

**COMMUNICATING WITH DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING**

## Section

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**21.1 POLICY:** It is the policy of the Miami Police Department to ensure that a consistently high level of service is provided to all members of the community, including those that are deaf or hard of hearing. The Miami Police Department is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act to communicate effectively with people that are deaf or hard of hearing.

**21.2 ORGANIZATION:** This departmental order is applicable departmentwide, to all employees of the Miami Police Department.

**21.3 RESPONSIBILITIES:** All Miami Police Department employees will make every effort to effectively communicate with people that are deaf or hard of hearing. Effective communication with a person that is deaf or hard of hearing is essential in determining what actually occurred, urgency of the matter, and type of situation. This is regardless whether the person is a victim, witness, suspect, or arrestee.

**21.4 PROCEDURES:** Various types of communication aides are available to communicate with the deaf or hard of hearing. The type of aide required for effective communication will depend on the individual's usual method of communication. The employee shall take into consideration the nature, importance, and duration of the communication at issue.

**21.4.1 Techniques That May be Used:** Employees may use any of the following aides when communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person.

- a) Use of hand gestures
- b) Use of visual aides
- c) Use of a notepad and pencil
- d) Use of a computer or typewriter
- e) Use of assistive listening system or device
- f) Use of a teletypewriter (TTY)

**21.4.2** Employees should evaluate the situation, determine the most effective approach to communication, assess the need for an interpreter, and assess their own ability to communicate effectively when attempting how to best communicate with a person that is deaf or hard of hearing.

**21.4.3** Employees should be mindful that when communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person the possibility of miscommunication is possible and any information obtained should be verified with the person to ensure that what they are saying being understood accurately. Also when communicating with a person that is deaf or hard of hearing the employee should be

patient and understand that there will be barriers to overcome to achieve effective communication.

**21.4.4** If an officer utilizes a note pad or sheet of paper to communicate with a person that is deaf or hard of hearing while investigating a criminal case, the material used to communicate should be retained by the officer in the event that the communication is required in future court proceedings.

**21.4.5** Initial officers responding to incidents where a family member or other person involved is utilized as a sign language interpreter should be aware that the person may not be an effective interpreter because of their emotional involvement. In this type of situation a person that is not involved may be a more effective interpreter.

**21.4.6 TTY and Relay Services:** The department shall be equipped to receive telephone calls from deaf or hard of hearing persons utilizing a teletypewriter (TTY). Employees must also accept calls placed by deaf or hard of hearing persons through a telecommunications relay service (Florida Relay Service).

**21.4.7 Sign Language Interpreter Services:** The City of Miami provides an on-call sign language interpreter services that can be utilized by employees for deaf or hard of hearing individuals that prefer to communicate using sign language. When an employee needs to utilize a sign language interpreter they will contact the Communications Unit and the service will be requested.

**21.4.8** It should be noted that people that are deaf or hard of hearing who are involved in incidents have just as much input to the law enforcement process as others. Employees should be mindful not to draw conclusions about incidents unless they fully understand, or are fully understood by all parties involved including those that are deaf or hard of hearing.