



NORTH CAROLINA Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Handling Calls from Individuals with Hearing Loss Using Relay Services

You may receive calls from Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals who use relay service, which is a third-party communication bridge similar to professional language interpretation services. A relay operator will facilitate communication between you and the caller with hearing loss. There may be some time delay in passing messages between the two parties that are communicating. Some callers may prefer to communicate with you by using their voice while others use a relay operator to voice for them.



Tips for Effective Communication:

- Some relay operators will announce that you are receiving a relay call and some will not. A delay of a few seconds in hearing a voice on the phone is normal.
- Be aware that there may be a short delay in order to allow the relay operator to facilitate messages between you and the caller, so please do not hang up thinking the delay is due to a solicitation call.
- Please be patient waiting for a response from the relay operator.
- Relay operators can be of any gender. Do not be suspicious if the voice you hear is opposite from the caller's gender.
- Speak directly to a caller like you would talk to any caller. Do not say "tell her/him"
- Some relay service calls require taking turns throughout the call. The relay operator will say the words "go-ahead" when it's your turn to speak. When you are done speaking, say "go-ahead" back to the relay operator.



NORTH CAROLINA Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

How to Talk on the Phone to a Caller who is Hard of Hearing

- **Speak Directly into Mouthpiece (Phone/Wireless):** Avoid having the microphone too close or too far from your mouth and don't use the speaker phone. Both lead to voice distortion and clarity is lost.
- **Speak at a Normal Pace, with Good Volume:** Talking too fast will make it difficult to follow the conversation. Talking too slow, overenunciating, or yelling can distort your speech.
- **Be Flexible with Adaptations:** When being made aware of a caller's hearing loss, try increasing the volume of your voice in increments until understood. Focus on talking clearly without yelling. Ask the caller for feedback about communication and plan to revise if needed.
- **Rephrase if Needed and Ask for Clarification:** If the person has difficulty understanding a specific phrase or word, use a different word or phrase to say the same thing. Ask the listener to repeat your instructions to ensure they heard accurately.
- **Avoid Using Complex Terminology:** Use everyday words, sentences and phrases as much as possible. If complex terminology is unavoidable, ask the person to repeat what was said to ensure understanding.
- **Introduce Topics of Conversations:** Introduce the person to the general topic of the conversation you are covering, i.e., "Now we will talk about your food supply". A short pause in between conversational topics will signal a new topic is coming.
- **Follow Up:** Send a summary of the conversation and instructions by email, text or mail. The sooner received, the more effective it will be.
- **Accept Relay Calls:** People with hearing loss sometimes depend on relay services to make phone calls. Don't assume that a several second delay to your answer is a solicitation call.
- **Successful Communication Takes Patience:** Following the above tips and exercising patience will reduce strain on everyone's part.

**For further information related to accommodations for your callers,
you can reach out to DSDHH at www.ncdhhs.gov/dsdhh or (919) 527-6930.**

