



Number: 31

Effective Date: 04-17-06

Revision Date: 06-05-2017

**Subject: Communication with
Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

PURPOSE

Hiawatha Police Department will ensure that a consistently high level of service is provided to all community members, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

POLICY

The Hiawatha Police Department has specific legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, to communicate effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

To carry out these policies and legal obligations, the Hiawatha Police Department instructs its Officers and Employees to carry out the policy listed below:

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing are entitled to a level of service equivalent to that provided to other persons
- The Hiawatha Police Department will make every effort to ensure that its officers and employees communicate effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Effective communication with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing involved in an incident, whether as a victim, witness, suspect, or arrestee, is essential in ascertaining what actually occurred, the urgency of the matter, and type of situation.
- Various auxiliary aids and services are used to communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These include use of gestures, or visual aids to supplement oral communication; use of notepad and pen or pencil to exchange written notes; use of an assistive listening system or device to amplify sound for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; or use of a qualified oral or sign language interpreter.
- The type of aid that will be required for effective communication will depend on the individual's usual method of communication, and the nature, importance and duration of the communication at issue.



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- To serve each individual effectively, primary consideration should be given to providing the type of communication aid and service requested by the individual. Officers should find out from the person who is deaf or hard of hearing, what type of auxiliary aid or service he or she needs. Officers should defer to those expressed choices, unless;
- There is another equally effective way of communicating, given the circumstances, length, complexity, and importance of the communication, as well as the communication skills of the person who is deaf or hard of hearing, or;
- Doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of the law enforcement activity in question or would cause an undue administrative or financial burden; only the Chief of Police or his designee may make this determination.

The input of people who are deaf or hard of hearing who are involved in incidents is just as important to the law enforcement process as the input of others. Officers must not draw conclusions about incidents unless they fully understand and are understood by all those involved, including people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing must not be charged for the cost of an auxiliary aid or service needed for effective communication.
- Officers must be willing to accept telephone calls placed by persons who are deaf or hard of hearing the Telecommunications Relay Service.

The Hiawatha Police Department will maintain a list of sign language and oral interpreting services that are available on call, 24 hours a day and will to provide qualified interpreters as needed. Each of these services will be chosen after having been screened for the quality and skill of its interpreters, its reliability, and other factors such as cost.



Hiawatha Police Department
Standard Operating Procedure



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PENALTY SECTION

Any violation of this policy or portion thereof may result in disciplinary action for the officer involved.