

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

INCLUSIVENESS

“ At some point people have to stop and say, “There’s Marlee”, not, “There’s the deaf actress.”

(Marlee Matlin)

The Aim of Scouting is to promote the development of individuals, enabling them to grow and take their place in society as active citizens. As we move forward with the Canadian Path we are much more aware of each individual’s personal progression, inclusive of their varying abilities. This inclusiveness within Scouting uniquely positions us to play an important role in modifying community attitudes and behaviour towards individuals with identified needs; it starts with Scouts.

Please use this guide for a better understanding of youth who are Deaf or hard of hearing; how as Scouters, we can make a difference through simple interventions, program modifications and knowing where to get help when needed.

DESCRIPTION

Deaf and hard of hearing describes a range of conditions. These may vary from slight or fluctuating hearing loss to total loss of hearing (deafness). There are two major types of hearing loss, Conductive (CHL) and Sensorineural (SNHL), although sometimes both types occur together:

Temporary Conductive Hearing Loss

- May be caused by a build-up of wax in the ear canal or a build-up of fluid in the middle ear. The condition is often intermittent and varies in severity. It usually responds well to treatment.

Permanent Conductive Hearing Loss

- May be caused by permanent damage to the ear canal, eardrum or tiny bones in the middle ear.

Sensorineural Hearing Loss

- Is sometimes referred to as nerve deafness. There are various degrees of sensorineural hearing loss and various speech sounds may be affected differently.

CHARACTERISTICS/BEHAVIOURS

- May wear a hearing aid or cochlear implant hardware
- Spoken language may be delayed
- Speech may be unclear making understanding their speech difficult, don’t forget, that to the individual concerned, what they are saying makes perfect sense
- Difficulty hearing in a noisy situation; the youth may find it more comfortable to turn their hearing aid off
- Difficulty hearing faint, unclear or distant speech
- Difficulty joining in fast moving group conversations
- Owing to a difficulty in following speech, may appear to be daydreaming
- May exhibit boisterous behaviour

IN A SCOUTING SITUATION

- Gain the attention of the youth member before giving them instructions
- Give clear instructions to the Sixer/Patrol Leader when doing small group work
- Be aware of lighting; ensure that it is clearly on *your* face and not on the youth member’s face
- If you need to turn the lights off for an activity, explain the rules first
- The same applies for blindfolded activities; remember the youth member will have no access to warnings and other communication at these times
- A youth that is Deaf or hard of hearing relies heavily on visual clues, and will need to watch others, particularly their faces, to aid understanding
- They may need to lip read or to follow other’s actions (though not all Deaf or hard of hearing youth can lip read); use normal speech and mouth patterns



- If the youth member signs [uses American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)], encourage the rest of the Colony/Pack/Troop/Company/Crew to learn the basics
- Communicate with the parents to ascertain how much, if any, assistance is required in looking after hearing aids, grommets, tubes, etc., particularly on camps
- Be careful not to get hearing aids or cochlear implant hardware wet

PROGRAM MODIFICATION SUGGESTIONS

You will have to consider a range of ways of explaining activities or giving instructions, otherwise misunderstandings of instructions or discussions will arise; have visual clues for instruction as well as auditory:

- Write the down the rules of the game
- Have books like the *Field Book for Canadian Scouting* on hand
- Use hand signals for opening and closing parades
- Use hand signals during meetings
- Have diagrams of the items to be constructed available

Particular attention needs to be paid to safety wherever you are. Remember that warnings that rely on hearing, such as fire alarms, shouted instructions, or car horns, may be ineffective. You may find it useful to pair the youth up with a hearing 'buddy'.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

This Info Sheet is a resource guide only and is not intended to be therapeutic, diagnostic, medical, or legal advice. Our best source of assistance for youth with identified needs is the youth's parents or caregivers; the information provided is designed to support the relationship that exists between a youth and his/her parents or healthcare providers and the Scouters involved with the youth.

SOURCES

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