

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN THE
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
AND THE
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO**

Re: Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION
FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

MANAGEMENT’S RESPONSIBILITY

Management has an obligation to reasonably accommodate Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees **with a disability under the Rehabilitation Act (the “Act”)** and applicants represented by the APWU who request assistance in communicating with or understanding others in work related situations, such as **but not limited to:**

- a. During investigatory interviews which may lead to discipline, discussions with a supervisor on job performance or conduct, or presentation of a grievance **pursuant to Article 17 and other provisions of the collective bargaining agreement.**
- b. During some aspects of training including formal classroom instruction.
- c. During portions of EAP programs or EEO counselings.
- d. In critical elements of the selection process such as during testing and interviews.
- e. During employee orientations and safety talks, CFC and saving bond drive kickoff meetings.

- f. During the filing or meetings concerning an employee's OWCP claim.

A reasonable accommodation must be approached on a highly individual, case by case basis. The individual's input must be considered prior to making a decision regarding accommodation.

IMPLEMENTATION

This obligation is met by selecting an appropriate resource from the variety of resources available. In selecting a resource, the following, among others, should be considered, as appropriate:

- The ability of the deaf and hard of hearing employee to understand various methods of communication and the ability of others to understand the deaf or hard of hearing employee.
- The importance of the situation as it relates to work requirements, job rights, and benefits.
- The availability and cost of the alternative resources under consideration.
- Whether the situation requires confidentiality.

Available resources which should be considered include, **but are not limited to the following:**

- a. Installation heads are authorized to pay for certified interpreters. Every effort will be made to provide certified interpreters when deemed necessary by an application of the principles set forth herein.
- b. In some states, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides interpreters at no charge. When a decision is made that an interpreter is the appropriate accommodation and a DVR interpreter

is not available other methods of securing an interpreter should be used, **such as through Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) technology, if available, postal-approved and authorized or other new and evolving technology that is authorized and approved.**

- c. Volunteer interpreters or individuals skilled in signing may be obtained from the work force or from the community. The skill level of such persons should be considered.
- d. In some situations, **such as day-to-day instructions and routine communications**, written communications may be appropriate based on the employee's ability to **comprehend** written communications.
- e. Supervisors, training specialists, EAP, and EEO counselors may be trained in sign language.
- f. **APWU represented** deaf or hard of hearing applicants **will** be scheduled for a specific examination time when an interpreter will be available.
- g. State or Federal relay services **or other postal-approved technology, such as Video Relay Service (VRS) or VRI, if available and authorized, or other new and evolving technology that is available, authorized and approved**, may provide a way for a deaf or hard of hearing employee to conduct postal business by telephone with other employees and customers.
- h. **When possible, interpretive services as described in (a) through (f) above should be scheduled as far in advance as possible.**

- i. In the event of an emergency situation, the Postal Service will strive to communicate the nature of the emergency as soon as possible.**

Management will provide the following assistance for deaf and/or hard of hearing employees **with a disability under the Act**:

- a. All films or videotapes designed for the training or instruction of regular work force employees developed on or after October 1, 1987, shall be opened or closed captioned. To the extent practicable, existing films or videotapes developed nationally that will continue to be used by deaf or hard of hearing employees with some frequency, will be opened or closed captioned.
- b. Special communications devices for the deaf will be installed in all postal installations employing deaf employees in the regular work force. Special communications devices, or telephone volume control devices will be installed for hard of hearing employees whenever a hard of hearing employee needs a reasonable accommodation in order to communicate by phone. These devices will be available to deaf and/or hard of hearing employees for official business and in the case of personal emergencies. As appropriate, Management will provide training to staff on the use of these special communication devices.
- c. A visual alarm will be installed on all moving powered industrial equipment in all postal installations employing deaf employees in the regular work force or in any installation where such a reasonable accommodation is necessary for a hard of hearing employee.