Traditionally, few individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing considered a career in the health care field. Advances in access and technology have changed this, although technical standards established by academia and training programs still present

Technical Standards

Technical standards are a set of abilities and characteristics required to gain admission to an educational or training program. Many are written in a manner that precludes deaf and hard of hearing individuals from accessing employment and medical/health care training.

An “organic” approach describes sensory and physical abilities a student must possess. “Functional” standards, by contrast, describe what the student must be able to accomplish, with or without reasonable accommodations, instead of how those tasks must be accomplished.

Examples of Functional & Organic Technical Standards

Technical standards written from an “organic” perspective may look like this:

“A candidate should be able to speak, to hear and to observe patients in order to elicit both verbal and non-verbal information, and must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with and about patients. Communication therefore includes speech, reading and writing.

Technical standards written from an “functional” perspective may look like this:

“The student must be able to process and communicate information on the patient’s status with accuracy in a timely manner to physician colleagues and other members of the health care team. This information then needs to be communicated in a succinct yet comprehensive manner and in settings in which time available is limited.

The examples above are from two postsecondary institutions. They illustrate the differences between “organic” (how the task would be accomplished), and “functional” (the actual desired outcome or end result).