

Tips for Communicating between People Wearing Masks and Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

The use of face masks is important for public health and safety during a pandemic. But it makes communication more challenging for Deaf and hard of hearing people. People wearing face masks may try to speak with a Deaf or hard of hearing person, but the Deaf or hard of hearing person might not be able to understand what the person is saying because so much of the face is covered or even know the masked person is trying to speak to them.

See tips below for how to communicate with Deaf and hard of hearing people when you are wearing a mask, as well as tips for Deaf and hard of hearing people to communicate with mask wearers.

Tips for communicating with Deaf and hard of hearing people while using a mask:

- If you cannot temporarily remove your face covering to communicate, try writing or typing on a smartphone or on a pad of paper. See the tip below about how to get apps that may help.
- If you are in a safe place to maintain appropriate distance, remove your mask to speak with the other person

Tips for Deaf and hard of hearing people to communicate with others who are wearing masks:

- Show a small card or sheet of paper that says, “**I am Deaf or Hard of Hearing**” on which you’ve marked ways to communicate with you
- Have your smartphone or tablet at the ready with up-to-date versions of VRI and/or speech-to-text apps that you know how to use. If you don’t know what apps to use, please contact Assistive Technologies, Inc (<https://www.accesstechnologiesinc.org>, info@accesstechnologiesinc.org, or call (503) 361-1201 (V/TTY)), download the apps, and *practice with the apps before you need to use them*.

For additional information and resources visit:

- National Association of the Deaf (NAD) at www.nad.org or Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) at www.hearingloss.org

For any questions or additional information in Oregon visit:

- Oregon Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (ODHHS) at www.odhhs.com or email odhhs.info@dhsola.state.or.us

For questions about requesting ASL Interpreters or CART in Oregon email to:

- request.odhhsp@dhsola.state.or.us