Improving Accessibility to Internet-based Public Health Information for Deaf Americans
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American Deaf Community

How many Deaf ASL Users in the U.S.?
- Approximately 17% (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss (www.nidcd.nih.gov)
- Approximately 350,000 to 517,000 are Deaf Americans who use ASL (www.research.gallaudet.edu)

American Sign Language is...
- A language not based on sound
- A visual-gestural language created by Deaf people
- A fully developed, natural language with no grammatical relationship with English

Policy

- Recommendations
  - The Internet is an effective media to inform the Deaf community about any public health issues and/or advisories
  - Collaborate with local Deaf organizations to assist your agency with ASL-English translations. Look for your local resources:
    - Deaf Clubs and/or churches
    - State agencies and/or commissions for Deaf & Hard of Hearing people
    - Universities & colleges that offer ASL classes/Deaf Studies
    - Deaf Groups and/or commissions for Deaf & Hard of Hearing people
  - Contact NCDHR for technical assistance
  - Recommended Readings:
    - Distribution of bilingualism: two forms of language proficiency.
      - Fluent (Above Average English Skills)
      - Limited (Below Average English Skills)

Translating: Available
Website #1 No Yes, 30+ spoken languages only
Website #2 No Yes, Spanish only
Website #3 Yes, Spanish only
Website #4 No Yes, Spanish only
Website #5 No Yes, Spanish only

Above Average English Skills
- Fluent
  - Videophone (See FCC chart & picture below)
  - Face-to-face
  - Telephone
  - Smartphone with Facetime, etc.
  - Social Media Networks (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.)
  - Skype, ooVoo, iChat,  Z4, P3, etc.

Below Average English Skills
- Limited
  - Videophone (See FCC chart & picture below)
  - Face-to-face
  - Telephone

Utilization of visually-based technology for communications and information retrieval in ASL and/or simple English

- A person here will tend to rely on ASL and/or captions
- A person here will tend to rely only on captions.
- A person here will tend to have limited language proficiency
- A person here will tend to rely on ASL only

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American Deaf Community

Background

The Internet is a growing medium for disseminating public health information, especially among younger generations. However, the type of dissemination has overlooked Deaf Americans who communicate primarily in American Sign Language (ASL).

- Spring 2009: Public notifications during H1N1 outbreak did not effectively reach Deaf ASL Users:
  - Radio was not an option
  - Captioning and printed-media were partially effective
  - No accessible ASL, information available

- March 2011: Snapshot search of accessible websites (excluding H1N1 information):
  - Accessible website: ASL videos and/or videos with captioning
  - Used MacBook with Safari browser
  - Five large state/city public health agencies

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