

National statistics show individuals with “severe” hearing loss make up 16% of the national population. Additionally, 1% of our national population has been diagnosed as “profoundly” deaf.

These statistics would portray the Treasure Coast (with an approximate population of 469,000 residents) to have approximately 75,040 residents inflicted with “severe” hearing loss and 4,690 to be deaf.

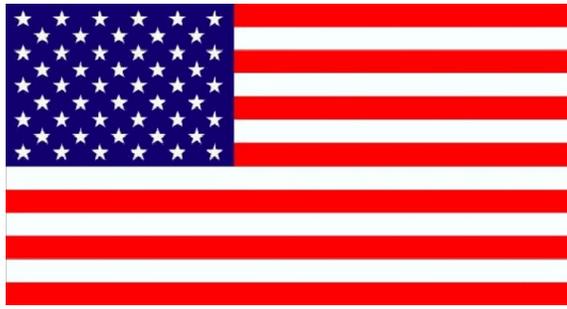
With an approximate population of 167,000 residents, the City of Port St. Lucie would average 75,000 residents having “severe” hearing loss, with 1,670 of those residents being deaf.

With these statistical numbers, you can certainly expect to come into contact with a citizen who is deaf or hard of hearing at sometime in your law enforcement career.

A routine law enforcement encounter (such as a call for service or a traffic stop) with a citizen who has a hearing disability could present a situation which might be viewed by an officer as a safety threat if misinterpreted.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)of 1990, the Port St. Lucie Police Department has adopted a detailed policy regarding law enforcement officer contact and communication with citizens who are inflicted with hearing disabilities.

This brochure has been developed to help you become familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Port St. Lucie Police Departments policy in regards to dealing with citizens who are hearing impaired.



TEAM PORT ST. LUCIE

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MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER
PLACE, STARTING WITH PORT ST. LUCIE

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COURAGE,
KNOWLEDGE,
INTEGRITY

MAKING CONTACT
WITH THE DEAF AND
HARD OF HEARING
COMMUNITY



A GUIDE FOR LAW
ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS

WORKING TOGETHER FOR
A SAFER COMMUNITY

DEALING WITH THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law on July 26, 1990, prohibits discrimination on the basis of any disability in employment and in programs and services provided by any and all state or local governments, commercial facilities, and certain private agencies.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires all law enforcement officers (nationwide) to provide effective communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. This communication is to be as effective as that provided for others who are not afflicted with a hearing disability.

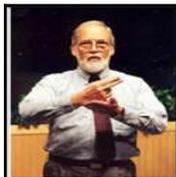
All Federal, State, County, and City law enforcement agencies are bound by Federal Law to adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, or face serious violations of constitutional and civil rights.

In summary, the Americans with Disabilities Act provides federal and civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities, guaranteeing them an equal opportunity to participate in, and to benefit from, services provided by public and private agencies.

ADA REQUIREMENTS

- Communication aids and services needed to communicate effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing, except when a particular aid or service would result in an undue burden or a fundamental change in the nature of the law enforcement services being provided.
- Only the head of the agency or his or her designee can make a determination that a particular aid or service would cause an undue burden or fundamental change in the law enforcement services being provided.
- Agencies must give primary consideration to providing the aid or service requested by the person with the hearing disability, and shall not charge the person for communication aids or services provided.
- When interpreters are needed, the agency must provide interpreters who can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially.

Law enforcement officers may find a variety of communication aids and services useful in different situations. The type of situation, as well as the individual's abilities, will determine which aid or service is needed to communicate most effectively.



COMMUNICATION

- Before speaking, get the person's attention with a wave of the hand or a gentle tap on the shoulder.
- Face the person, do not cover your mouth, turn away, or chew gum while speaking. Always try to converse in a well lit location.
- When communicating orally, speak slowly and distinctly. Remember, only one third of spoken words can be understood by speech reading.
- Use visual aids when possible, such as pointing to printed information on a citation or note pad, keeping in mind that some people who use sign language might lack good English reading or writing skills.
- When interviewing a witness or a suspect whose primary language is sign language, ask which sign language the person uses (American Sign or Signed English are most commonly used) and request a qualified interpreter to ensure effective communication.
- Do not use a family member or a child as an interpreter. They may lack the vocabulary or impartiality needed to interpret effectively.
- When using an interpreter, look at and speak directly to the person with the hearing disability, not to the interpreter.