

WELCOMING

Deaf or Hearing Impaired Girls

INTO YOUR TROOP

The official definition of deafness is the inability to comprehend verbal language due to an inability to hear. A hearing impairment can affect the ability to hear intensity, pitch, or both. Typically hearing loss above 90 decibels is considered deafness. Hearing loss varies in severity per case and it's important to remember to treat each girl uniquely while meeting her needs.

Remember that if a person is hearing impaired or deaf, they learn and communicate differently. Sometimes, a girl who is hard of hearing or deaf may also have speech difficulties or may not verbally communicate at all. You may need to work with a Sign Language Interpreter during your meetings. Do not assume a deaf person can 'read lips' or even communicate via written instructions. Written language is a second language for those who learn Sign Language as their first and main means of communication and can be difficult to interpret or understand.

Some suggestions and strategies for preparing for and including girls with deafness or hearing impairment in your troop:

1. Talk to her and her parents-she may have one ear that is better than the other. In that case, position her so that whoever is talking is heard with that ear.
2. If she has an interpreter, talk to the girl not to the interpreter and verse yourself in appropriate Sign Language Interpreter etiquette.
3. Be aware of how other noises can affect her – this is a good time to teach the other girls what “quiet” really means.
4. Supplement with visual instructions as needed for activities.
5. Have all girls work with a buddy and double check everyone understood the directions clearly.
6. Discuss clear safety rules – for example, if you are in a museum, she may not hear the fire alarm, develop an emergency gesture (she may already have one).
7. Some girls can wear special hearing aids that interact with a headset – the person who is talking should wear the headset.
8. If she has difficulty speaking, be patient-find out ahead of time how she would prefer to communicate (interpreter, written, visual, etc.).
9. Have fun and learn! If she uses Sign Language, there is no reason why your other girls (and the adults) can't learn some too!
10. Unless the girl and her parent/guardian prefer confidentiality within the troop, have the girl share about her differing abilities and special needs with the troop safely and allow the other girls to ask questions in a sensitive and caring manner to better understanding and allow everyone to work together as a troop to help everyone's needs be met.
11. Always consult with the parent/guardian beforehand to be sure you're providing for the girl's needs to the best of your ability – they will know the best methods and strategies to help their child.

For more information on how to use an Interpreter visit Texas School for the Deaf <http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=169971&type=d&pREC_ID=350037>

For more information on Deaf Culture and Etiquette visit Deaf Websites <<http://www.deafwebsites.com/deaf-culture/deaf-etiquette.html>>

For more general help and information visit The National Association for the Deaf <<https://nad.org>> and Hearing Loss Association of America <<http://www.hearingloss.org/content/who-we-are>>, and Special Education <<http://www.specialeducationguide.com/disability-profiles/deafness>>

If you have other questions or concerns you may contact the GSFA committee via email at gsfa@gsctx.org or GSCTX at customercare@gsctx.org or via phone at 1-800-733-0011.

This document is not intended to replace or supersede any doctor's instructions nor should it in any way be taken as medical advice or directions. This resource is a suggestion for GSCTX volunteers to use while welcoming girls to their troops with special needs and is for informational and educational purposes only. Please follow a parent/guardian's instructions in the medical care of their child and make sure you always have the appropriate medical and troop permission forms completed and available for emergency medical services (EMS) personnel.