

Overview

Patients with hearing loss may be hesitant to ask for accommodations, and accommodations are rarely offered without a request. It is imperative that health professionals realize the high prevalence of hearing loss in all populations and proactively offer services that enable patients with hearing loss to understand the critical information communicated by healthcare professionals.

Below are some technological solutions for communicating effectively with people with hearing loss. The medical provider must have the necessary equipment on hand, but the patient may choose to bring their own personal equipment instead. These provide "auxiliary aids and services" under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requirements for [Effective Communication](#).

Better Health Starts with Effective Communication

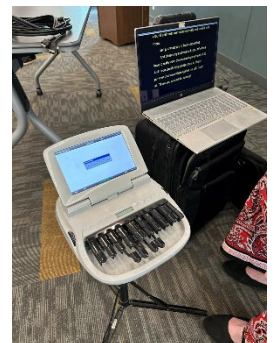
Communication access ensures that individuals with communication disabilities can fully participate in and benefit from health services and programs. By improving access, you can enhance health outcomes, reduce costs, and promote equitable care. ACCESS is a framework of six core principles. One-page [ACCESS flyers](#) are available on the website in English and Spanish languages, as well as additional information from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

- A** **Ask** about communication preferences, strategies, and accommodations **before** care begins.
- C** **Communicate directly** with the person unless specified otherwise.
- C** **Confirm** understanding of information given and received.
- E** **Eliminate** environmental distractions—and give your full attention.
- S** **Slow down** to allow time for processing information and responding.
- S** **Support** interactions using different communication methods—like gestures, writing, drawing, pictures, communication boards, videos, or assistive technology.

It is critically important for professionals and office staff to look directly at the patient when speaking—rather than at the computer—which is a common oversight.

Captions

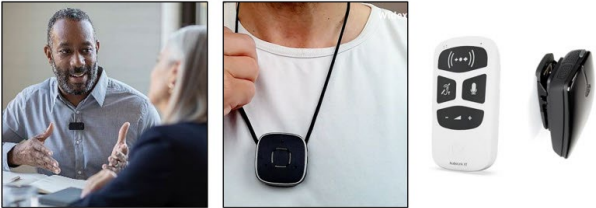




















- **Automatic captions:** better for shorter interactions, such as patient check-ins.
 - Providers need to have speech-to-text options available.
- **CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation):** preferred over automatic captions for medical appointments for technical accuracy.
 - *In-person* CART professional: usually preferable to have the best access to sound.
 - *Remote* CART professional: has improved immeasurably. Remember to prioritize the use of the mic(s).
 - Providers need to maintain a list of CART providers.



Technology for People with Hearing Loss in the Healthcare Setting

- Telehealth
 - Captions can be integrated into telehealth
 - Telehealth platforms are required to have captions by the end of 2026, under the "interoperable video conferencing" section in the FCC.

Technology Devices and Systems

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|--|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Remote wireless microphone (patient-owned) The patient brings a small microphone, which is proprietary to the hearing brand they wear. The provider wears the remote microphone, and the sound goes directly into the patient's hearing instruments. Brands shown: Starkey, Widex, Med-El, and Beltone.</p> |  | | | | | | |
| <p>Personal amplifiers (provider-owned) Used with headphones, earbuds, or a neckloop (for patients with telecoils in their hearing instruments)</p>  | <p>Personal Sound Amplification Examples</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>  <p>BeHear, SMARTO</p> </td> <td>  <p>Bellman MaxiPro</p> </td> <td>  <p>Com-Tek, Personal FM</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>  <p>Conversor Pro Audio</p> </td> <td>  <p>Trihear Convo</p> </td> <td>  <p>WilliamsAV Pocketalker</p> </td> </tr> </table> |  <p>BeHear, SMARTO</p> |  <p>Bellman MaxiPro</p> |  <p>Com-Tek, Personal FM</p> |  <p>Conversor Pro Audio</p> |  <p>Trihear Convo</p> |  <p>WilliamsAV Pocketalker</p> |
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| <p>Assistive listening systems (provider-owned) are versatile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital bedside table with portable counter hearing loop* • Permanent counter hearing loop at hospital info desk* • Patient education classrooms <p>*Patient uses telecoils in their hearing instruments to receive the sound directly or borrow a receiver and headphones.</p> |  | | | | | | |

Resources

- [Vendors, apps, and handouts](#) on the Center for Hearing Access website

About the Center for Hearing Access

Founded in 2024, the nonprofit Center for Hearing Access is a national advocacy and education initiative of The John G. Shedd Institute in Eugene, OR. We champion and educate users, facility staff, audiologists, and hearing instrument specialists about all ADA-compliant assistive listening systems and other strategies to increase access to healthcare, theaters, libraries, conferences, government offices, courtrooms, places of worship, and other public and private spaces. Effective hearing access can be life-changing for people with hearing loss to maintain community engagement.

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