



INCLUDING HARD OF HEARING AND DEAFENED PERSONS IN THE WORKPLACE



INTRODUCTION

As a part of the Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened Internship Project, the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD) has compiled this material to assist employers in hiring and including hard of hearing or deafened persons in the workplace.

Enclosed you will find ideas and suggestions on how to make the hiring and employment of these individuals a positive experience.

This information will be beneficial to review prior to a meeting with a potential employee who is hard of hearing or deafened. It will also assist you in making your workplace more accessible to hard of hearing or deafened people in the future.

Sharing this information package with supervisors and other employees will also be helpful as it explains the impact of hearing loss as an invisible disability, and how best to communicate with a hard of hearing or deafened individual.

SMD thanks you in advance for reviewing this material and for your consideration in hiring a hard of hearing and/or deafened person.

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TERMINOLOGY

Before you begin considering how to better include hard of hearing and deafened persons in the workplace, you should understand some basic terminology.

HARD OF HEARING

This term refers to persons who communicate orally and do not rely on American Sign Language. They may have a hearing loss ranging from mild to severe, but over the years have developed varying degrees of coping and communication skills. Hard of hearing individuals usually speech-read and often use a hearing aid, a cochlear implant and/or an assistive listening device to assist with communication.

DEAFENED

This term refers to persons who have lost hearing as an adult after having learned to speak. The hearing loss may have been sudden – (due to an accident or illness) or progressive over a period of time. A deafened person usually sustains a severe to profound hearing loss, communicates orally and identifies closely with the hearing world. Some deafened individuals choose to learn American Sign Language (ASL), but most rely on speech-reading, visual cues and text-based information to communicate.

HEARING AIDS

Some hearing aids may be analogue, which amplify sound by increasing the volume and modifying the tone, but do not fix the hearing loss. These aids make ALL sounds louder resulting in “background noise” for the hard of hearing person.

However, digital hearing aids have become popular over the last 10 years. Digital hearing aids are more expensive, but do help to eliminate the background noise. The sound is processed by a computer chip, which converts sound into coded signals. The signals are processed in accordance with the specific needs of the hard of hearing user. They may be set to adjust automatically to a change in environmental sounds or may have manual controls to adjust the volume.

There are many different makes and models of hearing aids on the market, and an assessment by a qualified, professional audiologist is recommended in order to accurately determine which hearing aid will best meet the needs of an individual’s hearing loss. Hearing aids fall into different categories:

- Behind the ear (BTE)
- In the ear (ITE)
- In the canal (ITC)
- Completely in the canal (CIC)

The addition of a t-switch in the hearing aid when it is turned on will help to block out background noise while using a telephone or using an assistive listening device. Some hard of hearing individuals will wear one hearing aid while others will require two.



COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

Like hearing aids, cochlear implants do not restore “normal” hearing. They are an option for deafened persons or those with a severe to profound hearing loss. The cochlear implant has both internal and external components. The internal components are surgically implanted in the mastoid area behind the ear. The implant consists of a receiver and an electrode array to stimulate the cochlea of the inner ear.



The external part consists of a microphone, a programmed speech processor, and a transmitting coil. Sound is received through the microphone and sent to the speech processor, which converts it to a special code. The code is then sent to the transmitting coil, which in turn sends it to the receiver, and converts it to electrical signals. The stimulation sends the sound by the auditory nerve to the brain. When the brain recognizes and interprets the signal, hearing is produced and the sound understood.

SPEECH READING

Speech-reading is a communication skill used by hard of hearing and deafened individuals. It requires practice, patience, perseverance, and a good sense of humor.

Speech reading is a very challenging activity as many words in the English language look similar on the lips. These words are referred to as homophenes. A good example of a tricky homophene is ‘summer’ and ‘supper’. In this example, hard of hearing and deafened individuals rely on the context of the sentence in order to determine whether the speaker is talking about their summer vacation or supper-time.

Numbers like 16 and 60 or 15 and 50 look the same on the lips and are best written down. Some sounds register no movement on the lips, making it very challenging to speech-read accurately. An example of this would be the words ‘kit’ or ‘hit.’

A good speech-reader usually reads four out of ten key words in a sentence and uses body language, tone of voice, and gestures of the speaker to fill in any information gaps.

Each individual who speech-reads will have varying degrees of skill and ability. It is important to remember that not all hard of hearing and deafened individuals communicate in the same way.

When you ask a hard of hearing or deafened person if they can read your lips, you may get different answers such as “yes,” “no,” or “some, depending on the speaker.”

Do not hesitate to ask the person how they identify themselves and how they prefer to communicate.

Please do not use the terms “hearing impaired” as it implies something is broken. Also the terms, “deaf mute” or “deaf and dumb” are inaccurate and considered to be derogatory.

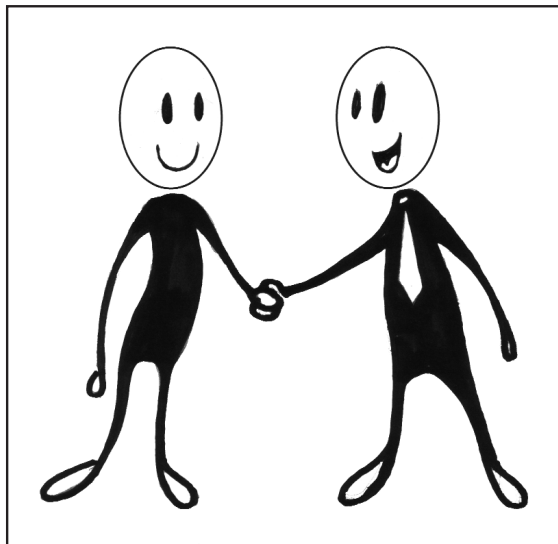
INTERVIEWING HARD OF HEARING & DEAFENED APPLICANTS

When interviewing a hard of hearing or deafened individual, you are looking for the same things you would want in any employee - someone who will develop new skills and wants to take on new challenges.

The difference is that when interviewing a hard of hearing or deafened individual, you must take into account the communication differences that exist, while otherwise treating them as you would any other applicant.

The following suggestions will help enhance communication during the interview process:

- Create a quiet climate where the hard of hearing or deafened person feels comfortable.
- Ensure there is good lighting in the room.
- Speak one person at a time should there be an interview panel.
- Be willing to use an assistive listening device if requested.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Repeat or re-phrase the question if misunderstood.
- Focus on the applicant's abilities.



MAKING THE WORKPLACE ACCESSIBLE

Hard of hearing and deafened persons tend to cope in different ways depending on the type and extent of their hearing loss. No single strategy works for all, and it may take time to find one that works well. Both the employer and employee need to understand that communication – or lack of it – will have a direct impact on their ability to do their job. Ideally, the hard of hearing or deafened employee should be prepared to talk to the employer about their hearing loss and the associated job challenges.

A job analysis prepared by the employer and employee is often helpful in evaluating the job in terms of hearing loss. Job responsibilities can be reviewed, and a plan devised to reconfigure job activities if possible or required.

Professionals such as audiologists and counsellors with expertise in hearing loss can help organizations to assess an employee's job accommodation needs, help with effective communication strategies, and offer expertise on the latest technology. Employee Assistance Programs may offer additional supports for hard of hearing or deafened individuals who may benefit from supportive counselling.

When considering how to make the workplace more accessible for hard of hearing and deafened persons, start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What is the extent of the person's hearing loss?
- Does the individual wear hearing aids, have a cochlear implant, or benefit from amplification?
- What are the job expectations?
- Are there any job functions that the hard of hearing or deafened employee might find difficult due to their hearing loss?
- What specific duties require hearing?
- How does communication take place (by phone or in person) and at what level?
- Is there background noise in the work environment, and if so, what is the cause?
- What are potential hazards in the workplace for persons with hearing loss?
- Would signaling devices like a flashing light for the fire alarm be used?

Sometimes, **environmental accommodations** will be required:

- Positioning a hard of hearing or deafened employee in a quiet work area is important. Noisy areas such as the photocopy room, a high traffic hallway, the switch board and any areas where staff congregate (such as the lunch room, coffee room and/or water fountains) will interfere with a hard of hearing or deafened person's ability to concentrate and ultimately to hear.
- Hard of hearing employees need to be positioned so they are facing approaching people.
- Use materials that are sound absorbing on walls, floors and ceilings to cut down on the noise, and help to retain the sound where possible.
- Use offices with walls and doors.
- Place noisy office equipment in an enclosed space.
- Choose machines designed to make less noise when in operation.
- Rearrange traffic routes in work areas.

Professional services can also be beneficial in making the workplace more accommodating for hard of hearing and deafened persons.

Computerized note-takers and interpreters are contracted and paid by the hour. Meetings over two hours require two note-takers and/or interpreters, and should be booked as far in advance as possible.

Computerized note-taking has become a viable communication tool for hard of hearing and deafened people. It is an inexpensive and user-friendly system that can be used effectively in the workplace.

An operator paraphrases, summarizes and condenses what is being said, types the information into a computer which is then projected onto a screen or monitor. Depending on the skills of the operator and the speaker's rate of speech, the inputted notes can range from an abbreviated summary to a near verbatim account of the information being presented. Computerized note-taking is a beneficial tool in large meetings so that hard of hearing or deafened employees have access to all of the information being presented.

Computerized note-takers are trained professionals and bound to ethical practices such as:

- 1. Confidentiality:** The note-takers will not discuss what they have typed outside of the communication setting in which this service was provided. They do not share this information with anyone. The note-taker keeps the information in strict confidence. The transcript is deleted from the laptop at the conclusion of the session unless other arrangements are made beforehand.
- 2. Faithful note-taking:** The note-taker will type what is being said and will project the information on a large screen using a data projector, or on the laptop screen depending on the communication requirements.
- 3. Impartiality:** The note-taker types only what is being said and does not add any personal opinions and/or beliefs into the information.

A good rule of thumb is to ask the hard of hearing or deafened employee directly whether they require the services of a computerized note-taker.

Should you wish to make arrangements for a computerized note-taker to attend a workplace meeting, contact information can be found in the Resources section of this manual.

COMMUNICATING ON A DAILY BASIS

Working with all people requires flexibility, creativity, diplomacy, and resourcefulness. The focus should be on **ability** rather than disability, to obtain the best possible employee.

It is appropriate to get a hard of hearing or deafened person's attention before beginning to speak to him. This can be achieved by calling them by name, touching them on the shoulder, flicking a light switch or tapping on a table. Once eye contact is made, speak slowly, and do not over-enunciate as this tends to cause confusion when one is trying to speech-read.

Some hard of hearing or deafened persons will prefer to display the blue international symbol for hearing loss as a sticker on their office door or as a tent card on their desk. This symbol serves as a gentle reminder to others that they are communicating with a person who has different communication needs.

Find out how the hard of hearing or deafened person prefers to communicate. Speech-reading skills will vary from one individual to another. Speech reading is an aid to communication, which supplements residual hearing and the use of a hearing aid or a cochlear implant.

MEETINGS, PRESENTATIONS AND TRAINING SESSIONS

When communicating with hard of hearing and deafened persons as part of a larger group, there are strategies that will enhance the full participation of everyone:

- Provide the agenda in writing in advance of the meeting.
- Provide computerized note-taking services.
- Use an assistive listening device such as an FM system, if applicable.
- Arrange the room so that the hard of hearing person is near the speaker or the chairperson.
- Repeat the questions from the group or the floor before answering.
- Use a round table for the best visibility of all the persons present.
- Use a conference microphone.
- Use a flipchart, blackboard or overhead projector to make the key words visible.
- Turn off the equipment when not in use to reduce the humming noises.
- Provide good lighting in the meeting room.
- Discourage others from tapping on the table or clicking pens, as this may become irritating to listen to when wearing a hearing aid.
- Keep and manage a speaker's list to ensure that one person speaks at a time.
- Distribute the minutes of the meeting as soon as possible following the meeting.



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

New technology is constantly being developed to assist hard of hearing and deafened persons to cope and to live with a hearing loss. Being open to new technology and accommodating the individual's communication and hearing needs is the first step to supporting a hard of hearing or deafened employee.

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS

At work, a hard of hearing or deafened worker may not hear the telephone ringing, or may not be able to distinguish the ring of a co-worker's phone. A flashing light attached to the phone will alert the individual that their phone is ringing. Another personal signaling device will vibrate when the phone rings. Depending on the frequency of the hearing loss some telephones can be adjusted for volume, which may be all that is required for telephone access. Regardless, it is helpful if the hard of hearing or deafened person actively participates in determining which devices best suit their communication needs.



AMPLIFIED PHONES/AMPLIFIERS

Amplification devices are used by some hard of hearing and deafened persons with an adjustment to increase the volume or tone of the voice. It may be a portable unit, which can be attached to the phone so that the volume and tone of the incoming voice can be adjusted to best suit the hearing needs of the employee. Or it may be built directly into the handset of the telephone. Either system makes phone communication more accessible to the hard of hearing or deafened person.



AMPLIFIERS

A hard of hearing person may require a phone, which allows the volume of the incoming voice to be adjusted. It can be located in the handset or by a button or arrow on the phone. A portable handset amplifier can be attached to the phone so that the volume and tone of the incoming voice can be adjusted to best suit the hearing needs of the hard of hearing or deafened employee.



TELETYPEWRITERS (TTYs)

TTYs are machines, which look like small electronic typewriters with an LED screen read-out. These phones are connected directly to the phone jack and plug into an electrical outlet. TTYs can be used by hard of hearing and deafened persons to communicate directly with each other by typing, if both parties have the equipment.

VOICE CARRY OVER (VCO):

MTS runs a 24 hour, 7 day a week, (free) telephone relay service so that TTY and non TTY users can call each other. Manitoba Telecom Services (MTS) operates the Manitoba Relay Service (MRS) that enables communication through the use of specially trained operators.

A hard of hearing or deafened TTY user can access the Manitoba Relay Service (MRS) system by dialing 711 to connect with the operator. Then, picking up the handset, the person tells the operator the name and phone number of the person he/she is calling and that the Voice Carry Over (VCO) option is required. By watching the screen on the TTY, the message will be typed letting him/her know that the call has been answered.

The MRS operator will type what the hearing person is saying into a computer, which will show up on the TTY screen of the hard of hearing or deafened person. The hard of hearing or deafened person can then read what is being said and respond through voice communication directly to the hearing caller.

The MRS operators who work at MTS are professionals and follow strict confidentiality rules. The operators work at desks where they have both a computer/TTY and a telephone handset. They act as a live relay between the two parties. Long distance calls are charged at 50% off the regular rate on the monthly billing.

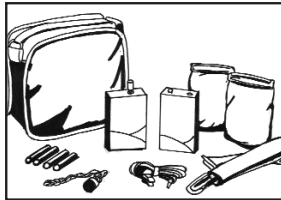
TIPS FOR USING THE MANITOBA RELAY SERVICE

- Speak slowly so the operator can type everything being said.
- Speak directly to the other individual (for example, don't say "tell him", instead just say, "Hi Joe, how are you?")

ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES (ALDs)

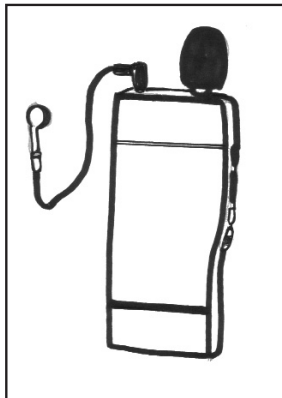
There are many devices that can be used with hearing aids or cochlear implants to allow their users to hear speech better. The speaker uses a microphone and the speech is heard through a receiver, which the hard of hearing or deafened person wears. It also helps to cut out the background noise. There are different systems depending on the needs of the individual.

EXAMPLES OF FM SYSTEMS



FM-SYSTEM

The FM system works like a mini-radio station, broadcasting on a frequency to the user's headset. FM frequencies can be transmitted through walls and consideration needs to be given for privacy especially if the speaker wearing the microphone decides to use the 'facilities' during the break. Conference microphones, which transmit the speakers' voice through FM signals can be placed in the middle of a board table or worn on an individual's lapel. The hard of hearing or deafened person wears an FM receiver to understand the speaker more clearly.



INFRARED

This technology uses an infrared light spectrum instead of sound frequencies to transmit a signal. Hard of hearing or deafened workers need to use a receiver compatible with their hearing aids and be in the area where the light signal is located. Conference microphones are also available and provide more privacy than FM systems.

Both FM and infrared systems are suitable for large and small groups. Personal FM systems are popular and may be used in group settings or one-on-one conversations in the car, while dining in restaurants, or while participating in recreational activities. Some hearing aids require a 'boot' so that the FM system can be connected directly to the aid. Other accessories such as a loop or a T-switch can be used as well, but this will depend on the type of hearing aid the individual uses.



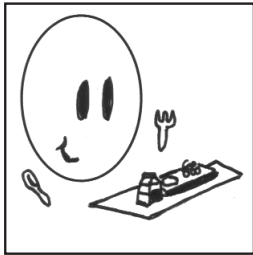
CLOSED CAPTIONING

This technology allows the hard of hearing or deafened person to read rather than to hear the speech. Many videos are available with captions, however if captions are not available on a particular training video the employer is using it is helpful to provide the hard of hearing or deafened worker with a transcript of the video.

INCLUDING HARD OF HEARING & DEAFENED STAFF SOCIALLY

Hard of hearing and deafened persons enjoy and benefit from inclusion in social activities at the workplace. It is not uncommon for hearing staff to forget that a hard of hearing or deafened co-worker may need some encouragement to join in with the group. A hard of hearing or deafened employee can often feel isolated as a result of their distinct communication needs. These feelings can lead to withdrawal from social interaction for the hard of hearing or deafened worker and ultimately impact on their employment satisfaction and performance.

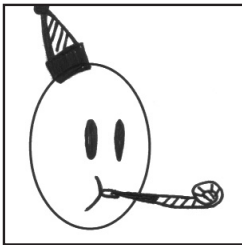
Some simple modifications may be necessary to help the hard of hearing and deafened employee to feel included. For example, if a game is being played at a social function, ensure the rules are explained in a way that the hard of hearing or deafened employee can understand. Visual instructions are beneficial, and enough time needs to be given so that the hard of hearing or deafened worker can read them, before the game begins.



LUNCHROOMS/CAFETERIAS

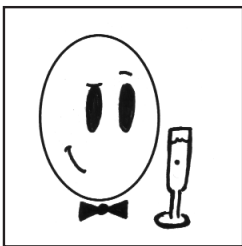
The lunchroom can be the most challenging communication setting in the workplace as it is a central gathering place for co-workers where they can relax and catch up with each other on a more personal level.

If the hard of hearing or deafened individual does not get the joke, they have not lost their sense of humor, but simply have not heard the punch line!



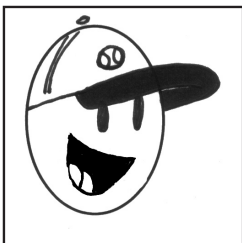
OFFICE PARTIES

As is the case in large meetings, background noise will interfere with the hard of hearing or deafened person's ability to have a conversation. When everyone is laughing and talking at once, finding a quiet spot at a Christmas party to chat one-on-one is a thoughtful and helpful way to include a hard of hearing or deafened co-worker.



RESTAURANTS

Should a staff group congregate at a restaurant, be prepared to use an assistive listening device to ensure the hard of hearing worker feels included. The device will not only help the individual to hear better, it will also block out background noise, which is often a problem in a busy restaurant.



OFFICE SPORTS TEAMS

If your place of work has a baseball or curling team, ask the hard of hearing or deafened person if they are interested in joining. Ensure they are invited when someone has a celebration for a new baby, birthday or a farewell dinner. E-mail is a wonderful way to communicate information to hard of hearing and deafened employees, as it can be read and retained for future reference.

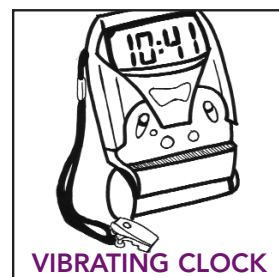
ACCESSIBILITY AT HOME

Sometimes, a hard of hearing or deafened person on your staff may work from home. You can help make this easier.

There are a number of technical devices that can be used in the home by hard of hearing and deafened individuals. Some of these may relate to a person's job more directly than others, depending on the nature of the person's work:

- Light systems may be used to alert the hard of hearing or deafened person that the phone is ringing, someone is at the door, a baby is crying or the smoke detector is ringing.
- Flashing lights may also be used to tell the hard of hearing or deafened person the alarm is ringing in the morning, or a vibrating alarm under the pillow or mattress will shake them awake.
- Closed captioning can be used when watching television so that the hard of hearing or deafened individual can read the news or understand the dialogue of a movie.
- Headphones using FM (radio waves) or Infrared technology can be used, which allows the volume to be adjusted to the required level by the hard of hearing or deafened individual, without interfering with others.
- Telephone amplification and/or a flashing light or a TTY with VCO (Voice Carry Over) may be used to read the incoming calls.
- E-mail and computers are another way for hard of hearing or deafened individuals to communicate with others at home.

Regardless of the technology used at home, the hard of hearing or deafened employee should ensure they are accessible to the employer when necessary.



HEARING EAR DOGS

Dogs specifically trained to assist hard of hearing or deafened individuals are of great value especially for one who is living alone. Often the hard of hearing or deafened person prefers to rely on a hearing ear dog rather than family and friends to alert them to various environmental sounds.



The dog will alert his owner to the sound of the telephone, the doorbell, a kettle boiling, the alarm ringing, a baby crying or danger such as a fire. The dogs are free to travel on public transportation with a hard of hearing or deafened person, provided they are identified as such.

BASIC TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH HARD OF HEARING & DEAFENED PERSONS

Whether at work, at home or out in the community, there are some basic things you can do to enhance your communication with hard of hearing and deafened persons:

- Ensure the light is on your face and not behind you.
- Get the person's attention before beginning to speak as the hard of hearing or deafened person may miss the initial communication if they are not facing you directly. For example they may only hear the words "time-off" and be unclear as to why or when.
- Ask the hard of hearing or deafened person how you can help to make communication more effective.
- Avoid noisy backgrounds.
- Face the person directly.
- Move closer to the person if necessary, but be careful not to invade their personal space.
- Do not shout or over-emphasize words.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Don't cover your mouth, chew gum or food, or smoke while talking.
- Use facial expressions, gestures, and body language.
- Rephrase if not understood, but don't keep repeating the same words.
- Write down key words.
- Give clues when changing the subject. (For example, "I am going to talk about something different now.") It gives notice to watch for different types of words while speech reading.

Most importantly, treat the person with RESPECT:

- Be patient if the response is delayed.
- Talk directly to the hard of hearing or deafened person and maintain eye contact.
- Do not be afraid to ask how the hard of hearing or deafened person prefers to communicate.
- Use notes, computers, e-mails, or note-taking for communication.
- Call the hard of hearing or deafened person by name.

RESOURCES FOR HARD OF HEARING & DEAFENED PERSONS

The Society for Manitobans with Disabilities

Head Office

825 Sherbrook Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3A 1M5

Voice: (204) 975-3010
Toll Free: 1-866-282-8041
TTY: (204) 975-3012
TTY: 1-800-856-7934
Fax: (204) 975-3073

Westman Office (Brandon)

Voice: (204) 726-6157
Toll Free: 1-800-813-3325
TTY: (204) 726-6157
Fax: (204) 726-6499

Parkland Office (Dauphin)

Voice and TTY: (204) 622-2293
Toll free: 1-800-844-2307
Fax: (204) 622-2260

Eastman Office (Steinbach)

Voice: (204) 326-5336
Toll Free: 1-800-497-8196
TTY: (204) 346-3998
Fax: (204) 326-9762

Interlake Office (Selkirk)

Voice: (204) 785-9338
Toll Free: 1-888-831-4213
TTY: (204) 482-5638
Fax: (204) 785-9340

Central Office (Morden)

Voice and TTY: (204) 822-1947
Toll Free: 1-800-269-5451
Fax: (204) 822-1948

Northern Office (Thompson)

Voice and TTY: (204) 788-4277
Toll Free: 1-888-367-0268
Fax: (204) 778-4461

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

Manitoba Chapter

C/O SMD Self-Help Clearing House
825 Sherbrook Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3A 1M5

Voice: (204) 975-3037
Fax: 975-3027

Winnipeg League for the Hard of Hearing

C/O SMD Self-Help Clearing House
825 Sherbrook Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3A 1M5

Voice: (204) 975-3037
Fax: 975-3027

Independent Interpreter Referral Service (ECCOE)

200 – One Market Road (The Forks)
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 4L9

Voice: (204) 475-6332
TTY: (204) 452-0687
Fax: (204) 452-0688
Email: iirs@mts.net
Web: www.eccoe.com

Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada

P.O. Box 907, 152 Wilson Street,
Oakville, Ontario L6J 5E8

Voice: 905-842-2891 or 1-800-768 3030
TTY: 905-842-1585
Fax: 905-842-3373
E-mail: info@dogguides.com
Web: www.dogguides.com

MTS Special Needs

For more information:
In Winnipeg: 941-8557
Toll Free outside Winnipeg: 1-800-542-8703.
TTY: 1-800-942-4942 or 1-866-238-2539.
Fax: 1-204-949-0570 or 1-866-238-2538.

Manitoba Relay Service

Hearing Persons call: 1-800-855-0511
Hard of Hearing or Deafened Persons dial: 711
(toll-free)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We would also like to acknowledge Rosalyn Sutley, for her teaching expertise, the guest speakers who attended the in-class portion of the project and especially the participants themselves, who demonstrated a keen desire to learn and share their experiences with us.

Special thanks go to the employers who participated in this project and demonstrated a commitment to working with and hiring hard of hearing and deafened workers.

- Montessori School
- Bee Clean
- Canad Inn
- The Church of the Rock,
- The Federation Provinciale des Comites de Parents du Manitoba
- The Forks North Portage Partnership

Finally, many thanks go to our funders who made this project possible.

- The Opportunities Fund, Human Resources and Skill Development of Canada
- Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities, Family Services and Housing

SOCIETY FOR MANITOBANS WITH DISABILITIES



SOCIETY FOR MANITOBANS WITH DISABILITIES

825 SHERBROOK STREET
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TELEPHONE: (204) 975-3010
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TTY: (204) 975-3012
TOLL-FREE TTY: 1-800-225-9108