

## Chapter 8

# Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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8.1. Overview

8.2. Reimbursement

## 8.1. Overview

Services under the Maryland Public Behavioral Health System (PBHS) are provided to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and who meet the eligibility for public behavioral health services. Beacon strives to ensure there is equal access to all services and resources for all Marylanders. To service individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, Beacon can be accessed through the TTY number at 866.835.2755.

In some instances there may be a need for an American Sign Language (ASL) or other visual language interpreter in order for services to be rendered. An interpreter may be needed in the following three instances:

1. **A participant is deaf or hard of hearing.** If the behavioral health professional selected by the participant is not proficient in ASL/other visual language interpretation, an interpreter can be secured in order for the participant to access services. The treating professional shall be reimbursed for the service at normal rates and the interpreting services shall be reimbursed.
2. **A participant is a minor and has parent(s) that is deaf or hard of hearing.** If the mental health professional selected for a minor is not proficient in ASL/other visual language interpretation, and the minor's parents are deaf or hard of hearing, an interpreter may be secured in order for the minor's parent(s) to participate in treatment with their child. The treating professional shall be reimbursed for the service at normal rates and the interpreting services shall be reimbursed.
3. **A provider is deaf or hard of hearing.** If the service provider is deaf or hard of hearing and needs an interpreter in order to communicate with the participant, family member, or group members participating in the services, interpreter reimbursement is also allowed.

## 8.2. Reimbursement

Providers **MUST** contact the Core Service Agency (CSA) of the participant's residence of record prior to service delivery. The CSA will pay for ASL interpreting or other visual language interpreting services. The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) will adjust the CSA's contract accordingly if funding is not available under their existing contract.

Providers should also access the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). They not only work as an advocacy group, but are a resource for state and local agencies. The ODHH offers awareness training to increase knowledge about the accessibility of services, as well as technical assistance to government agencies who may have questions regarding communication access and constituent services.

## 8.3. Telehealth

Maryland Medicaid will reimburse services delivered via telehealth to a patient that is deaf or hard of hearing by any provider that is fluent in ASL. Unlike telehealth for patients who are not deaf or hard of hearing, the patient may be located in their home. Patients are still required to comply with the technological requirements listed in COMAR 10.09.49.

If the ASL fluent provider is enrolled in Maryland Medicaid, the provider may register as a distant site provider, regardless of license level. After registration, the provider may bill for services rendered via telehealth to the patient that is deaf or hard of hearing, using the –GT modifier. As with all specialty behavioral health services, the distant site provider is required to have authorizations for all services

delivered via telehealth.

More information can be found in the Telehealth Program Manual on the webpage: <https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/Pages/telehealth.aspx> or you may email [mdh.telemedicineinfo@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.telemedicineinfo@maryland.gov).