

AGING I&R/A TIPS

National Information & Referral Support Center

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY with PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF or HAVE A HEARING LOSS

According to the National Institutes of Health, one in three people older than 60, and half of those older than 85 have a hearing loss. Here are some tips to help you communicate better with people with hearing difficulties.

10 Tips for Better Communication

- Speak naturally. It is more important to speak slowly than loudly.
- Be sure you are speaking into the telephone mouthpiece.
- Reduce background noise as much as possible.
- Avoid sudden changes in topic.
- Avoid sentences that go on too long.
- Rephrase rather than repeat what your listener does not understand.
- Don't be afraid to ask "Are you having trouble hearing me?" You can also ask: "What can I do to help you hear me or understand me better?"

- Allow enough time for your listener to respond.
- Supplement phone conversations with written material.
- Be prepared to provide phone numbers for interpreting services.

Signs of Possible Hearing Loss

- Frequent need to have things repeated.
- Trouble following and participating in a conversation, especially when there is background noise.
- Trouble understanding high-pitched, voices.
- Great irritation (and complaints) with automated voice menu systems.
- Complaints that the speech of others is mumbled or slurred.

This publication was made possible through a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Administration on Aging.