



STATE OF VERMONT DISPATCHER'S CHEAT SHEET WORKING WITH DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, DEAFBLIND COMMUNITIES

Abstract

Effective communication during emergency or non-emergency calls is crucial. The cheat sheet includes critical phrases, tips for non-verbal communication, and technological solutions such as texting and relay services. The cheat sheet serves as a reference guide to improve communication efficiency, reduce response time, and enhance the quality of care provided to patients with hearing loss.

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Nature of the Emergency:

"What is your emergency?"

"Can you describe (tell me) what happened?"

"Can you provide details (information) about the emergency?" "Can you tell me what happened?"

"Does anyone involved in the emergency have difficulty hearing or speaking?"

Is there anyone in the emergency Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind? If there is more than one person that requires an interpreter, then you might need to get two especially if it's a domestic violence or sexual violence. If you use the same interpreters for both, it will become a problem later.

"Is there anyone injured (hurt)?" "Can you describe the injuries (how that person got hurt)?"

Location:

"Where are you located?" "What kind of a building are you in – a house, a store, or an apartment building?"

"Can you provide your exact address or location?" (The phrase "exact address" is not always easily understood. You might have to say something like "what floor are you on? What is your apartment number?")

"Can you provide your current location or address?" A person might interpret that as their home address, but they don't realize you mean where they are at the moment.

"Are there any landmarks or visual cues to help us find you?" "What do you see around you that can make it easier for us to find you?" Not everyone will know what "landmarks or visual cues" means.

Caller' Information:

"What is your name?"

"What is your phone number?" If we are disconnected, what's the best way to reconnect? Does your phone require me to dial 711 or not? Can I call this number directly?

If a person has a landline phone, you will need to dial 711. If a person has an internet-based phone, you don't need to dial 711. If a person has an internet-based phone, they need to have a good Wi-Fi internet connection.

Details of the Situation:

"Are there any injuries?" "Is anyone hurt anywhere?"

"How many people are involved?" "Are you alone?" "Are there other people with you?"

"Can you provide a description of the individuals involved?" "Please tell me something (something that stands out) that will help the police or fire fighters to find you or others?"

Medical Emergencies:

"Is the person conscious?" If speaking with an ASL user, rephrase this one to "Can this person talk or gesture back to you?"

"Is the person breathing?" "Can you feel or see their chest going up and down?" A hearing person could tell at ease if a person is breathing. A person with hearing challenges relies on visual cues. You might have to rephrase it to something visual-related, not auditory.

"What symptoms are they experiencing?"

"Do you have any specific medical conditions or needs related to your hearing that emergency responders (medical staff) should know about?" Do you have any other disabilities? Do you have any issues with your vision? Or do you have any issues with your mobility?"

Step by step:

Does this person have hearing loss?

What is the best way to communicate?

Are they conscious enough to have a conversation?

Do they need any additional assistance to communicate?

Medication questions:

"Are there medications or medical devices you require?"

"Are there any necessary medical devices or medications that should be brought to the scene?"

"Are there any necessary accommodations for medical treatment or communication with healthcare professionals?"

"Do you or anyone involved have any specific medical conditions or disabilities we need to know about?"

Fire Emergencies:

"Is everyone out of the building?"

"Can you describe the size and color of the flames?" "Is it big or small?" "Is it orange or yellow?" They will be puzzled by this question. Add more to why you are asking.

Police Emergencies:

"Are there any weapons involved?" A weapon can be a gun or knife. (Not everyone will know what the word weapon means.) Is it real or fake? Do you know the difference? Is it a toy gun?

Vehicle Accidents:

"Is anyone trapped or injured?" Is anyone stuck? Is anyone not able to get out or unable to move?

"How many vehicles are involved?" How many cars or trucks are involved?

Other Specific Questions:

"Is there anyone with medical training at the scene?"

"Are there any hazards or dangerous substances like gas or ammonia (use common cleaning product examples) involved?" ASL users might not know what it means "hazards or dangerous substances".

"Are you in danger right now?"

Mobility Issues:

"Is anyone involved in the emergency unable to move easily or requires assistance with mobility?"

Is anyone hurt or unable to move?

"Are there wheelchair accessibility concerns at the location?"

Anyone in danger of using a wheelchair?

Evacuation Challenges:

"Does anyone need assistance with evacuation due to mobility issues or other factors?"

"Are there specific requirements for transportation or evacuation methods?"

Service Animals:

"Is there an emotional support animal or hearing service animal living with you?"

"Are there any considerations for the safety and well-being of service animals?" "Is your service/support animal friendly?"

Are you comfortable with us taking the animal elsewhere? Do you have a family member who can take the animal while we take you to the hospital?

Cultural Considerations:

Note Section:

1. Effective Communication and Assistance: Knowledge of a caller's cultural practices can help dispatchers and responders communicate more effectively and make necessary accommodations. For example, in some cultures, direct eye

contact might not be considered respectful, or there could be specific ways to address individuals that are more culturally appropriate. Another example, pointing might be considered acceptable in some cultures, whereas in others it is often taught as impolite behavior.

2. **Building Trust:** When emergency services recognize and accommodate an individual's cultural needs (if applicable), it fosters trust between the caller and the responders. This trust is crucial for successful intervention, especially in cases where the caller may be in a vulnerable or distressed state. For example, a responder who has taken a few classes in American Sign Language (ASL) could use this skill to communicate with a deaf caller until an interpreter arrives. This effort can significantly reduce any alienation or discomfort the caller might feel in interacting with responders.
3. **Reducing Anxiety:** In an emergency, knowing that responders are aware of and willing to accommodate specific cultural practices can reduce anxiety for the caller. This is particularly important when the individual might already be facing barriers to communication, such as being deaf or hard of hearing. An example could be offering to wear a clear mask, writing back and forth, or using speech to text app. It depends on the caller's preference of accommodation while engaging with responders.

By asking about cultural considerations, dispatchers are better equipped to ensure that the services provided are respectful, appropriate, and tailored to the individual's specific needs. This is part of a broader commitment to personalized, compassionate care in emergency response services.

"Are there any cultural considerations we should be aware of in providing assistance?"

"Are there specific practices or requirements that need accommodation?"

Children or Vulnerable Populations:

"Are there infants, young children, or individuals with special needs involved in the emergency?"

"Do you have any specific requests or considerations for their care?"

Confirmation of Hearing Status:

"Are you Deaf or hard of hearing Or DeafBlind?" "How do you identify your hearing condition?"

"Do you use any assistive technology like hearing aids or cochlear implants?" Do you need hearing aid batteries? What size? (You might want to consider bringing batteries on site. If their batteries died while you're helping or dealing with a person, communication barriers will pop up.)

Preferred Communication Method:

"Do you prefer communication through text messages, written notes, or sign language?"
"Do you prefer to use English or ASL?" If they said ASL, it means their ability to read and exchange notes in English might not be good. Don't assume.

"Is there a specific way you prefer to receive information?"

Safety Considerations:

"Are you in immediate danger?"

"Is there a safe location nearby where you can wait for assistance?"

Evacuation or Shelter Needs:

"Do you require assistance with evacuation?"

"Are there specific considerations we should be aware of regarding shelters or safe spaces?"

Contacts for Notification:

"Is there someone we should contact ~~on your behalf~~, such as a friend or family member?"

"Do you have a preferred method for notifying your contacts?"

"Can you provide (give) another contact method (person) or an emergency contact who can help?"

"Is there a specific way we should contact you if needed?"

Follow up Instructions:

"How would you like us to share updates or further instructions?"

Communication Assistance:

"Do you have to use the relay service or a phone amplifier? Can this number be texted?" Is your phone a landline or connected through the internet? Do you have a captioned app on your cell phone?"

"Is there a specific way you are comfortable with for communication?"

"Would you like us to share information to emergency responders (medical staff) about your hearing?"

"Is there anything else we can do to assist you in this situation?"

What's the best way to communicate? How can the police or firefighter communicate with you? Do you need any accessibility of any kind?

"Is there assistive technology needed for effective communication?"

What's the best way to communicate? How can the police or firefighter communicate with you? Do you need any accessibility of any kind?

"Can you describe the suspect?" "Can you tell me what the person looks like?"

Get the FULL description of their whereabouts.