Culturally and Linguistically Affirmative Mental Health Care

**Things to consider when working with Deaf* and hard of hearing (DHH) clients.**

*Deaf: When written with an uppercase “D” refers to a sociolinguistic group that includes both deaf and hard of hearing people who use a sign language. When written with a lowercase “d” it refers to an aural diagnosis.*
Meet Jordan

This person here is a mental health provider who has never worked with a DHH client.

Hearing**: refers to a person who can hear and speak. This is the majority culture.

Jordan was contacted by a DHH person named Alex who is seeking mental health services.

Alex

Interpreter requested

Deaf School
College
Deaf
Depression
ASL & Written English

**Hearing: refers to a person who can hear and speak. This is the majority culture.
TO PREPARE FOR THEIR FIRST SESSION JORDAN DOES SOME SELF-REFLECTION.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE D/DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING?

WHAT CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

WHAT ARE MY BELIEFS AND BIASES ABOUT DHH PEOPLE?

CAN I REFER THIS CLIENT TO A PROVIDER WHO SIGNS AND/OR IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT DHH CLIENTS?

HMMM....

Note: For resources on these topics fill out our contact form on our website
Similar to other groups, the DHH community is diverse. Uniquely, there are differing language experiences, language usage, educational experiences, and additional disabilities within the group.

*deaf+: someone who is deaf with additional physical or mental disabilities.
On the day of the appointment Jordan and the interpreter arrive early to prepare for the therapy session.

WELCOME TO MY OFFICE. LET'S DISCUSS EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SESSION.

SOUNDS GREAT! I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW...

A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER, ALEX ARRIVES.
The Dynamic Therapy Room: The Session

- Provider positioned toward the client
- Pay attention to the client's body language
- Ask Alex if he was comfortable with the interpreter
- Brightly lit room
- Pause to facilitate smooth interpreting
- Look at your client, not the interpreter

- Do not sit in front of a window
- Don't speak in third person POV
- Do not dismiss the client's requests

Tell Alex...
Please slow down
After the session, Jordan sends Alex a message requesting feedback on the session and overall communication.

Everyone’s preference is different. Here are two examples of how Jordan could contact Alex.

**EMAILING**

Hi Alex, This is Jordan. I am writing you this email for....

**VIDEO PHONE**

Hi Alex, This is Jordan. I am calling for....
Alex expressed a desire to continue working with Jordan. Jordan reviews the session notes and begins to prepare for Alex's next appointment.

Best practices for DHH clients.

How to decrease power imbalances in mental health care?

Impact of communication on mental health and wellbeing.

How to change interpreters?

Therapeutic goals for Alex's depression.

Note: For resources on these topics fill out our contact form on our website.
Let's Get Started: DHH-Conscious Mental Healthcare

- Personal and Cultural Awareness
  - Reevaluate personal perceptions
  - Challenge bias about DHH people

- Knowledge
  - Read about Deaf mental health research
  - Learn about Deaf/hearing cross-cultural experiences and perceptions

- Skills
  - Coordinate accommodations to support communication
  - Adapt best practices in evaluation and treatment
For more information on this topic, visit [https://gu.live/dhhcrc](https://gu.live/dhhcrc)