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Policy/Program Development Interim Manager

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Topic: Revised Policy

Subject: 6.4 Services to Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Applies to (*check all that apply*):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation - All Staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation - Executive Team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation - Administration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational Rehabilitation - Branch Managers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) Contracted job developers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) Collaborators, Interested Parties

6.4 Services to Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation provides services to persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation recognizes that this is a diverse population with differentiated needs. Within the Deaf community, there are individuals who are either born deaf or become deaf before acquiring language. They do not necessarily see themselves as people with disabilities. They view themselves as a cultural group with a shared language, value system, and experiences.

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing vary in terms of the cause and degree of hearing loss, the age at which hearing loss occurs, educational background, language and communication methods, and feelings about their hearing loss. Some

identify themselves as a linguistic and cultural minority group while others see themselves as people with disabilities. In some cases, the primary disability identified may be a learning, speech or language, or developmental disability. Individualized service is crucial to successful service.

Policy

Communication is Key

Clear communication between the vocational rehabilitation counselor and the participant with a hearing loss is essential for successful vocational rehabilitation. Persons who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing have the right to clear and effective communication access in their environments. Providing communication access through appropriate accommodation better assures the participant is provided with the information needed to make informed choices and be active in the individual employment plan.

Counselors are committed to using the participant's preferred communication method. Counselors strive to develop a good understanding of the abilities and issues of participants who are deaf or hard of hearing to provide appropriate vocational rehabilitation services. Best practice guides service for this population so they can gain employment.

To assure appropriate communication, the program provides the participant with the appropriate service procedure or technology by qualified providers. Consideration of the participant's primary language is also essential. For some individuals the services of a certified American Sign Language interpreter or a team of certified sign language interpreters or a qualified transcriber are required. For others technology might be appropriate: an FM loop or video remote interpreting services may be appropriate. An important consideration when using technology is the need to maintain privacy and confidentiality. Thus, there may be a need to encrypt information if shared electronically (e.g., email or instant messaging).

Exception

If the participant opts to use services that provided by nonqualified providers, this is an exception and documented in the participant file.

Hearing Evaluations

Referral to a licensed audiologist is required for the hearing evaluation. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation staff will not use occupational hearing screening tests or hearing tests provided by Hearing Instrument Specialists (who hold the BC-HIS credential). These tests are not comprehensive enough to determine functional loss and specific accommodation needs.

Participant Use of Comparable Benefits

Federal regulations (34 CFR 361.5 and § 361.53) define “comparable services and benefits” as services and benefits that provide or pay for by other Federal, State, or local public agencies, by health insurance, or by employee benefits. The provision or payment may pay for all or a part of the service and benefits. Additionally, comparable services and benefits are available to the individual at the time needed to ensure the individual can progress toward and achieve the employment outcome in the participant's individualized plan for employment. The comparable services and benefits are equal to or match the services that the participant would otherwise receive from Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation. Some vocational rehabilitation services are exempt from comparable benefits. There are requirements for Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation to coordinate with other public agencies for comparable services and benefits. (Please see the Technical Assistance Guide - TAG: Comparable Benefits - for more complete information.)

It is the participant’s responsibility, when eligible, to apply for and make appropriate use of any comparable benefits and services (see **Policy 1.8 Participant Responsibilities**). Further, the counselor must identify and secure comparable benefits. If benefits are not utilized, the counselor shall investigate and document all participant comparable benefits explored.

Population Served

This policy discusses vocational rehabilitation services to persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Individuals whose impairments fall within the definition of legal blindness or are of a rapidly progressive nature leading to legal blindness are generally referred to and served by the Oregon Commission for the Blind (ORS § 346.120). However, Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and the Oregon Commission for the Blind partner to assure each eligible person receives services essential to employment success as appropriate.

If you have any questions about this information, contact:

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