

# Hiring Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees



## EMPLOYMENT FIRST KENTUCKY

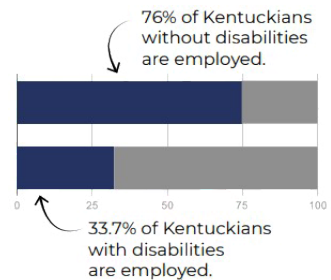
It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Kentucky that competitive integrated employment shall be considered the first and primary option for persons with disabilities of working age who desire to become employed, including those with the most significant disabilities.

Simply put, it is the idea that everyone has the right to work!

### Why it Matters

Kentucky has among the highest rate of people with disabilities in the nation and among the lowest rate of people with disabilities who are employed. \*

This 42.3% gap ranks Kentucky tied for 48th in the nation.



### What it Will Do

Employment First will help to:

- Build an inclusive workforce;
- Strengthen Kentucky's economy; and
- Improve the quality of life for citizens with disabilities across the Commonwealth.

### Kentucky's Employment First Council

The Employment First Council advises the executive and legislative branches of government on increasing meaningful opportunities for competitive integrated employment for citizens with a disability seeking employment, regardless of their level of disability. The 28-member council is appointed by the Governor.

For more information about Kentucky's Employment First Council, contact:

[Nanci.Howard@ky.gov](mailto:Nanci.Howard@ky.gov).

For more information on Employment First, visit [www.employmentfirstky.org](http://www.employmentfirstky.org).

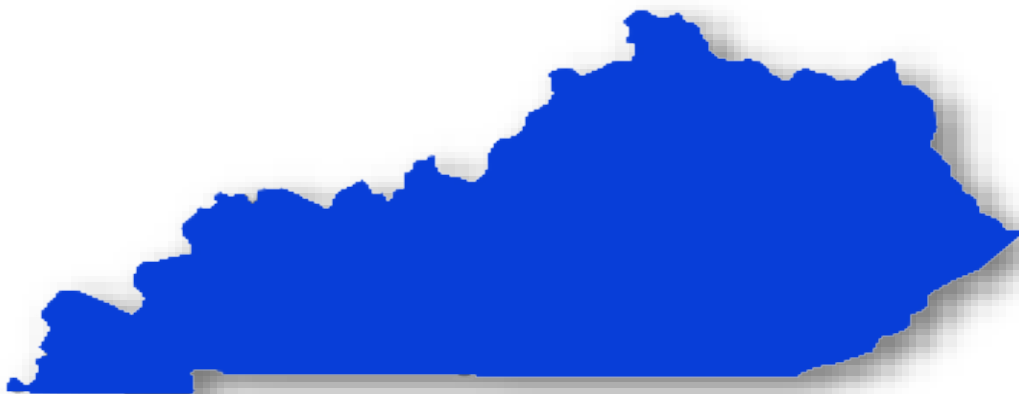
*\*Source: 2023 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium*

This guide was created in partnership with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) to educate employers on the benefits of hiring deaf and hard of hearing individuals for their workplace. There are approximately 4.5 million people living in Kentucky (2021 KY Cabinet for Economic Development), and about 15.5%, or nearly 700,000 Kentuckians over the age of 18 have a hearing loss (Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2022).

Did you know:

- Kentucky ranks third per capita in people identified as deaf or hard of hearing (2010 American Community Survey Data, United States Census).
- Loss of hearing is considered the number one war wound among American veterans. Half of all blast-related injuries result in permanent hearing loss for veterans (Hearing Loss Association of America). Among post-9/11 veterans, 414,000 have come home with hearing loss and tinnitus, or ringing in the ears (News 21, 2013).
- Hearing loss ranks as the third most common health issue in the United States behind heart disease and arthritis (National Institutes of Health).
- Approximately two to three out of every 1,000 children in the United States are born deaf or hard of hearing. Nine out of every 10 children who are born deaf are born to parents who can hear (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a shortage of non-traditional employees in Kentucky. Now there are new economic developments such as Quadrant and Eurofins Genomics LLC, with nearly 800 job opportunities. This is an excellent time to diversify your workplace!



***KCDHH is an agency with the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet  
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## The Diverse Population of Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)

### *One Size Does Not Fit All*

Many variables, such as age of onset and degree of hearing loss, determine the communication needs and abilities of individuals who have hearing loss. While English may be the first language for some, especially those that experience hearing loss later in life, American Sign Language (ASL) may be the first language for others. The grammar and syntax of ASL is different from English, which can lead to difficulties with written English for some native ASL users. For example,

- Some are comfortable with speaking, some are not.
- Not all benefit from hearing aids/cochlear implants.
- Some use sign language, some use speech, while others may use a combination of both.
- Some may need ASL interpreters and others captioning services and/or other assistive devices.



Hearing loss is a sensory difference and has nothing to do with cognition.

### Benefits of Hiring DHH Employees

- Tax Incentives: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3966.pdf>.
- Hiring DHH employees can produce a more productive and inclusive workplace. Studies show that workplace diversity [drives innovation and leads to better financial outcomes](#).
- Environmental noise may not be an issue to some DHH employees <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2012/Q3/study-hearing-impaired-ears-hear-differently-in-noisy-environments.html>.



## Reasonable Accommodations for Potential DHH Employees

- *Ensure equal opportunity in the application process by using the following:*
  - Make sure effective communication is taking place by providing any necessary accommodation.
  - Perform a skills assessment.
  - Include unbiased hiring practices.
  - Use job-related selection criteria.
  - Gather diverse hiring panels.
  - Offer training on EEOC policies to supervisors and employers.
  
- *Enable a qualified DHH individual to perform the essential functions of a job by*
  - using adaptive technology like videophones or an amplified/captioning phone, if necessary.
  - using training programs such as those offered by the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure that qualified DHH candidates have the necessary skills to flourish in their position.
  
- *Enable a DHH employee to have equal benefits and privileges of employment by*
  - providing [effective communication](#) for access to meetings, employer-sponsored services, employee benefits, social events, etc.
  - using The National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology's list of [resources and tips](#) for employers.

## Commonly Requested Accommodations

### ❖ *Sign Language Interpreters*

- ✓ When hiring a sign language interpreter, please remember that they must hold a valid Kentucky state license to practice. This means that the interpreter has met minimum standards set forth by the state licensure board ([KRS 309.300 to 309.319](#)).
  
- ✓ To hire a sign language interpreter, begin here: <https://www.kcdhh.ky.gov/oea/ic-private.html>. This document lists sign language interpreter agencies and freelance interpreters and their contact information. An interpreter referral agency will match your needs with interpreters who are available where and when you need them. The referral agency will make the necessary arrangements. If you contact an interpreter directly, it may be less expensive, but can also take longer.



❖ *Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)*

A CART provider types into a stenographic machine, which is connected to a computer. The computer, using special software, translates the stenotype shorthand into English which is simultaneously displayed on a computer monitor or a tablet. CART service enables communication access for deaf and hard of hearing persons who do not use ASL interpreters, sign language transliterators, and/or oral interpreters. Go to <https://www.kcdhh.ky.gov/oea/whatiscart.html> for more information.



To find a CART provider, visit <https://www.kcdhh.ky.gov/oea/cartproviders.html>

❖ *Assistive Listening Systems*

A number of electronic systems can help by amplifying the speaker's voice and eliminating background noise. KCDHH can help your DHH employee acquire this technology. <https://www.kcdhh.ky.gov/ois/assistive.html>



❖ *Note Takers*

Providing a note taker allows the deaf or hard of hearing individual the freedom to focus on the content being presented. Providing a trained note taker assures the DHH individual that the written record of core concepts, key points, and supporting details will be accurately captured.

❖ *Captioned Media*

- Training videos
- Video messages from the CEO



❖ *Testing Accommodations*

In a test that includes voiced instructions, deaf individuals may be provided captioned instructions, sign language interpretation, and/or extra time for reading and understanding the text.

❖ *Amplified Phones, Captioning Phones, and Video Phones*

- Amplified phones are usually equipped with a volume control, tone control, and boost button for hard of hearing individuals.
- Captioning phones use text provided on phones that deaf or hard of hearing individuals can read and keep up with the conversations. Go to the following link for captioning phones <https://hamiltoncaptel.com/solution-for-business-interconnected-by-tenacity.html>.
- Videophones are devices that deaf or hard of hearing individuals who use sign language to communicate can access via the internet. This allows the DHH individual to speak directly to other videophone users or to use an ASL interpreter to converse over a voice line.



❖ *Training for Employers and Hearing Colleagues*

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has a [Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services department](#). This department can help provide training for employers, human resources officers, and hearing colleagues.

## RESOURCES



800-272-7172

[WFD.VOCREHAB@ky.gov](mailto:WFD.VOCREHAB@ky.gov)

<https://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/Pages/Kentucky-Office-of-Vocational-Rehabilitation.aspx>

The Kentucky Career Center provides services to individuals who have been identified as having a combination of hearing and vision loss in varying degrees. Eligible individuals receive services to get a job, return to a job, keep a job, or get a better job. Several staff may work together to provide the services needed by an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing and has a vision loss. Services may be provided by a rehabilitation counselor for the deaf or communications specialist for hard of hearing.



800-372-2907

[www.kcdhh.ky.gov](http://www.kcdhh.ky.gov) / [kcdhh@kcdhh.ky.gov](mailto:kcdhh@kcdhh.ky.gov)

KCDHH acts as an advocate for deaf and hard of hearing persons on legislative issues, as well as a consultant to the governor, General Assembly, and various state and local governmental agencies concerning policies and programs that pertain to people with hearing loss. KCDHH provides information, referral and advocacy services, and an interpreter referral service for state agencies.



800-526-7234

<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Deafness.cfm?>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on job accommodations and disability employment issues. JAN provides free one-on-one practical guidance and technical assistance on job accommodation solutions and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for people with disabilities.

## Who Is Hiring Deaf/Hard of Hearing Employees in the Workforce?

