



# Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Persons

*Improving Communication, Changing Lives*

April 2, 2020

NVRC is sending this information via regular mail to its membership and will have the information available online at its website [nvrc.org](http://nvrc.org) and Facebook pages. Please consider completing the included medical card, reviewing this information and downloading those apps that work for you **BEFORE** you need to go to the hospital.

Thank you and we hope you all stay well.

*~NVRC Staff Andaleeb, Bonnie, Bruce, Debbie, Eileen and Leah*

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**Please note: This guide was prepared by a coalition of consumer advocacy groups\* that advocate for the rights of deaf and hard of hearing people to help get you ready for your hospital visit. It is edited here.**

**How Do I Communicate with Doctors, Nurses, and Staff at the Hospital During COVID-19?**  
Going to the hospital will be very different during this pandemic.

**This Information can be also be found <https://www.nad.org/covid19-communication-medical-access-for-deaf-hard-of-hearing/> It will be updated as needed.**

In normal times, hospitals must give services that help you understand what is being said and are supposed to ask you what services you need. This might include in-person sign language interpreters, Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), lip-reading, written communications, hand-held amplification devices, captioning or CART, or speech-to-text apps.

Now, during the pandemic, most hospitals are seeing a large number of patients and often **cannot provide the same services**. Many hospitals will **not** allow in-person interpreters, family members, or visitors to come into the hospital with you. **You may be alone for a long time when you are in the hospital.**

**Most doctors and nurses in hospitals now wear masks and gloves and may talk to you from behind a window or curtain**, so it may be harder for you to communicate with them.

You have the right to decide your care. This means **you will need to know a few things and bring your own communication tools** to the hospital during the pandemic:

- Print out a page/medical placard saying you are deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind and need hospital staff to communicate with you differently.
- If you have a smartphone, load the apps you need to communicate, and bring your smartphone with you.
- Before you need to go to the hospital, download several VRI apps and/or speech-to-text apps. Some of these apps are free.
  - List of apps is available at the website listed above.
  - Test the apps at home before you need to go to the hospital.
  - Keep in mind you may have to use your smartphone using your cellular connection only in case the hospital does not have Wi-Fi.

- When you get to the hospital, ask hospital staff to let you use their Wi-Fi, and to put you in an area with strong Wi-Fi if possible.
- Tell hospital staff to communicate with you through your smartphone with VRI or speech-to-text apps.
- **If you do not have a smartphone, bring or ask hospital staff for something to write on and pens or markers.**
- **Bring an emergency bag with items you need to communicate. Label the bag and items with your name. Leave space on the label to add your hospital room number. The emergency bag can include:**
  - Paper and pens or markers
  - Plugs and chargers for your smartphone
  - Tablets and/or laptops with their associated chargers
  - A cellular hotspot in case the hospital WiFi is not working
  - An extension cord or power strip in case your bed is too far from an outlet
  - Extra eyewear supplies you might need, such as reading glasses to read the speech to text on a phone app
  - Extra batteries for your hearing aids, cochlear implants, or assistive listening devices
  - A copy of your advance medical directive, if you have one. You can find more information and instructions to make an advance directive on AARP's website.
  - Emergency contact information for family members or friends
  - For DeafBlind people, Braille devices and chargers and extra gloves for an interpreter to use
- **If the hospital staff refuses to talk with you or respect your wishes, demand an "ethics consultation."** You can also contact [ConsumerGroups@DHHCAN.org](mailto:ConsumerGroups@DHHCAN.org) for help.

# List of Technology Tools

While we do not endorse any specific tools or vendors, we are sharing a short list of known applications in alphabetical order. It is important to test and practice using any application before you need to go to the hospital.

For face-to-face communication, you may want to consider supplemental speech-to-text options for understanding hearing people. You may also want to consider options for typing text back as a backup option. Some tools can translate between different languages.

## Video Interpreting

Linguabee is offering free video interpreting for COVID-19 testing  
<https://www.linguabee.com/covid19/free-vri>

## Speech to Text

Ava (can type back, many languages) (iOS, Android)  
Google Live Transcribe (can type back, many languages) (Android)  
Microsoft Translator (can type back, can translate, many languages) (iOS, Android, Windows)  
Otter.ai (English only) (iOS, Android)  
Web Captioner (many languages) (universal web page)

## Typing Back

Big Note (iOS, Android)  
Cardzilla (iOS, Android)  
Google Keep (iOS, Android)  
Sorenson Buzz Cards (iOS, Android)

## Phone calls

You may want to consider having more than one **video relay service (VRS)** provider's app on your phone, in case your provider of choice experiences technical difficulties.

Convo (iOS, Android)	Global (iOS, Android)	Purple (iOS, Android)
Sorenson (iOS, Android)	ZVRS (iOS, Android)	

You may want to consider having more than one **captioned** telephone provider's app on your phone, in case your provider of choice experiences technical difficulties.

CaptionCall (iOS)	ClearCaptions (iOS)
Hamilton CapTel (Android 7 or older)	InnoCaption (iOS, Android)
Sprint Web CapTel (universal web page)	

## Text-based options for phone calls

IP Relay (iOS, Android)  
Mobile TTY or real-time text (RTT) calling 711 (iOS, some Android)

In addition to the tools above, persons who are **DeafBlind** may want to load an application that can display text in large type.

Apple Notes (built in on iOS)

Make it Big (iOS)

Cardzilla (iOS)

\*This guide was developed by deaf and hard of hearing groups, deaf doctors, and other experts:

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- Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Loss
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- Christopher J. Moreland, M.D., MPH, Associate Professor of Medicine, UT Health San Antonio
- Gallaudet University Technology Access Program/Deaf Hard of Hearing Technology RERC
- Gallaudet University Deaf Health Communication and Quality of Life Center
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- Jim House – TDI Board of Directors; and Disability Integration Manager for the WA Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning
- Michael McKee, M.D., MPH, Associate Professor of Family Medicine, University of Michigan
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD)\*
- Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)\*
- Samuelson-Glushko Technology Law & Policy Clinic at Colorado Law (counsel to TDI)
- Rob Roth, (retired) executive director for non-profit social service agencies serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities
- Teresa Blankmeyer Burke, Ph.D., Bioethicist & Philosopher, Gallaudet University