

The University of the Incarnate Word is committed to providing a supportive, challenging, diverse, and integrated environment for all students.

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—Subpart E and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the University ensures accessibility to its programs, services, and activities for students with documented disabilities.

To qualify for services, the student must provide the Office of Student Disability Services appropriate documentation of his or her disability at the time services and/or accommodations are requested.

This brochure is available  
in alternate format  
upon request

\*Information provided by the University of Southern California

The University of the Incarnate Word  
**Student Disability Services**

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# Student Disability Services

**The University of  
the Incarnate Word**



**Deaf and Hard-of  
-Hearing**

**Administration Building  
Room 105**

Telephone: 210-829-3997

## Dead and Hard-of-Hearing

Deaf and hard-of-hearing refers to hearing losses of varying degrees from hard-of-hearing to total deafness. The major challenge facing students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing is communication.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students vary widely in their communication skills. Among the conditions that affect the development of communication skills of deaf and hard-of-hearing persons are:

- Personality
- Intelligence
- Nature and degree of deafness
- Degree and type of residual hearing
- Degree of benefit derived from amplification by hearing aid
- Family environment
- Age of onset

Age of onset plays a crucial role in the development of language. Persons with prelingual hearing loss (present at birth or occurring before the acquisition of language and the development of speech patterns) are more functionally disabled than those who lose some degree of hearing after the development of language and speech.

Since much learning is acquired aurally, students with hearing loss may have both experiential and language deficiencies. Because they do not hear environmental noises and day-to-day conversations, deaf and hard-of-hearing children can miss a great deal of crucial information usually learned incidentally by hearing children.

Not all deaf students are fluent in all the communication modes used across the Deaf community, just as users of spoken language are not fluent in all oral languages. For example, not all deaf students lip-read; many use sign language, but several types of sign language systems exist.

**American Sign Language (ASL)** is a complex visual-spatial language that is used by the Deaf community in the

**American Sign Language (ASL)** is a complex visual-spatial language that is used by the Deaf community in the United States and English-speaking parts of Canada. It is a linguistically complete, natural language. It is the native language of many deaf men and women, as well as some hearing children born into deaf families.

ASL shares no grammatical similarities so English and should not be considered in any way to be a broken, mimed, or gestural form of English.

**Pidgin Sign English (PSE)** combines aspects of ASL and English and is used in educational situations often combined with speech.

In addition to sign language and lip-reading, deaf students use sign and oral language interpreters. These are professionals who assist deaf or hard-of-hearing persons with understanding communications not received aurally. Interpreters also assist hearing persons with understanding messages communicated by deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals. Sign language interpreters use highly developed skills; oral interpreters silently form words on their lips for speech reading. Interpreters will interpret all information in a given situation, including instructor's comments, class discussion, and environmental sounds.

The interpreter and deaf or hard-of-hearing students usually sit in front of the classroom. Sign language may initially be a distraction to the class and the professor; however, quickly the class and the professor are able to adapt to the interpreter's presence. Interpreters at USC, who are certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, subscribe to a strict code of ethics that requires confidentiality of private communications and honesty in interpretation or translation.

Most deaf and hard-of-hearing students use note-takers in class because it is difficult to follow an interpreter or to speech-read and take notes simultaneously. Some deaf and hard-of-hearing students may have language and vocabulary deficiencies. Interpreters and note-takers should introduce themselves to the professor at the beginning of the term. They can make special arrangements for appropriate seating and discuss specialized vocabulary or technical terms that will be used.

Realtime captioning is another way some deaf and hard-of-hearing students can participate in the classroom. A realtime captionist is a stenographer (similar to those used in court), who uses a steno-machine to take down the lecture verbatim. The words of the lecture are instantaneously readable on the screen of a laptop computer. The deaf and hard-of-hearing student merely reads the lecture while it is being presented. When the lecture is over, the student is given a copy of the lecture on computer disk as a study sheet.

Typically, the realtime captionist sits in front of the classroom, off to one side where an electrical plug is conveniently located. The student needs to be able to see the professor and the computer screen. The goal of the captionist and the student is to distract the class as little as possible.

Most deaf and hard-of-hearing students can be evaluated in the same way as other students. On written tests, some deaf students, especially prelingual ones, do better if an interpreter reads and translates the questions to the students in sign language.

## Instructional Strategies

- Make sure you have a deaf student's attention before speaking. A light touch on the shoulder, a wave, or other visual signal will help
- When desks are arranged in rows, keep front seats open for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and their interpreters
- Repeat the comments and questions of other students, especially those from the back rows; acknowledge who had made the comment, so the deaf or hard-of-hearing student can focus on the speaker
- When appropriate, ask for a hearing volunteer to team up with a deaf or hard-of-hearing student for in-class assignments
- Assist the student with finding an effective note-taker or lab assistant from the class
- If possible, provide transcripts of audio information
- Face the class while speaking; if an interpreter is present, make sure the student can see both you and the interpreter
- If there is a break in the class, get the deaf or hard-of-hearing student's attention before resuming class
- Because visual information is a deaf student's primary means of receiving information, films, overheads, diagrams, and other visual aids are useful instructional tools