



National Disability Coordination Officer Program
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

Working effectively with people with hearing impairment

What is hearing impairment?

- Ranges from mild hearing loss to profound deafness
- Can be caused by a genetic condition, illness, trauma, or natural aging
- People with hearing impairment may use hearing aids, lip-reading, Auslan (sign language) or a combination to assist with communication

Affects of hearing impairment in the workplace

- An employee with a hearing impairment may have difficulties with:
 - Communicating where there is background noise
 - Communicating in large groups
 - Communicating using the telephone
 - Identifying workplace hazards

Reasonable adjustments for hearing impairment

- Reasonable adjustments need to be individualised to meet employees' specific needs.
- It is important to ask the employee what would be most helpful for them.
- Some examples of reasonable adjustments that may help employees with hearing impairment include:
 - Amplified telephone handsets
 - Hearing loops
 - Text telephone (TTY) and relay service
 - Live captioning
 - Auslan interpreters
 - Visual or vibrating alarms
 - Use of SMS for mobile phone communication
 - Frequency Modulated (FM) systems

- Email as a communication alternative
- Rearranging work stations to reduce background noise
- Availability of verbal information in a written format
- Supply of agendas, notes, presentations etc in advance
- Setting up meetings to ensure that the person with hearing impairment can clearly see the faces of participants

Sources

JobAccess

http://jobaccess.gov.au/ServiceProviders/Assisting_job_seekers/Supporting_jobseekers_with_different_types_of_disability/Pages/home.aspx

Trybus, R.J., Stika, C.J., & Bruyere, S.M. (2002). Working effectively with persons who are hard of hearing, late-deafened, or deaf. Employment and Disability Institute: Cornell University.

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