

# Successful Approaches to Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community



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Wisconsin Department of Health Services



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## What Will You Learn Today?

The Department of Health Services (DHS) Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) has been working with multiple state and community partners to raise awareness related to the risk of dementia for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

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## Hearing Loss is Invisible!

Some may like to keep it invisible as much as possible.



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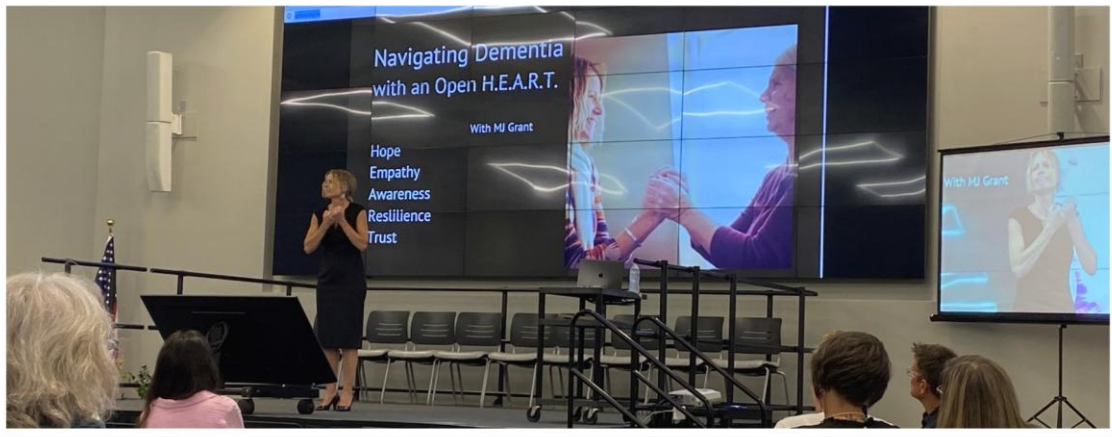
## Impact of Age-Related Hearing Loss

- Presbycusis
- Loss of ability to distinguish high frequency sounds
- Trouble with speech discrimination
- Trouble hearing the telephone or TV
- Visual acuity
- Denial and blame
- Depression, isolation, and withdrawal
- “Selective hearing”

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## Dementia Day—July 22, 2023

### MJ Grant

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## Dementia Live Experience

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# Wellness Day Keynote—April 13, 2024 Dr. Jamie Wilson



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# Dementia Videos



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## Dementia Video #1



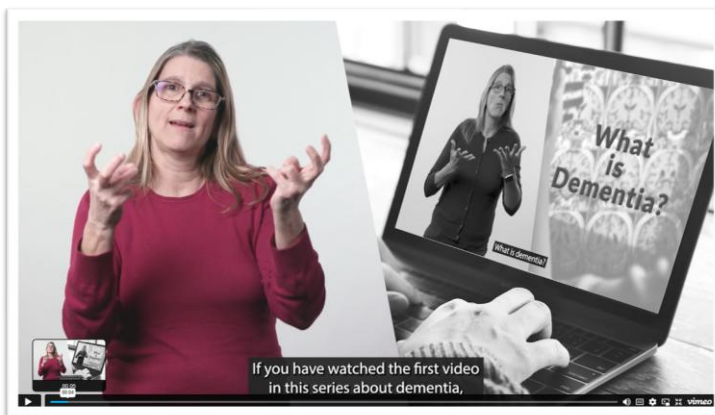
### ODHH Video 1: [What is Dementia?](#)

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## Dementia Video #2



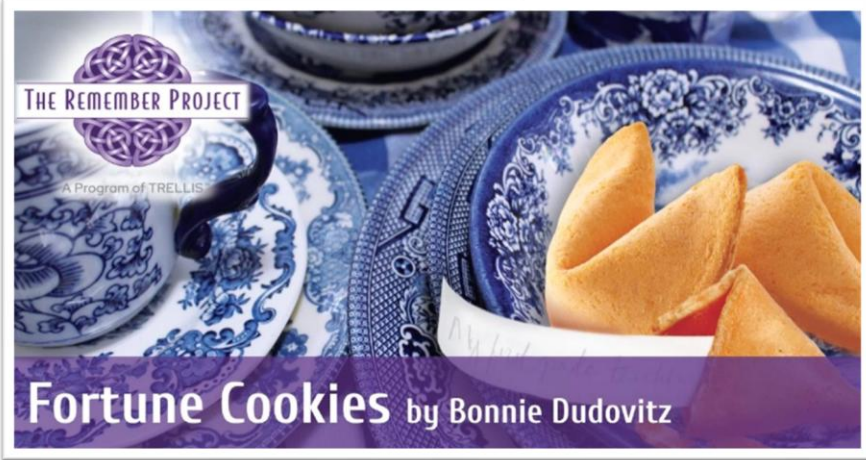
### ODHH Video 2: [Dementia Caregiver Resources](#)

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# Remember Project



October 5, 2024  
April 12, 2025  
May 15, 2025

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# Remember Project: "Fortune Cookies" by Bonnie Dudovitz



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## Fortune Cookie Actors



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## What Form of Communication is the **Best**?

- The deaf and hard of hearing person knows what form of communication is most effective for them.
- Try to respect their preferred mode of communication whenever possible.

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## Effective Communication is a Shared Responsibility

- Don't assume that people with hearing loss use the same mode of communication.
- Communication access must be considered on an individual basis.
- Ask when you are not sure what to do.



## Communication Supports

- Lipreading
- Writing
- Natural gestures
- Sign language
- Interpreters
- Videophone and video relay service (VRS)
- Captioned telephones
- Computer Assisted Realtime Transcription (CART) services
- Assistive listening devices

## Communication Tips



Don't assume that all Deaf and hard of hearing people use the same mode of communication. Ask the individual about their preferences.



Get the person's attention before speaking.

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## Communication Tips (2)



State the topic of the discussion first.



Speak slowly and clearly.



Do not exaggerate your speaking style or mouth movements.



Reduce background noise, if possible.

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## Communication Tips (3)



Look directly at the Deaf or hard of hearing person when speaking, as eye contact is a sign of respect.

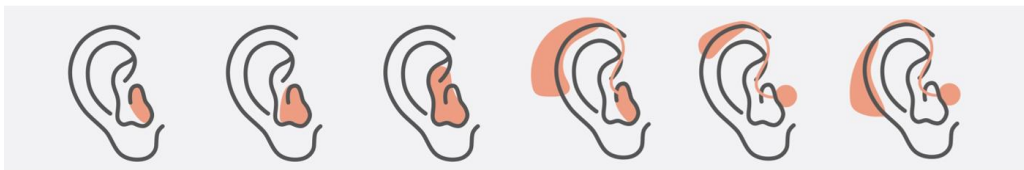


Do not place anything in your mouth while speaking.



Use pen and paper to communicate only if the individual desires to do so.

## Hearing Aids



Completely in the canal (CIC)

In the canal (ITC)

In the ear (ITE)

Behind the ear (BTE)

Receiver in the canal (RIC)

Open fit



## Cochlear Implants

### Off-the-ear speech processor



### Behind-the-ear speech processor



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## Benefits of Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

- Make soft sounds and speech audible
- Work best in one-on-one or small group quiet environments
- Can mask tinnitus
- Reduce listening fatigue
- Decrease social isolation
- Improve communication access

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## Limitations of Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

- Do not restore normal hearing
- Can reduce but not eliminate background noise
- Challenges hearing and understanding speech on the phone
- Television and music can be difficult to understand

## About the BHI



[Behavioral Health Initiative Website](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/bhi.htm)  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/odhh/bhi.htm>

# Resources

## [P-02764, Interacting with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)

### Interacting with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

For health departments, clinics, and other providers



Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing must be provided access to effective and appropriate **virtual or in-person sign language interpretation and textual English communication.**

#### Methods of communication

Become familiar with multiple communication methods in the event that certain services are inaccessible or delayed during general operations.

- In-person sign language interpreters
- Speech-to-text apps (may not be accessible in some environments)
- Captioning or communication access real time translation (CART)
- Written communications (only for brief or simple communication)
- Video remote interpreting (VRI)
- Lip reading (not often a reliable form of communication)

#### Communicating with people who do not use sign language

- If communication is difficult, try writing down a few words and phrases.
- Use a computer or other device as a communication tool.
- Let the individual speak. If they do not understand you, type and allow the person to see the screen.

#### Communicating with people who use sign language

- When working with an interpreter, speak directly to the person who is Deaf.
- Make sure the person who is Deaf has a clear line of vision to the interpreter.
- Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to assist with communication.

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[Please see other side.](#)

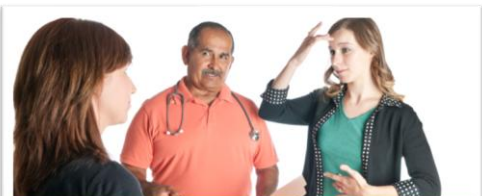
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# Resources (2)

## [P-03492 Interpretation for Medicaid Services](#)



### Interpretation for Medicaid Services

If you or a family member have Wisconsin Medicaid and use a language other than English, including sign language, it is your right to have an interpreter available for your appointments at no cost to you. Having an interpreter allows you to understand and communicate easily with your provider.

Scan to view a video translation of this information in American Sign Language (ASL)



#### FAST FACTS

##### ► What will the interpreter do?

- Once your Provider has found an interpreter for you, the interpreter will:
  - Attend the health care appointment with you in person, over the phone, or on a computer or mobile device.
  - Interpret the conversation between you and the provider, not replace you in the conversation.

##### ► Why should I use an interpreter?

- You can communicate in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- You keep your health information private—interpreters must follow the same confidentiality laws as the provider.
- An interpreter will be familiar with medical terms used by the provider.
- You can use an interpreter at no cost to you.

P-03492 (08/2023)



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## Any Questions



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## Thank you!

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