

## Expanding Communication Access to the Deaf Community

How can we ensure communication access to a diverse **deaf and hard of hearing (d/hh)** community? Starting by connecting families with the various communication modes, technology options and accommodations covering the spectrum. In addition to the different resources identify themselves. Deaf organizations are both Deaf and community programs in your area that primarily serve the d/hh/hoh community. The more organizations you have in contact with the d/hh community, the more you will learn!

### Diversity in Identity, Communication & Education

There are **4,000,000** people in the US who are deaf or hard of hearing, with **1,000,000** people identify as **Deaf** (capital D) and use American Sign language (ASL). There are wide variations in causes and degree of hearing loss, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and how individuals feel about their hearing loss. More than **80% of deaf children** are born to hearing parents and are not exposed to sign language until school age. Having a **deaf** children of their for language acquisition. Meanwhile, more than **80% of deaf parents** have hearing children, which can lead to communication challenges in families.

While special education provides education of children with and without disabilities in a least restrictive environment (LRE), Deaf culture perspective holds that a language rich environment is best achieved through ASL. Therefore, a **IDE for deaf children** ensures access to information through sign language and interaction with peers. Rather than an education offered solely through English or ASL, many in the Deaf community believe that culture can be fostered in a bilingual approach through both ASL and written English.

### "It is Deaf and Right to be Deaf"

Although some people may view deafness as a disability, the culturally Deaf community views Deaf as a **language identity** where one is everything except deaf. Culturally Deaf people identify as **Deaf**. At the heart of Deaf culture is ASL, which has its own vocabulary, grammar and rules for syntax, as well as programs that involve sign, social experiences and body language. ASL is the Deaf first and language in the US. Deaf culture contains a