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Overcoming COVID-19 Communication Challenges

It is no secret the COVID-19 pandemic created many communication challenges for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have difficulty speaking. While masks made it impossible to read lips and facial expressions, social distancing forced us all to rely more on virtual communication, which has been a barrier for those with limited access to or understanding of technology.

Thankfully, with COVID-19 vaccines becoming more readily available, and mask mandates lifting in certain settings, more of us will soon be able to return to in-person gatherings and traditional face-to-face communication. But until the pandemic is completely behind us, and all mask mandates are lifted, here are a few tips to help you safely and effectively communicate with individuals living with hearing loss:

- 1. Wear a clear mask.** Masks are now optional in most public spaces, but still required in settings like hospitals, medical offices, care facilities, schools, and customer service centers. When you do put on a mask, why not choose a clear one? Companies like ClearMask (TheClearMask.com) have developed see-through masks that effectively protect against the spread of germs and do not fog up, ensuring the wearer's mouth is always visible.
- 2. Write it down or type it out.** While it might not be ideal to share a pen and paper at this time, mobile phones can be a useful tool if you find yourself speaking to someone who is having difficulty understanding you. Try typing out what you are saying in your messaging app or using a dictation app.

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About the PSC & Georgia Relay

The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for the establishment, implementation, administration and promotion of Georgia Relay. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Georgia Relay allows people who have difficulty hearing or speaking to communicate with any standard phone user. To make a Georgia Relay call, dial 7-1-1.



Learning More About the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit

This pandemic has increased our need for virtual communication more than ever! Online chat rooms have become the new hangouts, and video calls have become the new conference rooms. However, the internet isn't financially available to everyone. To help keep people connected, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established a program called the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB). Working with select internet providers, EBB offers temporary discounts on monthly broadband bills for qualifying low-income households.

Ready to benefit from this program? Follow these steps:

- 1. Check If You Qualify** – Visit [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](https://www.getemergencybroadband.org) to see if your household fits into any eligible categories
- 2. Apply for the Emergency Broadband Benefit** – Choose how you want to apply and submit all necessary documents
- 3. Find a Broadband Provider Near You** – Use the EBB search tool to find a company that offers discounts in your area

For more information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit, or to find out if your household qualifies, visit [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](https://www.getemergencybroadband.org).

OVERCOMING COVID-19 COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES CONTINUED...

And remember that using hand gestures while speaking can greatly help a person who is deaf or hard of hearing understand you—especially when your lips are covered by a mask or you're choosing to keep a safe distance.

- 3. Turn on captions.** Whether you are communicating one-on-one or in a group conference, turning on automatic captioning is a simple way to ensure everyone participating in the meeting can understand what is said. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other popular video chat apps offer free captioning, as well as other helpful features like the ability to change the size and color of fonts and pinning or spotlighting certain screens to ensure the speaker or ASL interpreter is always visible.

Ready to further your communication capabilities? Visit us at [GeorgiaRelay.org](https://www.GeorgiaRelay.org) to see how we make communicating by telephone easy, accessible, and reliable for everyone, including people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or have difficulty speaking.



We know everyone is excited to head outside this summer, but it's important to keep safety in mind! Before you head to the beach or go on that hike, we've got a few tips for you to keep in your fanny pack:

Waterproof Your Hearing Devices

If you plan on hitting the pool, swimming in the ocean, or relaxing at the lake this summer, make sure your hearing aids or cochlear implant attachments are appropriately prepared for the waves and water. If you are unable to make them water-resistant, safely store them away before jumping in the deep end.

Protect Against the Sun

The sun is especially bright during the summer. To avoid glare or additional damage to your eyes, wear a hat or sunglasses. And don't be shy with the sunscreen!

Head Safety

If you plan on getting on a bike, wear a helmet and goggles to further protect your noggin.

Talk to Safety Professionals

If your child is blind or deaf, make sure you talk to a lifeguard or other safety professional to inform them on the proper ways to get your child's attention. It's best to be prepared—even when they're having fun in the summer sun.



Georgia Relay Partner
Dial 7-1-1

Join Georgia Relay Partner to Make Strong Connections with Your Customers

Providing excellent customer service should be a high priority for every business and organization—and that includes communicating with customers, clients, or other community members effectively over the phone. To ensure Georgia-based businesses and organizations can connect with as many people as possible—including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or have difficulty speaking—Georgia Relay offers a beneficial training opportunity, known as Georgia Relay Partner.

As a Georgia Relay Partner, any Georgia business or organization—of any industry or size—can receive FREE virtual or in-person training to learn best practices for placing and receiving calls with Georgia Relay users. In addition to free training, all Georgia Relay Partners receive a host of useful training and marketing materials to use as a reference after their training is complete.

Georgia Relay Partner Materials Include:

- Relay Partner Guide
- Employee Guide
- Calling Tips Flyer
- Relay Fraud Prevention Flyer
- An official Georgia Relay Partner certificate and window decal

Not only will your Relay customers recognize your dedication to serving them, but your business or organization will reach more individuals—increasing sales and growing customer loyalty. As an added benefit, your business or organization will also be included in our Georgia Relay Partner online business directory—allowing Relay users to easily access your contact information.

Stay connected with MORE customers. Visit GeorgiaRelay.org/Relay-Partner-Program to learn more and register your business or organization now!



What's Happening at Georgia Relay

See what we've been up to and what exciting events we've participated in this summer!

May 21, 2021

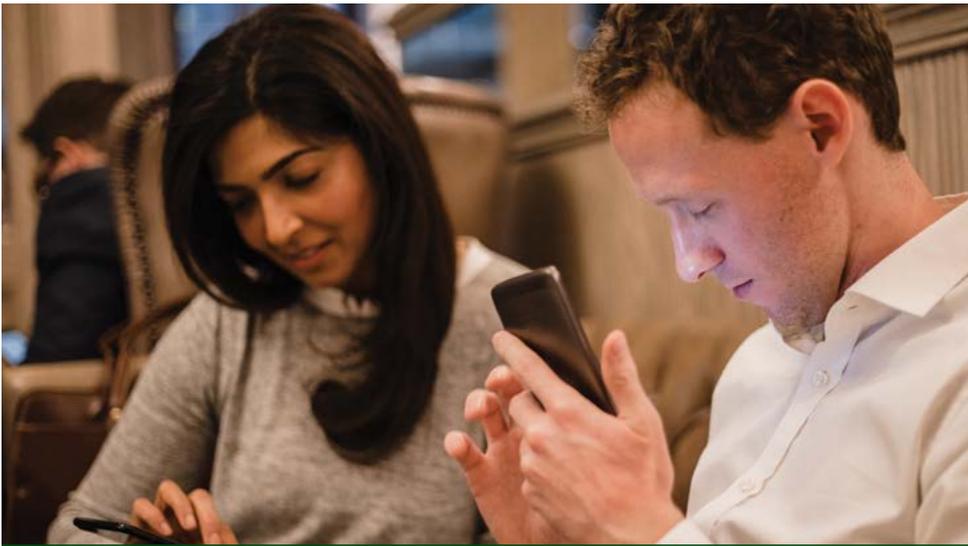
Outreach Coordinator Brendan Underwood participated in the Southwest Georgia Council on Aging's Older Adult Health Fair

July 26, 2021

Georgia Relay celebrated the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

July 27, 2021

Georgia Relay, the Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Tools for Life hosted a virtual Community Resource Fair, where each organization had the opportunity to share information about their programs and services and how they serve the community with assistive communication solutions



Congratulations to 2021 Hamilton Relay Scholarship Winner, Darison Daggett

Make the Call with Deaf-Blind Service (DBS)

Did you know that Georgia Relay offers calling support to individuals with combined hearing and vision loss? Deaf-Blind Service (DBS) uses a combination of specialized equipment, such as a TeleBraille or deaf-blind communicator, and the assistance of a Communication Assistant (CA), to allow individuals who are deaf-blind to place and receive telephone calls.

Each year, Hamilton Relay presents an opportunity for high school seniors who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or have difficulty speaking to apply for a scholarship to benefit their continued education.

This year's recipient in Georgia is Darison Daggett, a native of Rome, Georgia, and a student at the Georgia School for the Deaf. Darison was awarded the \$500 Hamilton Relay Scholarship after completing the application process and writing an essay about communication technology.

"Hamilton takes pride in recognizing outstanding leadership and promoting education," says Brendan Underwood, Georgia Relay outreach coordinator. "We are excited to have the opportunity to contribute to furthering Darison's education and wish him success in reaching his personal and professional goals."

Darison plans to study film and animation this fall at the Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Congratulations on your success, Darison, and best of luck at NTID!

Here is how the process works:

1. Using specialized equipment, the DBS user dials 7-1-1 or 1-800-255-0056 to reach Georgia Relay.
2. The CA will answer by identifying Georgia Relay and typing "NUMBER TO CALL PLS Q GA."
3. The user provides the area code and telephone number they want to call, as well as any additional instructions.
4. Once the call is connected, the CA will type everything said by the other party word for word, along with any background noises.
5. When the DBS user reads "GA," it is their turn to respond. They can type their message and add "GA" when they are ready for a response. The conversation will proceed in this manner until the call is complete.
6. When the DBS user has completed their side of the conversation, they type "GA TO SK" to close the call.

To ensure each DBS call is up to the user's standards, there are features such as Slow Type Buffer to make sure the conversation flows at the user's chosen pace. This feature allows the DBS user to select their preferred speed when receiving the typed text from the CA. Users can select their received typed-text pace by creating a Georgia Relay Customer Profile, so CAs are alerted of the user's communication preferences at the start of every call. If a user finds it difficult to keep up with the text during a DBS call, or it is too slow, the CA can adjust the speed during the call as needed.

Customer Corner: Say Hello to the Latest Devices

With technology constantly advancing, many new assistive telecommunications devices have become available to offer even greater capabilities to individuals who find it difficult to communicate using a standard telephone.

With equipment provided by the **Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (GATEDP)**, qualified Georgia residents who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have difficulty speaking, can find the solutions they need to stay plugged in and connected to their world. Check out some of the latest communication solutions—and their special features—offered to qualified Georgians through GATEDP:



CapTel® 2400i

Much like its predecessors, the CapTel 2400i displays easy-to-follow captions for hard of hearing users during phone conversations. With 40 decibel amplification, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi compatibility, and a high-tech touch screen to easily navigate the device's settings, this latest model does a great job of making communication a breeze.

QuattroPro

This nifty device is a personal amplifier users can wear around their necks—so they always have it when they need it! With the ability to connect to hearing aids, cellphones, and other Bluetooth compatible devices, the QuattroPro makes it easier for users to hear what other people are saying to them.



Panasonic KXTGM450

Reaching up to 50 decibels, this amplified phone comes in a wireless or landline option and is an excellent communication tool for individuals who are hard of hearing. Some of its most notable features include a speakerphone option, Volume Boost control settings, Noise Reduction, Slow Talk for reviewing voicemail messages and to pace speech during calls, and more.

Sonic Alert HomeAware

This visual alert is here to make you aware of your surroundings. With an easy-to-read scrolling display, bright lights to catch your attention, bed shakers, and an amplified alarm, you will never miss another call, doorbell ring, or emergency signal ever again.



Learn more about the qualification and application process and apply now at www.gcdhh.org/gatedp.

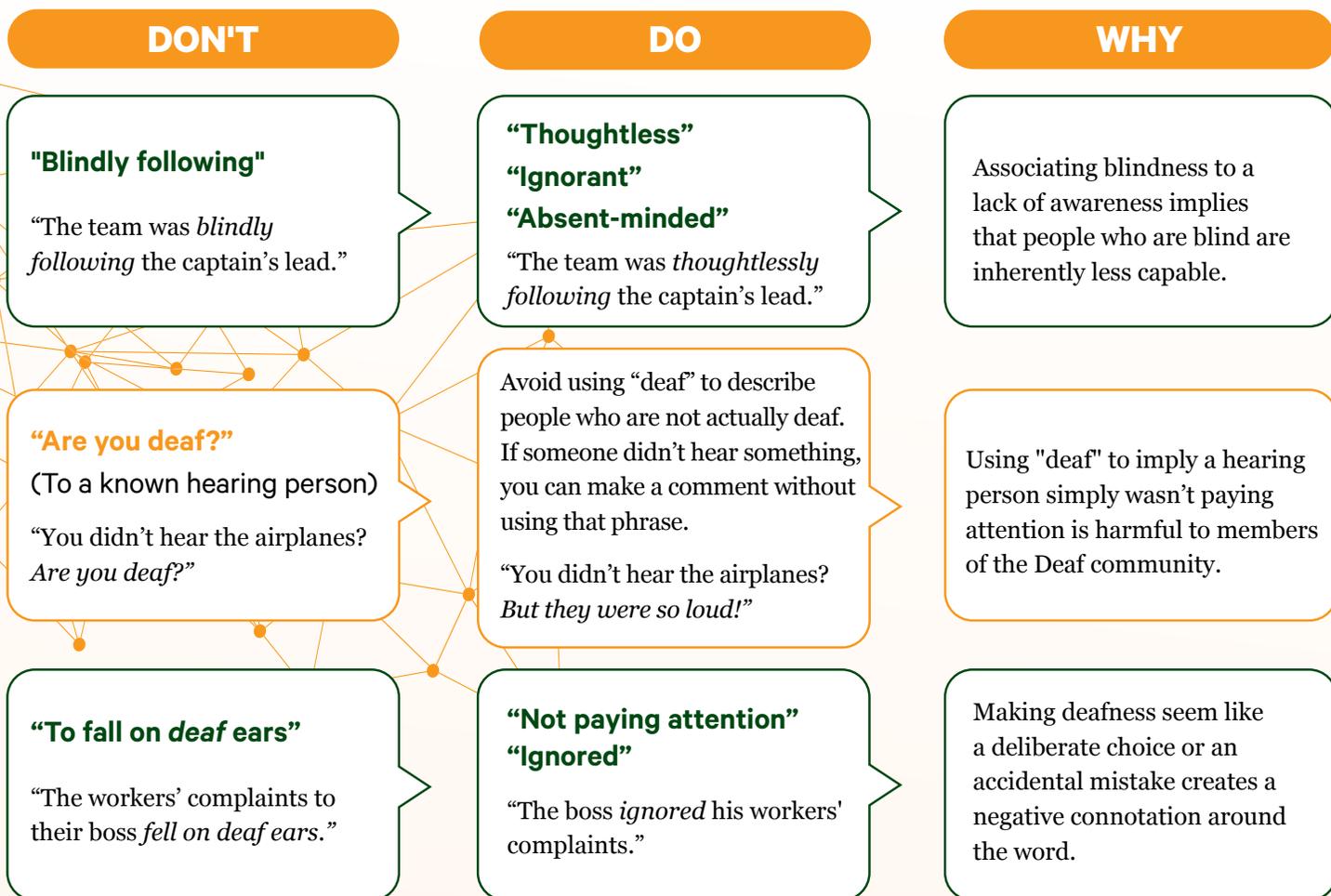
CapTel® is a registered trademark of Ultratec, Inc

FEDERAL LAW PROHIBITS ANYONE BUT REGISTERED USERS WITH HEARING LOSS FROM USING INTERNET PROTOCOL (IP) CAPTIONED TELEPHONES WITH THE CAPTIONS TURNED ON. IP Captioned Telephone Service may use a live operator. The operator generates captions of what the other party to the call says. These captions are then sent to your phone. There is a cost for each minute of captions generated, paid from a federally administered fund.



Ableist Language: Dos, Don'ts, and Whys

Did you know that a lot of common phrases used today are riddled with ableist language? To help combat any offensive wording, we've listed a few examples for those who would like to be better allies to their friends and family who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or deaf-blind.



CAMP JULIENA

Goes Virtual This Summer



The Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's Camp Julienna is back for the summer. This seasonal escape has provided opportunities for children who are deaf and hard of hearing to connect with new friends and develop beneficial life skills since the summer of 1992.

This summer, campers ages 6-13 who are deaf or hard of hearing are participating in a week of virtual fun. From team-building skills to memories and friendships that will last a lifetime, Camp Julienna has everything a young camper could ever need!

Learn more at www.gcdhh.org/camp-juliena.

DON'T

"Blind spot"

"The coach had a *blind spot* for building team chemistry."

"Turning a blind eye"

"The professor often *turned a blind eye* on the students cheating on the exam."

"Tone-deaf"

(In a musical context)

"The same senior was cast as the lead in every musical, despite being *tone-deaf*."

(In a nonmusical context)

"The overexcited intern was *tone-deaf* to the quiet atmosphere of their new job."

DO

"Unable to understand" "Can't see how important"

"The coach *didn't understand the importance* of building team chemistry."

"Choosing to ignore"

"The professor often *chose to ignore* the students cheating on the exam."

"Can't match pitch" "Struggles with singing"

(In a musical context)

"The same senior was cast as the lead in every musical, despite *struggling with singing*."

"Can't read the room" "Doesn't pick up on..."

(In a nonmusical context)

"The overexcited intern *didn't pick up* on the quiet atmosphere of their new job."

WHY

Using "blind" to describe an inability to understand falsely implies that people who are blind have a lower capacity for understanding.

This phrasing associates blindness with ignorance, which implies that the Blind community is inherently ignorant.

Once again, we are associating deafness with ignorance and pushing a negative connotation onto the Deaf community.

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Customer Care

1-866-694-5824 (Voice/TTY)

To use Georgia Relay

7-1-1 or 1-800-255-0056 (TTY)

www.GeorgiaRelay.org



Visit us on Facebook at
[Facebook.com/GeorgiaRelay](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaRelay)



2231 Dawson Rd., Suite W
Albany, GA 31707

Cook's Corner: Lemon Bars

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour and powdered sugar together then pour in the butter. Mix gently until just crumbly. Lightly spray a 9x13 dish with cooking spray then press the crust firmly into the pan. Bake for 15 minutes.
2. While the crust is baking, make the lemon curd. In bowl, whip the eggs until they are well-blended and light. Add the sugar, baking powder, and flour and stir to combine well. Add zest and lemon juice and mix well.
3. After the crust has finished baking, pull from the oven, and immediately pour the curd mixture over the hot crust. Put back in the oven for 45 minutes or until set.
4. Let cool completely before slicing into squares. Dust with powdered sugar and enjoy!

INGREDIENTS:

Crust:

3 cups of flour
1 1/2 cups of powdered sugar
1 1/2 cups of butter (3 sticks), melted

Lemon Curd:

6 eggs
3 cups of sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons of baking powder
1/2 cup of flour
1/3 cup of lemon juice
Zest from 3 lemons

