

Deaf Student Orientation Guide



Overview

Student orientations are an opportunity for students to learn about the support services available on campus, including when and how to access them. At the end of orientation, deaf¹ students and the disability services staff should have a shared understanding of expectations, roles, and protocol for accessing auxiliary aids and services. This guide offers strategies for building an orientation program for deaf students.

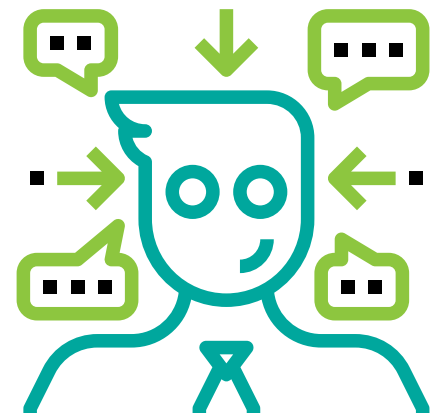
Students Transitioning to College

Deaf students enter college with a range of experiences with accommodations and access services. Some students enter the postsecondary setting with limited training on how to use certain accommodations and maximize their benefits. A literature review² revealed several important factors to consider about deaf students transitioning into postsecondary education, including the following:

- The responsibility for initiating the use of accommodations shifts from the special education program in secondary institutions to the student in postsecondary education.
- Institutions should inform students about the accessible features on their campus.
- Colleagues, supervisors, faculty, and staff set the tone for how welcoming an institution is to deaf students.

Planning an Orientation for Deaf Students

Attending college brings a variety of new experiences for deaf students: requesting accommodations, selecting classes, navigating large campuses, and adjusting to a new environment. New student orientation is critical to familiarize students with the policies and procedures regarding the accommodations process. Orientations are also an opportunity to educate and offer additional resources to the student. Depending on the configuration of the staff in the disability services office and number of deaf students enrolled per semester, there may be several opportunities to make information about accommodations available to students in a variety of formats.



Consider the following options:

- Schedule meetings during all student orientation days with designated times specifically for deaf students.
- Offer a standalone orientation for all students registered with the disability services office.
- Reserve one-on-one orientations during or after the initial interview process for accommodations.
- Create online, self-paced orientations for students to complete prior to beginning first semester.
- Host a group orientation for deaf students only.

There are pros and cons to offering single or group orientations. Orientations conducted one-on-one are an opportunity to get to know the student's unique needs or challenges. One-on-one orientations also allow disability services staff members to assess the student's previous experiences using accommodations in the home, at school, or in the community. Student orientations conducted in a group setting allow deaf students to meet and interact with peers. This approach gives deaf students the opportunity to make friends, meet potential mentors, and/or possibly have a "buddy" to reach out to for support during their tenure in college. For both one-on-one and group orientation meetings, arrange communication access services that accommodate the needs of each student participating.

Orientation Content to Include

As you prepare an orientation agenda, consider the range of topics that will be useful to students. Determine what information is crucial for students to understand about policies and procedures for accommodations and how students can access additional resources on campus. The content should be concise, to the point, and incorporate the following categories.

Logistical Information

Share the disability services office location, contact information, appropriate staff members and positions, and the purpose of the office.

Accommodations Overview

Include descriptions of various kinds of accommodations (communication access, note takers, testing, etc.) and emphasize that students have the right to access any campus program or services.

Accommodations Requests

Identify key points that students are responsible for understanding about accommodations and services at your institution. The following are example procedures to review with deaf students:

- When requesting accommodations for the different types of campus events, do students contact the disability services office or the host of the event?

Is the process different for classes, tutoring, internships, study abroad, residential life meetings, etc.?

- How do students request accommodations?

Options include completing an online form, calling the office or department responsible for the event, etc.

- What information is required when submitting a request?

Options include the date, time, length of appointment, event description, type of accommodation being requested, etc.

- Is the request process different for ongoing needs compared to a one-time need, and is there a specific timeline to request these services?

Is the process for requesting accommodations for a class schedule each semester different from requesting a one-time campus event outside of the classroom?

Expectations and Responsibilities

Explicitly outline the roles and responsibilities of students, service providers, and faculty and staff members involved with accommodations and auxiliary services. The following discussion questions can guide the content to be reviewed:

- If a student will be absent or late and uses interpreters or speech-to-text professionals, does the student notify the office or service providers?
- What is considered a “no-show,” and what happens after several no-shows?
- What does a student do if a service provider does not show up for the student’s class(es)?
- Whom does a student contact with concerns about a service provider?
- If a faculty member shows a video in class without captions, what should the student do?

Engaging Students

Regardless of the format, strive for an interactive and engaging session that fosters autonomy and independence. Consider opportunities for new students to engage with deaf individuals who have experience using accommodations, such as inviting currently enrolled deaf students, a deaf student organization, or even deaf faculty and staff members to be a part of the orientation. For a group setting, consider arranging the following:

- A panel of returning students to share their experiences and tips
- Social activities such as a lunch or dinner gathering for all interested individuals
- A meet-and-greet event with other deaf students, staff members, and faculty members
- A scavenger hunt or trivia game that covers important information about the campus, history, various campus resources for students, and famous alumni



Additional orientation activity ideas to consider for group or one-on-one settings include the following:

- Create a series of video clips on accommodations (and uses in different settings).
- Use online platforms such as Facebook groups or your institution's learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas, D2L) to offer deaf students the option to engage with other incoming and returning deaf students about the college experience.
- Pair new incoming deaf students with currently enrolled deaf students to serve as mentors.
- Ask a returning deaf student to provide a campus tour during orientation.
- Invite representatives from community organizations to share resources and services available to deaf students.
- Depending on whether the disability services office decides to use a group or one-on-one setting, invite or arrange appointments with different campus student resources and service offices to give an overview of how they support students. Some examples include student government, student organizations, and resource centers such as tutoring centers, writing labs, and multicultural centers.

Post-Orientation Resources

Consider making the orientation content available for students to access year round. Inform students where this information can be found, such as in a handbook and posted online. Encourage students who missed orientation to review the information. Some disability services offices have students sign an agreement indicating that they understand the policies for using accommodations. If the student does not comply with existing policies, students can review the original accommodation agreement.

Note and Reference

¹ NDC uses the term *deaf* in an all-inclusive manner, to include people who may identify as deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and hearing impaired.

² Cawthon, S., Schoffstall, S., & Garberoglio, C. L. (2014). How ready are postsecondary institutions for students who are d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing? *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(13), 1–25. doi:10.14507/epaa.v22n13.2014



NDC
National Deaf Center
on Postsecondary Outcomes

This document was developed under a jointly funded grant through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and the Rehabilitation Services Administration, #H326D160001. The contents do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the federal government.

© 2019 National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes
Licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 International



Office of
Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

