

Providing Effective Communication for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Residents and Applicants

To ensure that residents and applicants are able to communicate effectively with **[Housing Provider]** employees, **[Housing Provider]** sites will arrange for sign language interpreters, at no cost to a deaf or hard of hearing resident or applicant (current or prospective) after a valid reasonable accommodation request has been made. Examples include a request for assistance communicating during a unit tour, application process, lease signing, lease renewal, discussion of a lease violation, among others.

Every **[Housing Provider]** employee who regularly engages with residents and/or applicants must know how to obtain a **[Housing Provider]** specified, qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter as needed upon request. **[Housing Provider]** recommends that employees obtain a qualified interpreter with a legal endorsement for the discussion and signing of leases and other legally-binding documents in accordance with fair housing guidance. **[Housing Provider]** creates, maintains, periodically updates as needed and distributes to its employees a “Resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services” document that contains an accurate and current list of the names and contact information for locally available interpreting services. This includes services for in-person interpretation as well as options for on-demand Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) in the event of immediate issues or emergencies.

A request for a reasonable accommodation may come in many forms. The resident or applicant does not need to use the phrase “reasonable accommodation” to make a request. For example, in the context of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind individual’s request for an interpreter, or a request made on their behalf, an individual asking whether **[Housing Provider]** has interpreters, or whether someone will be available to help him/her understand the rental tour, qualifies as a request for a reasonable accommodation and triggers **[Housing Provider]**’s process for providing a reasonable accommodation.

[Housing Provider] will make reasonable accommodations to provide for the resident or applicant’s requested method of communication. If a reasonable accommodation request for an ASL interpreter has been made by a resident or applicant, **[Housing Provider]** employees should not express or suggest to the person making the request that writing notes back and forth or lip reading will provide effective communication unless the individual has requested this method of communication. Similarly, if a reasonable accommodation request for an ASL interpreter has been made, **[Housing Provider]** employees should not express or suggest to a resident or applicant that family members or friends are required or encouraged to be used for interpreting. **[Housing Provider]** employees will engage in the interactive process of a reasonable accommodation in order to ensure effective communication with the applicant or resident.

Always consult with your Supervisor and/or the Legal Department if you have any questions or concerns about properly handling a disability related matter, reasonable accommodation request, or any potential fair housing issue.