

Deafness and Hard of Hearing

DEFINITION: *Deafness* is a hearing impairment that is so severe that the learner is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects a learner's educational performance.

The learner relies primarily on vision to access spoken communication.

DEFINITION: *Hard of hearing* is impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a learner's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness. *The learner relies primarily on hearing to access spoken communication.*

Note: Neither Communication Disorders nor Developmental Delay are appropriate eligibility categories for learners who meet either of the above criteria.

TYPES

Conductive hearing losses are caused by diseases or obstructions in the outer or middle ear. Conductive hearing losses usually affect all frequencies of hearing evenly and do not result in severe loss. A learner with a conductive hearing loss is usually able to use a hearing aid well or can be helped medically or surgically.

Sensorineural hearing loss results from damage to the delicate sensory hair cells of the inner ear or the nerves that supply it. This hearing loss can range from mild to profound. It often affects the learner's ability to hear certain frequencies more than others. Thus, even with amplification this hearing loss may perceive distorted sounds, sometimes making the successful use of a hearing aid impossible.

A mixed hearing loss refers to a combination of a conductive and a sensorineural loss.

DEGRESS OF LOSS

The severity of the hearing impairment is ranked according to the additional intensity above a nominal threshold that a sound must be before being detected by an individual; it is measured in decibels of hearing loss, or dB. Severity of loss is as indicated below:

- Mild: between: 20dB and 40dB
- Moderate: between: 41dB and 54dB
- Moderately Severe between: 55dB and 70dB

- Severe: between: 71dB and 90dB
- Profound: 91 dB and below
- Total: No Response (NR) to limit of equipment

EVALUATIONS

Full Audio Logical Evaluations should include, not only information regarding the type and degree of loss, but the learner's ability to understand speech. For educational purposes, speech discrimination scores in both quiet and noise environments becomes key information in differentiating between deaf and hard of hearing eligibility and appropriately supports the learners needs. Learners with a progressive hearing may require more frequent assessments.

An evaluation of the acoustical environment should be a component for all learners with residual hearing. Incidental language and learning occurs beyond the limitations of an assistive listening device.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The effect of a hearing loss on a learner's language development depends on the severity, type of loss, age at which the loss is diagnosed and age at which amplification and intervention begins. Signs that the learner may not be hearing normal are:

- Does not respond consistently to sound.
- Speech is delayed or unclear.
- Asks for statements to be repeated.
- Has difficulty following directions.
- Turns the volume up loud on the TV and other electronic devices.

TEACHING TIPS/INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Hearing loss, including deafness, does not affect a person's intellectual capacity or ability to learn. However, learners who deaf or hard of hearing generally do require special education services in order to receive free appropriate public education. Services may include:

- Speech therapy, language therapy and auditory training from a specialist
- An Assistive Listening Device
- Services of an educational sign language interpreter or real-time transcription
- Captioned film/videos

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Fact Sheet

- A note taker, so the learner with a hearing loss can fully attend to instruction
- Copies of handouts such as syllabus, lesson plans and assignments
- Instruction for teachers and peers in the preferred communication method
- Support for the learner in advocating for communication access.

RESOURCES:

- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/hearingresources.html>