

RECONNECT Program Manual  
Addendum on Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
March 18, 2010

1. A view popularly held by people born profoundly deaf or deafened very young:
  - a. Deaf people are a cultural group, a linguistic minority (speaking American Sign Language).
  - b. Deaf people: The upper case D is significant as it proclaims that deaf people share a culture rather than a medical condition.
  - c. Deafness is not a disability.
  - d. Deaf people are not handicapped.
  - e. Deaf people do not need a cure for their conditions than racial/ethnic minorities.
  
2. Parents' and children's hearing ability and deafness impact their communication and interactions.
  - a. Hearing parents, deaf children: Ninety percent of all deaf children are born to hearing parents. Deaf children acquire a sense of cultural identity from their deaf peers rather than their parents.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Deaf parents, hearing children
  - c. Deaf parents, deaf children (deaf of deaf)
  
3. Age of Onset
  - a. Pre-lingual deafness: Children born profoundly deaf or deafened very young prior to the acquisition of language can experience social isolation and delayed social development.
  - b. Post-lingual deafness: Hearing impairment is sustained after the acquisition of language. Loneliness and depression can arise as a result of isolation and difficulty in accepting their hearing loss. The challenge is made greater by the need for those around them to adapt to the person's hearing loss.
  
4. Mental Health
  - a. There are no signs in sign language for many of the mental health terms.
  - b. Signing may appear to be intense for non-signers. Signing uses the hands, head, body, facial expressions, and unusual sounding speech to express emotions. The movements and locations of the signs are constantly changing. Hearing people may misinterpret the intensity in signing and unusual sound as aggression or mental health issues. For example, hearing people may misunderstand the deaf couple's communication (signing and unusual sound) as an indication of aggression or domestic violence.
  - c. Many deaf children are misdiagnosed as having attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Deaf people use signs and movements to engage and greet people. They may wave or turn on lights to get

your attention. A deaf child in the classroom may seem to not be paying any attention, be impulsive, or be overly active. They may leave their seats to get teacher' attention.

- d. Most psychological tests are not valid for deaf people because they use English-based measures. American Sign Language (ASL) is not English based and deaf individuals are not as literate in English as hearing people.

## 5. Community Partners and Resources

- a. Community partners that are significant to people who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) include drivers education, interpreting services, doctors, Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (offices in Taylorsville and St. George), LDS Deaf Wards, Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH), and Utah Association for the Deaf (UAD).
- b. People who are D/HH can get free video phone from Sorensen Communications. Video phones are designed for people who are H/HH, run through internet, and enable video communication.

## 6. Social Marketing and Outreach

Deaf community in Utah is small. People who D/HH get information from other D/HH (word by mouth), DSDHH monthly newsletter, UAD (Announce and Bulletin), and Voc. Rehab counselors.

## 7. Flexible Funds

For people who are D/HH, it would be appropriate to use flexible funds for hearing aids and video phones for employers.

## 8. Family Development

- a. Oralism vs. Manualism (Sign Language): There is intense debate and controversy in the Deaf community over the most appropriate education of deaf children. Parents of deaf children have critical decisions to make, because languages are best learned at a very young age. There may be conflicts and disagreements between children and parents regarding oral and signing.
- b. Communication difficulties between hearing parents and deaf children are major challenges throughout the development years.
- c. Deaf children's interaction with hearing peers may be limited.
- d. For D/HH youth in transitional age, their life skills may be lacking if the skills are not fostered since little.

9. Youth Development

- a. Loneliness that comes with not able to communicate can be profound. The youth-in-transition program should pay attention to creating social opportunities and peer activities.
- b. Deaf young persons living independently face special challenges and safety concerns. They cannot hear someone breaking in. They cannot ask who it is when someone knock on the door.

10. Program budget should include interpreter services.

11. community is small and assurance of confidentiality is critical.

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<sup>1</sup> Deafness as Culture by Edward Dolnick, The Atlantic Monthly, September 1993, Vol. 272 No.3, retrieved on March 31, 2010 from [http://gallyprotest.org/atlantic\\_monthly.pdf](http://gallyprotest.org/atlantic_monthly.pdf)