



Office of Deaf Services

Deaf Services Advocates Program

The Deaf Services Advocates Program provides the opportunity for DBH contracted providers to have staff trained and designated as Deaf Services Advocates. The program is designed to enable deaf and hard of hearing consumers to navigate DMH services more easily and improve the quality of care they receive. Participating providers will be recognized on DMH's Office of Deaf Services website with contact information listed for their Advocate(s).

Advocates support the provision of culturally appropriate, linguistically accessible services and the rights of deaf and hard of hearing consumers to make informed decisions about service delivery and communication options. They also serve as a point of contact between their agency and the Office of Deaf Services in order to support program goals and maintain a collaborative relationship.

Advocates should have at least a bachelor's and preferably a master's degree in a mental health or human services field. They should be in a high enough position to be able to advocate effectively to administrators when necessary, and they should be in a low enough position that they are able to have face-to-face contact with deaf and hard of hearing consumers when needed to provide information or listen to concerns. Depending on a CMHC's size and organizational structure, an intake clinician, community support supervisor, clinic or program manager, clinical director, or other staff employed at a similar level may be appropriate for this role. Previous experience in Deaf culture or American Sign Language or in another culture or language is beneficial but not required.

The Advocate role is an adjunct responsibility. After completing initial training, responsibilities are estimated to take 15-30 hours per year depending on the number of deaf and hard of hearing consumers served. Each agency may appoint one or more staff to serve as Advocates as necessary to allow coverage of various service areas, locations, and programs.

Staff will be designated as a Deaf Services Advocate by the DMH director of Deaf Services upon documenting successful completion of 15 hours of initial training consisting of the following:

- Deaf Services Training (Missouri DMH, 5 hours): Relias Learning lookup code MOCMHC-DEAFSERVICES
- Working With People with Hearing Loss (MN DHS, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division, 3 hours): http://registrations.dhs.state.mn.us/HearingLoss/welcome_intro.html
- Deaf Services Advocates Training (Missouri DMH, 7 hours): live training

Deaf Services Advocates Training includes basic instruction in:

- Hearing loss and assistive technologies.
- Deaf education and approaches to language and communication.
- The legal basis for accessible services.
- The Deaf community as a cultural and linguistic minority group.
- Accessibility issues and communication options for deaf and hard of hearing consumers.
- DMH's specialized service delivery options for deaf and hard of hearing consumers.
- Model training to provide to their agency's staff.

Deaf Services Advocates are expected to:

- Engage deaf and hard of hearing consumers to ensure informed choice in service delivery and the provision of effective communication.
- Provide 45-60 minutes of training to their agency's staff on meeting the service needs of deaf and hard of hearing consumers annually.
- Support ongoing awareness among their agency's staff of service delivery and communication options for deaf and hard of hearing consumers.
- Encourage their agency's staff who work with or are likely to work with deaf consumers to complete DMH's Deaf Services Training.
- Encourage their agency's staff who work with or are likely to work with hard of hearing consumers to complete MN DHS, DHHS's Working With People with Hearing Loss training.
- Encourage staff to connect with the Deaf Services Director for consultation regarding specific assessment or treatment concerns or any other questions the Advocate is not equipped to address.
- Maintain contact with the Office of Deaf Services to discuss current and emerging issues regarding service access and utilization as well as general concerns regarding assessment and treatment as needed.