

Mental Health Care Accessibility
FOR THE
DEAF COMMUNITY



nami

Mercer

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Serving the New Jersey Capital Area

SHEDDING LIGHT ON ISSUES RELATED TO
HEALTH CARE INEQUITY FOR THE DEAF
COMMUNITY AND HOW TO NAVIGATE IT.



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This toolkit was brought to you by NAMI Mercer and created by Jacob Adam, an intern at NAMI Mercer. The deaf and hard of hearing community often face many adversities with accessibility in many points during the day, rarely finding adequate care and accommodations.



IN REGARDS TO MENTAL HEALTH, ACCESIBILITY IS INCREDIBLY HARD TO FIND, EVEN WITH THE BOOM OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH.

PEOPLE OF FULL HEARING SHOULD BE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE STRUGGLES AND THE DEAF COMMUNITY SHOULD KNOW OF RESOURCES AND SOLUTIONS TO COMBAT THIS ONGOING ISSUE.

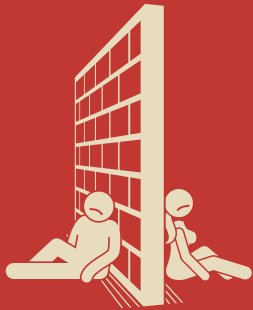
Understanding Deafness

- Deafness is a spectrum that encompasses various levels of hearing loss, ranging from mild to profound. It can be congenital or acquired later in life due to factors such as illness, injury, or aging.



- Deaf culture is a vibrant and distinct cultural community with its own language (American Sign Language, or ASL), traditions, and values. Many individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing identify strongly with this culture and consider themselves members of the Deaf community.

Barriers of Accessing Mental Health Services



Communication Barriers

With having little to no qualified sign language interpreters or other communication accommodations, deaf individuals will struggle to effectively communicate their needs and experiences to mental health professionals.



Stigma and Discrimination

Fear of discrimination or negative reactions from healthcare providers and others in the community may discourage deaf individuals from seeking professional help for mental health concerns, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment.



Limited Access to Information and Resources

Deaf individuals often encounter barriers in accessing mental health information, educational materials, and resources that are available in accessible formats like American Sign Language videos or written materials in plain language.



Financial Barriers

Out-of-pocket costs for sign language interpreters or specialized therapy services may be prohibitive for some deaf individuals, particularly those with limited financial resources.

EFFECT OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Higher risk of trauma and victimization

Feelings of social rejection, loneliness, and lack of human dignity

Poorer Health Literacy

Misinterpretation of person's thoughts and needs

Misdiagnoses



Statistics



40% of deaf children have prevalence in mental health struggles contrasted to 25% of their hearing counterparts via the National Institute for Mental Health in England

“33.8% of deaf individuals had either depression or anxiety versus only 6.8% for hearing individual counterparts” - (Kvam et al. 2007)

“...deaf community suffers from mental health issues twice as much as the rest of the population.” - (National Deaf Therapy, 2023)





CALL TO ACTION

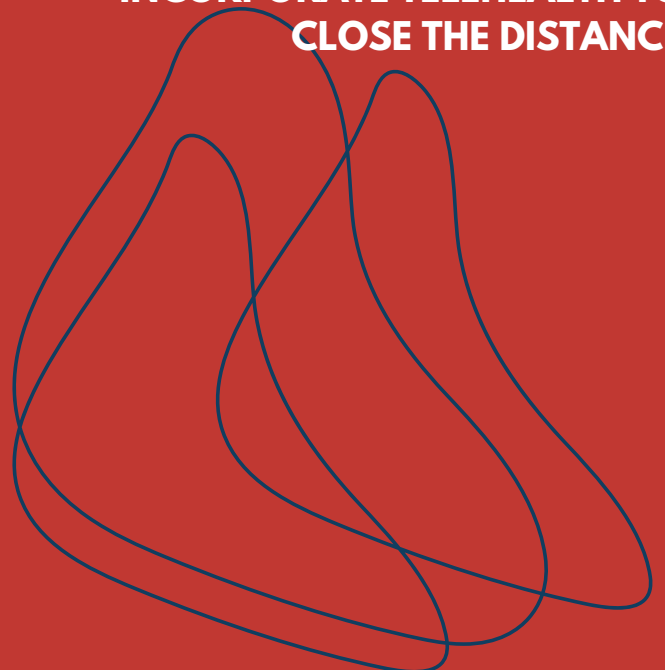


EDUCATION

- **HAVE ASL CLASSES**
- **MAKE ASL COUNT AS A LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT**
- **HAVE CLASSES ON DEAF CULTURE**

IN COUNSELING WORKFORCE

- **CREATE CONTINUING EDUCATION WORKSHOPS**
- **UTILIZE A LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TO EDUCATE PROFESSIONALS**
- **INCORPORATE TELEHEALTH TO CLOSE THE DISTANCE**



Accessibility Through Technology

Mental Health Services



Teletherapy

Teletherapy platforms that offer American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters can provide accessible mental health services for deaf individuals, permitting them to communicate with therapists and counselors remotely.

BetterHelp is an example of this.



Captioned Mental Health Apps

Mental health apps that include captions and subtitles for videos and audio content can ensure accessibility for deaf individuals regardless of hearing status who rely on written language for communication.

Headspace is an example of this.



Text-Based Therapy Platforms

Text-based therapy platforms offer asynchronous communication with licensed therapists via messaging, chat, or email, making mental health support accessible to deaf individuals who prefer written communication.

Talkspace is an example of this.

Resources & Organizations

Resources:



New Jersey Association
of the Deaf

Urgent 24/7 Mental Health
Advice Line for families of deaf
individuals—>

Call 0300-303-0165

<https://vimeo.com/425381423>



Deaf-Hearing
Communication Centre



Deaf Counseling
Center(DCC) The New
Jersey Office

Organizations:



PAHrtners Deaf Services in PA

Conclusion

Mental health accessibility for all communities is something to advocate for, for we as a society aim to continue to move the goalpost. Being the voice of the voiceless for this community will bring us one step closer to that. People in deaf and hard-of-hearing communities should have just as many ways to connect with others and mental health professionals, so acknowledging the shallow depth of information and coverage in this community will create leaps and bounces of progress for the future. By spreading awareness about deaf culture, and American Sign Language, those who are deaf and their loved ones will have better access to resources and know where to find to a sense of belonging.



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