to cancel the membership of that Association.

Review of this Code of Practice

This Code of Practice will be reviewed in June 2008. A Deafness Forum working party will be established at that time for the specific purposes of reviewing the Code.

Signed: _____ on behalf of: _____
(Name of representative) (Name of Association)

(Date)

Attachment: Guidelines on communication needs of people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.

These guidelines are intended to provide member associations with information about communication methods available to meet the needs of people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment. These guidelines have been developed through consultation with members, and members are encouraged to provide these guidelines to other organisations to assist them to understand communication access for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.

Communication needs of people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment

When communicating with people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment it is important to recognise, and respond appropriately, to their communication needs.

Strategies

When speaking with a person with a hearing impairment or deafness, there are various strategies that can assist. Firstly, ask the person about their communication needs. Most people will be happy to explain their needs and provide advice on how best to communicate with them.

Telephone Contact

When contacting people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment, establish (and use) the most appropriate communication system. It may be telephone (voice, SMS, TTY, or via the National Relay Service), or may be e-mail, fax, mail or even contact through a third person such as a family member or an interpreter.

If organising an event that will be attended by people unable to use standard voice telephones, arrange for the venue to provide for their needs. That may include voice telephones with adequate volume control, and hearing aid couplers and/or TTYs.

One to One Communication

Always speak directly to a person with a hearing impairment. Do not address questions to an accompanying interpreter, family member, or friend. If possible, find a quiet area away from background noise.

Do not shout at a person with a hearing impairment. This does not help them to hear well. Shouting distorts lip patterns and makes lipreading more difficult. Speak clearly but do not over enunciate speech as this also distorts normal lip patterns.

If asking questions, use open-ended ones that do not require a yes or no response. This helps to ensure that questions are being understood. If a response indicates that the deaf person has not understood, do not repeat the same words. Rephrase what was initially said, using different words, or write down your question.

Communication in meetings and events

At all face-to-face meetings or events involving people who are Deaf or hearing impaired, there must be:

- a) Professionally qualified Auslan interpreters (para-professionals should only be used when professionals are not available and only as part of an interpreter team; people who are not accredited must never be used), and/or
- b) a properly functioning and appropriate assistive listening system, and/or
- c) computer-aided real-time transcription (CART)

as necessary to suit each (and all) of the individuals involved.

The provision of CART only is generally not sufficient. It must be remembered that Auslan-users need the opportunity to ask questions and speak with other participants who do not know Auslan. They cannot do so without an interpreter. The same is true in reverse.

If the meeting or event exceeds two hours, then there must be at least two Auslan interpreters (preferably three) and at least two CART steno-captioners. This is primarily for occupational health reasons, ensuring that no one interpreter or steno-captioner has to work for too long without a break.

For Auslan interpreting, best practice is three interpreters working in twenty-minute rotations (one interpreting, one providing backup, and one resting).

At the beginning of proceedings, all participants must be (diplomatically) asked whether their communication access needs are being adequately met.

Note: lead times for bookings for assistive listening system equipment, Auslan interpreters, and CART steno-captioners can be extensive. The short supply of professional Auslan interpreters, particularly in non-metropolitan areas, means that it may be necessary to bring them to the event from another city.

Lighting and Viewing Requirements

It is important, in any situation, to ensure that there is sufficient indirect lighting to allow effective lipreading or the reading of an interpreter. This may mean the provision of supplementary lighting in some situations.

To facilitate effective lipreading, it is important to make sure lips are always visible to the person who needs to lipread. If a person cannot see the lips then he or she cannot lipread.

It is also important to ensure that Auslan-using participants have a clear view of the interpreter, and that CART-users have a clear view of the CART display. Lighting should not lessen the clarity of the CART (or any other visual) display.

Audiovisual Material

Whenever a television broadcast, DVD, video, or any other audiovisual material is screened to any audience that includes a Deaf or hearing impaired person ensure that it has captions and that they are displayed. If that simply is not possible, then it is essential to ensure the soundtrack is provided via both CART and Auslan interpreters. When producing DVDs, videos, or TV Community Service Announcements ensure they are all captioned and, have Auslan interpreters on them.

Display monitors or projection screens used for audiovisual material must be large enough to ensure captions can be clearly viewed by the entire audience.

Literacy

When communicating in writing, remember that some deaf people may have lower English literacy skills and prepare the written material accordingly (but without being patronising). When a person with low English literacy skills writes something for publication, publish it as provided, with the only exception being grammatical/orthographical corrections. These comments also apply to Websites, which are just another way of communicating in writing.

When preparing an oral presentation for another person who will give it using Auslan, prepare the material in a simplified English format to facilitate its delivery in Auslan.

Breaks

During all meetings and events ensure short breaks (minimum of 10 mins) are taken approximately every 45 minutes. The time between breaks should never be extended beyond an absolute maximum of 60 minutes. This is because the added stress involved in listening can cause Deaf and hearing impaired people to tire more quickly.

It is also extremely important that Auslan interpreters and CART steno-captioners have scheduled breaks. In particular, it is not fair to expect interpreters to work during breaks, or to shorten scheduled breaks (e.g. by proposing that refreshments be brought back to the table so that a meeting can continue without a real break). Apart from anything else, interpreters and steno-captioners need refreshments and the opportunity to use toilets just as much as do other participants.

Videoconferences and Teleconferences

Do not assume that all people are able to participate in telephone conferences or videoconferences. Find out whether all needed participants can make use of such technologies and, if so, what special requirements must be met. If any participant cannot use the technology, then use an alternative (such as a face-to-face meeting, real-time Internet-based discussion) or make appropriate adjustments (such as interpreters at the location of the user).

If all participants are able to be involved in telephone or videoconferences, ensure all participants (especially the person chairing the conference) understand the particular needs of every other participant.

Accommodation

There are particular communication issues when people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment are staying at a meeting or event venue.

If a volume control phone user is staying at a meeting or event venue, they must be provided with a volume control phone in their guestroom.

If a TTY user is staying at a venue, they must be provided with a TTY in their guestroom and there must be a TTY at the venue's reception or event area enabling them to contact venue staff.

Also, people who need captioning in order to watch television must be provided with a Teletext-enabled television facility (and instructions on how to access the captioning) in their guestroom that they occupy at the venue. In order to ascertain requirements, it is important to have an appropriate question on the event's registration form.

Where requested by the client, the venue must have a method of individually alerting the user in the event of an emergency, such as fire, bomb threat, etc.