

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Student

As part of George Mason University's continuing commitment to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities, the university established and maintains Disability Services (DS). Under the administration of University Life, the department implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities.

Disability Services is available to serve all students with disabilities, including those with cognitive (e.g., learning, psychological, and closed head injury), sensory, mobility, and other physical impairments.

As part of University Life's commitment to recognizing and honoring the richness of diversity at Mason, DS staff members actively participate in the campus-wide diversity dialogue. DS welcomes and encourages all students with disabilities, whether registered with DS or not, to identify themselves as members of the disability community, and to engage in the diversity dialogue on campus by getting involved with DS and other multicultural programs and activities.

Mission

Disability Services strives to:

- **Promote equal access** to students with disabilities in curricular and co-curricular activities within the university experience.
- **Foster partnerships** with students, faculty, and staff to create environments that are accessible, diverse, and inclusive.
- **Empower students** to fully participate in the university community.

Disability Services at George Mason University offers a variety of services for students with documented disabilities. We encourage both prospective and current students to learn more about our services by going to our web site at and/or calling our office to make an appointment with a DS specialist.

Services for Students and DS Process

Disability Services collaborates with students with documented disabilities and faculty to provide reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids, and support services that are individualized and based upon medical documentation, functional limitations, and a collaborative assessment of needs. In order to receive accommodations, students must complete the following process:

1. **Submit Intake Form** – Once a student has been admitted to the University, he/she should complete the Intake Form (available at <http://ds.gmu.edu/> or the DS office) and submit it to Disability Services along with medical documentation. Prepare early because some accommodations may require significant planning in advance of the semester.

2. **Submit Documentation of Disability** – Provide appropriate documentation when requesting reasonable accommodations. Documentation guidelines are available on the DS website at <http://ds.gmu.edu/>. These guidelines will be helpful when working with a medical provider to ensure that evaluation reports are appropriate to document eligibility and support requests for reasonable accommodations. DS staff members are available to answer any questions regarding documentation guidelines. The University does not provide nor pay for services rendered to meet the above documentation requirements.
3. **Initial Intake Interview** – When the Intake Form and related documentation have been received and reviewed, a DS staff member will contact the student to schedule an intake interview. At the intake interview, the DS staff member and student will discuss eligibility, individual needs, and tentatively agree upon accommodations.
4. **Accommodations** – After the intake interview has been conducted, a Academic Accommodation Letter may be developed to identify appropriate accommodations. Copies will be provided to the student for distribution to faculty members.
5. **Student's Responsibilities** – It is the student's responsibility to distribute Academic Accommodation Letters to the appropriate instructors as soon as possible. Failure to distribute Academic Accommodation Letters may cause delay in the provision of services. The student must also keep a copy of the Academic Accommodation Letter for their records.
6. **Continuing Needs** – A student must meet with a DS staff member prior to the beginning of each semester to review accommodation needs for the upcoming course work. It is the student's responsibility to request this appointment and to do so early enough to allow for the processing of the accommodations.
7. **Grievance Procedure** – Students with disabilities who have any complaints (e.g., regarding a request for accommodations) are encouraged to use the student grievance procedure outlined on the DS website at <http://ds.gmu.edu/grievances/>

Documentation

Current documentation of the student's disability from a qualified medical professional is required in most cases. Documentation should include diagnosis, functional limitations, prognosis and recommended accommodations. Information regarding the nature of an individual's disability is held in strict confidence.

Some Services Typically Provided

1. Sign Language Interpreters: The service providers manually sign what is audible and voices what is signed by the student, using English, American Sign Language (ASL) or Signed English.
2. Cued Speech Transliterators: Transliterators transliterate the message manually using Cued speech.
3. Note-takers: Note-takers are volunteers in the course who take notes in class and will make copies of class notes to give to the student.
4. Computer Assisted Real-time Translation (CART): CART writers create a verbatim transcript of the class which is displayed on a computer screen in real-time.

For the duration of this document, Sign Language interpreters, transliterators, and CART writers/professionals will be referred to as *service providers* unless otherwise specified.

The Best Time to Apply for Services

To maximize the effectiveness of accommodations, we urge individuals to apply for services 6-8 weeks prior to needing them. Some accommodations take 4-6 weeks to implement. The University cannot guarantee that interpreting and/or CART services will be available on the first day of classes for those students who do not submit their request at least 4 weeks prior to the first day of class each semester.

Academic Accommodation Letters

Before each semester, students are responsible for requesting a AAL from DS. The AAL is a letter intended for faculty that outlines the student's accommodations; it will inform instructor(s) which accommodation(s) students are eligible to receive. After engaging in an interactive process, the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing will decide accommodations in accordance with the student's documentation.

Before each semester, students are also responsible for submitting their schedule to the coordinator. Based on receipt of schedule, DS will send a letter to professors before each semester to explain the impact of hearing loss, use of auxiliary aids, as well as the role of service providers.

Some students who have disabilities in addition to deafness, might also have a meeting with one of the assistant directors in DS who specialize in the other disabilities that affect access to the academic curriculum.

After accommodations are discussed and identified, the student agrees to:

- Submit semester schedule to coordinator before the start of the semester,
- Personally deliver the Academic Accommodation Letter(AAL) that is generated by DS to the course instructor,
- Make personal appointments with instructors/employers regarding accommodations,
- Work with instructors to implement accommodations,
- Alert Disability Services if assistance is needed with accommodation related issues as soon as possible.

Video and Audio Recording

In the event the student wishes to record the interpreters, s/he will need permission from the professor and will need to sign a Video Agreement form. Video/Audio may be permissible by the professor without being considered an accommodation with the professor's approval.

FM Hearing Systems

Students who are D/deaf, hard of hearing, or D/deaf-blind may request the use of an FM system for use in the classroom environment. The FM system utilizes a microphone and a transmitter unit (worn by the instructor) and a receiver and headset (worn by the student). The instructor's speech is transmitted to the student's receiver unit (via the FM radio signal) and the student has the ability to control volume and other settings.

The Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI) has a limited number of FM hearing systems available. Students are required to meet with ATI to receive training on the equipment. Students are responsible for transporting and setting up the equipment.

CART Services

Students are required to meet with ATI to receive training on the equipment. Students are responsible for transporting and setting up the equipment.

Note-takers

Note-taking services are provided by student volunteers in the course. It is an academic support for students registered with DS and is arranged by discussion during the intake meeting with the coordinator of the D/deaf and hard of hearing. When the student picks up the AAL, he/she will also pick up enough note-taker packets for each class.

Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations are not automatically given to D/deaf, hard of hearing, or D/deaf-blind individuals. Documentations submitted by professionals must support the need for testing accommodations that might include extended time, or testing in a different format. Accommodations requiring test accommodation considerations must be done in consultation with the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing and an additional disability specialists. Students who will need these types of collaborative meetings should schedule intake appointments as early as possible.

Student Responsibilities

1. Complete registration and intake with required documentation with DS.
2. Request reasonable accommodation of service providers for scheduled class times at least six weeks in advance of the beginning of the semester.
3. Complete academic advising and registration for classes as soon as possible.
4. Requests for service providers outside of regularly scheduled class times must be e-mailed two weeks prior to the event (or as soon as the need for a service provider is discovered).
5. Student must identify themselves to the service providers on the first day of class or in any new situation.
6. Notify the DS coordinator of any schedule changes as soon as possible.
7. Direct questions about class material, procedures, policy and related items to the professor/instructor of the course.
8. Reserve interpersonal communications to times before or after class. Interpersonal conversations with the service providers are inappropriate during class time.
9. Notify the DS coordinator if the service providers do not show up to class.
10. Inform the coordinator if a known absence will occur or if the class will be cancelled.
11. Be responsible and respectful of the service providers and the faculty member.
12. Be aware that the service providers will wait for the student for 20 minutes grace period for each interpreting event. If the student arrives late, but before the grace period, it is not the responsibility of the service provider to inform the student of missed material.
13. Ask the service provider if he/she is available to interpret if the student needs to speak to the instructor or with other students after a class meeting. If not, the student will need to schedule an appointment with the instructor and/or student(s) and request a service provider through the DS.
14. Discuss any communication problems or other issues with the service providers directly, initially, and inform the DS after these discussions. Do not discuss these issues with other service providers or D/deaf, hard of hearing, D/deaf-blind individuals who may use the service provider for communication access. If the issues cannot be resolved directly with the service providers, contact the coordinator who will then meet with the student and service provider individually and together.
15. If services are needed for a university related activity or program other than academic classroom accommodations, follow the process for requesting services under “Additional Interpreting Requests”.
16. Schedule services through DS only. If a student schedules services directly with a service provider, DS will not be held responsible for compensation or issues that may arise.

17. Do not ask service providers to engage in behavior that could compromise the service provider's code of professional conduct. Any questions about the code of professional conduct should be brought to the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing.

Priority Registration

Students who are eligible for services are also granted priority registration beginning in their second semester of enrollment at Mason. Registering for classes early allows adequate time for the DS coordinator to contact and schedule service providers.

Related Academic Program Requests

Students should inform the coordinator for D/deaf and hard of hearing about planned activities noted on the course syllabus, such as class field trips and videos, which will require services.

Requests for services should be made as far in advance as possible. A minimum of 48 hours' advance notice is usually required in order to locate a service provider; one-week advance notice is preferred. Last-minute requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Interpreting Requests

In addition to receiving in-class accommodations, students may request services for meetings with instructors and advisors, instructor-guided study sessions, and instructor-assigned group project meetings. Students also have the right to request service for any Mason activity that is open to students or the public such as plays, lectures, and student organization meetings.

Students may also request service providers through DS by emailing apuopolo@gmu.edu. When requests are made, the following information must be included:

1. Student's name
2. Date of event
3. Starting time to the ending time
4. Exact location
5. Nature of assignment (lecture, concert, etc.)
6. Name of sponsoring department/college (if known)
7. Point of contact for the event

The coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing will notify the student by email when a services are confirmed.

Off-campus Mason Related Service Requests

For off-campus service requests there is a **MINIMUM 2 week notice**. The student must first contact the coordinator for the event to inquire if there will be appropriate accommodations provided. If there are no appropriate accommodations, the student is to make their request with the coordinator of the event. If the event application does not have a place to indicate a need for disability accommodations please contact the DS with the event materials so the DS can investigate that situation. If, after contacting the event coordinator, there is still a need for a service provider; please contact the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing.

The following information will be required for this type of request:

- Name of Event;

- Location of event;
- Date(s) of event;
- Event Sponsor(s);
- Event phone number/e-mail;
- Event Coordinator;
- Event Coordinator phone number/e-mail;
- Instructor of program;
- Instructor of program phone number/e-mail; and
- Is attendance at this event mandatory? Yes or No.

Absences, Tardiness, and Class or Event Cancellation

DS will follow a “No-Show” procedure. Each student is allowed two (2) “No-Shows” per semester. On the third “No-Show”, there will be a \$60.00 fee charged to the student. For additional No-shows, the student will incur the \$60.00 fee for each scheduled class/event thereafter the initial “No-Show” fee has been charged. Late arrival: Service providers will wait **20 minutes for each class** for students to arrive to ALL classes/events. After the allotted time, if the student does not arrive, the student is considered a “No-Show.” In the event the student will be late, s/he must follow the same procedure to avoid a “No-Show”.

See below for full procedure.

Schedule Changes

Students must give the coordinator advance written notice for any class cancellations, room changes, teacher conferences, field trips, tests that do not require services, or additional interpreting assignments. Though all efforts will be made to cover such assignments, if students do not give advance notice, they will not be guaranteed service. Only University activities and class-related activities will be provided with services through the DS.

Working with the Service Providers

- Sign Language interpreters employed by DS are required to follow the NAD-RID *Code of Professional Conduct*. Service providers must interpret all information accurately and without bias. They must not add to or delete from any message. They are not permitted to tutor, express personal opinions, or participate in the class in any way. If a student does not understand portions of the lecture or class assignment, it is the student’s responsibility to request clarification from the instructor.
- Sign Language interpreters will follow the RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) Code of Professional Conduct. **There are situations that supersede the RID Code of Professional Conduct which may include but are not limited to: personal safety of students, faculty or staff, and severe student conduct issues.** However, the above issues will be approached in a professional manner. CART providers also follow a professional code of conduct, NCRA Code of Professional Ethics for CART and Broadcast Captioners.
- The student’s working relationship with the service providers will be most successful in the context of a team. Together, the student and the service providers should agree on technical or specialized sign vocabulary. If the student has specific sign or style preferences, he/she should communicate them to the service providers.
- If students are scheduled to conduct a class presentation, they need to provide a copy of notes to the service providers. If possible, students should allow time to meet with the service providers prior to the presentation.

Service Providers No-Show

If the service provider does not show up for the assigned class/event, students must contact the coordinator at 703-993-3601 or 571-230-4353 (v/text). DS will then contact the service providers or a substitute service provider will be provided. It is important that students remain in class. While DS takes all preventative measures, it is important that the student report absences to help prevent future mishaps.

Closed-captioning

DS will work with faculty to determine if movies and videos are closed-captioned. If media are not captioned, the student needs to inform DS prior to the viewing to allow time for an ATI representative to work with the professor to ensure the technology is caption friendly. If the media is not captioned, DS, ATI, the student and faculty member will work together to arrange accommodations.

Classroom Arrangement

The service providers will work with the student and the professor to determine the best place to sit or stand. If seating in the front is limited, it is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the professor. Saving seats is not the service provider's responsibility.

General Information

Many D/deaf students are more comfortable using text or e-mail to contact the DS. While this is acceptable, know that the technology has its limitations. Texts do not always send when expected and e-mail messages are not always checked as fast as the student may need. As a general practice, the coordinator of the D/deaf and hard of hearing checks e-mail every morning and several times throughout the day. The best ways to contact the coordinator, if it is an urgent issue, is to text, or have someone place the call for the student. Otherwise, e-mail is acceptable. Please verify issues have been resolved by receiving a response from the coordinator.

Failure to complete homework, inattentiveness, or sleeping during class is every student's right. Service providers are not responsible for informing the students of missed information and the interpreters may rest their hands if the student is inattentive. Interpreters are responsible to attend to the information, and at a moment's notice, resume the interpretation process. It will be up to the professional judgment of the interpreter to determine if continued signing is appropriate.

Interpretation

- It is the student's responsibility to understand the materials and information presented both in and out of the classroom.
- It is the student's responsibility to make sure the Sign Language interpreters know what form of interpretation is preferred. Every attempt will be made to meet the student's preferred mode of communication.
- Students should keep in mind that the interpreter is an individual accommodation, not a group accommodation. Therefore, students need to meet with the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing prior to classes in order to arrange these services. **The accommodation process does not mean that students are permitted to choose the service providers.** It does mean the student may request the mode of communication. If the service provider is unable to meet these needs, then the student should follow the grievance process listed below. This process needs to be completed each semester. Therefore, if a student requested a certain service provider to not work for him/her during one semester and it was granted, the student cannot assume that the service provider will not be assigned in the future. However, if the student feels a service provider's skills are inadequate for an assignment, the student must inform the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing immediately.
- If a student needs a service provider to voice for them, it is the student's responsibility to work with the service providers. It is in the best interest of the student to prepare in advance. Although Mason tries to

hire professionals who have high quality voicing skills, the profession of interpreting recognizes that, broadly speaking, "voicing" is a challenge. Therefore, it is part of the student's responsibility to assist the service providers prepare whenever possible by providing a copy of the student's outline, meeting with the service providers before the presentation, informing the service providers of complex ideas or unusual/technical words, and a general overview of the goal of the presentation. All these items will improve the interpretation.

- If the student feels they are being misrepresented by the service providers voicing for them, the grievance process, outlined below, needs to be followed.

Conflict Resolution

If conflicts arise with another student, service providers or faculty member, these conflicts, when possible, should be resolved between the two parties. If a resolution cannot be reached, follow the grievance procedures as detailed below.

Grievance Procedure

A. Students are encouraged to meet with the service providers and advocate for a positive change before alerting the coordinator. If this is not successful, the following additional steps should be taken as soon as possible.

1. Contact the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing and explain the grievance. If the grievance is related to service providers, give a detailed written report to the coordinator. The grievance will be taken seriously and discussed with the service provider and associate director of the DS. The coordinator will use the information provided to help in assessing the issues relating to the service provider.
2. After meeting with the student and going over the complaint, the coordinator will observe the interpretation or CART transcribing process. The in-class observations will be collected to address the complaint.
3. After the results are collected, the coordinator for the D/deaf and hard of hearing will meet with the D/deaf student to inform him or her about the results. The entire process will be done in a timely manner to ensure students continue the educational process with as little interruption as possible.
4. If the findings support the student's grievance, the service provider will be removed as soon as is reasonable. If the findings differ from the student's complaint and resolution is not immediate, the service provider will continue as the process continues. The student will be responsible to attend classes and keep up with assignments. The student will also be expected to work with the service provider. In turn, the service provider will be expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

B. If the action taken by the coordinator is not satisfactory to the student, the student will need to proceed as follows:

1. Contact the director of DS. The student will need to complete a service provider request to arrange for interpreting services. If the action taken by the director of the DS is not satisfactory to the student then the student will need to proceed to step 2B.
2. If the action taken by the director of DS is not satisfactory to the student, the student may contact the ADA coordinator.

Appealing beyond DS

Should the appeal not be granted within DS, the next step is for the student to appeal the decision to the ADA Coordinator in the Compliance, Diversity and Ethics (CDE) office, <https://diversity.gmu.edu/>

**Student “NO-SHOW” Procedure
George Mason University, Disability Services**

(In effect the first day of each semester.)

What is a “No-Show”?

A “No-Show” is a situation where the student does not notify Disability Services that s/he will not attend a scheduled class or event. This includes situations when the class was canceled but the coordinator was not informed by the student. Late arrival: Service providers will wait **20 minutes for each class** for students to arrive to ALL classes/events. After the allotted time, if the student does not arrive, the student is considered a “No-Show.” In the event the student will be late, s/he must follow the same procedure to avoid a “No-Show”.

Avoid a “No-Show” by notifying the coordinator of Deaf and HH no less than 32 hours of the scheduled event.

- Email apuopolo@gmu.edu
- Text message 1-571-230-4353 (available for 32hrs or less notifications)
- Voice call 1-703-993-3601

When do I contact Disability Services?

- No less than 32 hours of the scheduled class/event.

Provide the following information to avoid a “No-Show”:

- Your name (first and last)
- Name of your class(s) that you will miss
- Day(s), date(s), and time of class(s), e.g. Monday, March 1st, 8-8:50 AM
- Name of interpreter, or indicate CART Services

Each student is allowed two (2) “No-Shows” semester. On the third “No-Show”, there will be a \$60.00 fee charged to the student. For additional No-shows, the student will incur the \$60.00 fee for *each* scheduled class/event thereafter the initial “No-Show” fee has been charged.

Emergency situation “No-Shows” may be waived on a case-by-case basis with documented proof of the incident per committee approval.

Fee: Until the student’s balance is paid, a **hold** may be placed on the George Mason Account. The Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Accounts and the University's catalog specifically state that all university accounts must be immediately suspended if a past due balance is owed, i.e. registration, admission, and enrollment. Payments in cash or check must be submitted to Disability Services.

Printed Name _____
Signature _____
G Number _____
Date: _____

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind Policies

4400 University Drive, MS 5C9, Fairfax, Virginia
22030 Student Union Building I (SUB I)

I, _____, a student of George Mason University, have read and understand my responsibilities as described in **PROCEDURES OUTLINED IN Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Student Policy Guidelines**. By signing this form, I am agreeing to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in this document provided by Disability Services.

SIGNATURE

G NUMBER

Date

If you have questions regarding this form or the Disability Services process, please call our office at 703.993.2474 or email ods@gmu.edu. Thank you for your assistance.

Phone: 703-993-2474; Fax: 703-993-4306 | Email: ods@gmu.edu | Website: <http://ds.gmu.edu>