A proactive approach is taking action to make changes rather than reacting to things that happen. This is effective when developing plans for creating campus-wide access for deaf and hard of hearing students. Currently, many institutions are taking a proactive stance to planning for how students with disabilities will access the full spectrum of programs and events available on campus instead of taking a more traditional “wait and see” approach.

**Initial Meeting**
Before the initial meeting with a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, inquire as to their communication preferences for the meeting so appropriate accommodations can be scheduled, if needed. At the meeting, students can review their past accommodation preferences as well as what they anticipate needing for the upcoming semester. Accommodations can change dramatically for deaf or hard of hearing students moving from the K-12 environment to a postsecondary setting. Larger class sizes, an increased number of speakers, and the faster pace can cause students to request accommodations they have not previously used to achieve effective communication.

**Sign Language Interpreters**
A critical part of planning in advance is finding the resources available in your area. Some questions to consider:

- An early or pervasive lack of communication access with family members and others they interact with
- Lack of effective communication access to physical and mental health treatment services
- Late intervention and detection of hearing status leading to less early childhood services
- Few providers with the cultural competence to work effectively with this population
- Higher levels of stress in their lives from communication challenges and discrimination
- Lack of appropriate K-12 educational services including preventive educational programming on health-related topics

**Speech-to-Text Providers**
Speech-to-text services is a term that covers real-time access to information via the written word. The two basic categories are verbatim (CART) and meaning-for-meaning (computer-aided transcription). Maintaining a list of verbatim and meaning-for-meaning speech-to-text providers will allow for greater flexibility in scheduling services. It can be helpful to develop institutional policies on how transcripts from the service provider will be used. Questions for consideration include:

- Will transcripts generated by the captionist be provided to the student?
- Will faculty or other campus staff be able to utilize these transcripts?

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Captioned Media

Post-production (offline) captioning has become a hot topic on many campuses. All videos should be captioned with verbatim, time-synced captions to be accessible. This includes course-based content plus media on the institution’s website or streamed for public access. More institutions are ensuring that all media used in courses are captioned - whether or not a student who is deaf or hard of hearing is registered for the course. This provides accessibility and decreases the need for last-minute captioning. Some institutions have policies that require all media purchases are accessible to students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Assistive listening devices, visual fire alarms, and accessible emergency alerts are other strategies for planning in a proactive manner.

Policies & Procedures

Developing policies and procedures that outline how access will be provided through the disability support services office is a major step in proactive planning. Clear policies and procedures can help institutions avoid misunderstandings. Some areas to consider include:

- How will students request accommodations and how much advance notice will be required?
- How will the institution handle last-minute requests?
- How will it be handled if a student receiving services has excessive absences?
- What process will be used if a student prefers a different service provider than the one assigned?
- How will student complaints be addressed?