

302.1 PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- I. PURPOSE: The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines to ensure effective communication with individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind or speech impaired.
- II. DISCUSSION: The Tampa Police Department is committed to ensuring that a consistent, high level of service is provided to all community members, including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind or speech impaired. The Tampa Police Department requires all members to adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure effective communication with individuals, regardless if they are victim, witness, suspect, arrestee, or immediate family members needing information.
- III. DEFINITIONS:
 - A. Person who is Deaf: an individual who has severe hearing loss.
 - B. Person who is Hard of Hearing: an individual who has impaired but functional sense of hearing.
 - C. Person who is Deaf/Blind: an individual who has severe hearing loss and significant vision impairment.
 - D. Person who is Speech Impaired: an individual who has an impaired ability to produce speech sounds and may range from mild to severe.
 - E. Qualified Interpreter: an individual who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively (what the person is saying) and expressively (conveying information back to that person).
 - F. Certified Interpreter: an individual holding a certification in interpretation such as: National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Certification, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Certification, and Oral Translation Certification (OTC).
 - G. Communication Aids:
 - 1. Pad and pen
 - 2. Text via cell phone
 - 3. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)
 - 4. Teletypewriter (TTY)
 - 5. Assistive listening systems
 - 6. Interpreters
 - 7. Videophone

- H. Florida Relay System: a service provided to the residents in the State of Florida who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind, or Speech Disabled that connects them to standard (voice) telephone users 24/7.
- I. American Sign Language (ASL): a language for the deaf in which meaning is conveyed by a system of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the upper body.

IV. PROCEDURE:

- A. The key to communicating effectively is to consider the nature, length, complexity, and content of the communication and the person's normal method of communication.
 - 1. In a simple encounter, such as a traffic stop or giving directions, a notepad and pencil or even gestures might be sufficient.
 - 2. During an initial complaint or report, the officer will need to obtain information from the complainant/victim/witness by the means chosen by the individual.
 - 3. During interrogations and arrests, a sign language interpreter will often be necessary. However, if an individual who does not have a hearing disability would be subject to police action without interrogation, then the same would be applied to an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. However, an interpreter might be necessary to explain the action being taken.
 - 4. In an emergency situation, an officer's immediate priority is to stabilize the situation. Once the scene and/or person(s) are secured, protocol for effective communication should be followed.
 - 5. In some situations, a person with a hearing disability might have a companion with them that can translate. These persons often lack the impartiality and specialized vocabulary needed to interpret effectively and accurately, so using them may not be appropriate at times.
- B. During more involved communications, or at the request of the person with a hearing disability, a more formal communication aid will be required.
- C. When an officer encounters an individual who requires a type of communication aid, that individual will know which communication method is best for them. The officer should honor the individual's choice unless it would significantly interfere with the officer's law enforcement responsibilities or the officer is confident that the other means of communicating, that may be easier to provide, are just as

effective. Remember that persons who are deaf or hard of hearing must be able to understand the officer as well as those who do not have hearing impairments.

- D. Upon encountering any person with whom an officer needs to communicate, the officer will not wait for the person to specifically request communication accommodation once it becomes apparent that communication difficulty exists. Rather, the officer must take the initiative to inquire as to whether the citizen feels that he or she needs communication assistance and the citizen's preference as to the nature of the assistance needed. The citizen's preference should be accommodated if appropriate and reasonable. Reports should reflect all circumstances relating to the communication difficulty, the officer's inquiry concerning the citizen's preference, and the nature of any accommodating actions taken. The foregoing applies equally to physical communication limitations (SOP 302.1) as well as limited English proficiency situations (SOP 302).
- E. Using the Florida Relay System:
 - 1. If the individual has access to a TTY:
 - 2. Dial 7-1-1.
 - 3. A specially trained Florida Relay Operator will answer and identify themselves by their operator number.
 - 4. Give the operator the phone number of the person you are calling.
 - 5. The operator will connect you with the person you are calling and will assist you with communication through typing your conversation to them and reading the replies/questions to you.
- F. Using Video Relay Service:
 - 1. If the individual has a videophone device and service and initiates contact with the provider:
 - 2. The individual has the video interpreter (VI) call the number of the person they need to contact.
 - 3. The VI places the call and interprets as a neutral, non-participating third party. Anything that the audio user says is signed to the video user, and anything signed by the video user is spoken to the audio user.
- G. Using an Interpreter:
 - 1. Contact TPD Communications to arrange for ASL interpreters.
 - 2. ASL is the most common, but there is also Signed English as well as Foreign Sign Languages.
 - 3. If the individual is under arrest, he/she will not be able to communicate if they are handcuffed behind their back.
 - 4. Lip reading is rare, but for communication with a person who reads lips, face the individual directly and make sure you are in a well-lit area.

H. Latent Investigations:

1. When an officer or detective needs to conduct an interview for latent investigation purposes:
 - a. They shall get approval via Division Commander.
 - b. Contact TPD Communications to make the appointment with approved vendor- AQI services (Absolute Quality Interpreting).
 - c. Give at least two days' notice for when the services will be required.
 - d. Give a length of time that the interpreter will be required (two-hour minimum with breaks to be included).

Supersedes SOP 302.1, dated 9/21.