

## Senior Service Providers Hearing Loss Facts

### Quality Care for Seniors

While living in a nursing home or a long-term care facility, residents are entitled to receive quality care, experience quality of life and exercise their rights.

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** requires facilities who receive federal funds (including Medicare and Medicaid) to provide auxiliary aids to individuals with disabilities when needed to participate in a program or nursing home activity.

The **Americans with Disabilities Act Title III**, signed into law in 1990, mandates that a nursing home/assisted living facility (places of public accommodation) must ensure that health services are fully accessible and equally provided to individuals with disabilities. Full and equal access to care can be achieved by removing physical barriers, providing "auxiliary aids and services," or making reasonable changes to policies, practices, and procedures. Failure to do so may cause the provider to be liable for medical malpractice and/or discrimination.

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### In the United States...

- **1 in 3** adults age 65-74 will have a hearing loss. (*National Institute on Aging*)
- **1 in 3** baby boomers will struggle with hearing loss. (*National Institute on Aging*)
- **50%** of adults 75 and older have hearing loss. (*National Institute on Deafness and other Comm. Disorders*)
- **48 million Americans** have a significant hearing loss. (*2011 National Health Interview Survey*)
- **2.7 million** veterans receive disability benefits for hearing loss. (*2011 National Health Interview Survey*)
- **Hearing loss ranks as the third most common health issue** in the country, behind heart disease and arthritis. (*National Institutes of Health*)
- Recent studies conducted by the *National Institute on Aging* reveal a link between **untreated hearing loss and dementia**, as well as a greater incidence of balance problems, falls and stress related diseases such as heart disease and stroke.

## Effective Accommodations

### Why?

- Seniors lack information related to their medical care and participation is limited.
- Involvement in activities is impeded.
- Interaction with service providers and seniors is obstructed, which can lead to isolation, withdrawal, and depression.
- Be aware that what works for one senior may not work for the next one.

### How?

- Staff can learn and implement effective communication strategies.
- Captioning should be activated on community televisions and seniors' televisions.
- Provide a sign language interpreter or CART.

# Effective Accommodations Continued

## **Where?**

- EVERYWHERE!
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing seniors have the right to access the same programs and services that are offered to all other seniors:
  - Television
  - Phones
  - Social/Recreational Activities
  - Religious Services
  - Medical Services
  - Emergency-Visual Alert Signalers

## Communication Tips

- Always get the person's attention before you start speaking.
- Face the person and maintain normal eye contact.
- Be sensitive to the visual environment.
- Avoid bright lights that produce glare.
- Do not shout or exaggerate mouth movements.
- Speak at a normal pace, enunciating clearly.
- Allow more time for communication.
- Use gestures clearly.
- To make conversations easier, place residents' beds facing each other so that they can see other's faces.
- Provide accommodations.

## KCDHH—How We Can Help!

### **Do you have trouble hearing on the phone?**

KCDHH provides specialized equipment such as TDDs, amplified, captioned and wireless phones and devices to eligible deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians at no charge.

### **Looking for Information, Referrals, or Assistance?**

#### **KCDHH:**

- Maintains a library of books, periodicals, DVDs, videotapes, and CDs on deaf and hard of hearing issues that are available and loaned to the public.
- Produces resources and provides information, education, and outreach through web and social media, publications, presentations, and trainings and makes referrals to assist concerns.
- Provides assistance and advocacy or makes appropriate referrals to agencies that can offer the best assistance for you and your needs.