



Terminology

The issue

What are the "proper" terms and definitions to be used in regard to deafness?

CAD's position

The Deaf, the deafened, and the hard of hearing are all very distinct groups. Using the proper terminology shows respect for their differences.

deaf

A medical/audiological term referring to those people who have little or no functional hearing (deaf, Deaf, and deafened). May also be used as a collective noun ("the deaf" or "small-d deaf") to refer to people who are medically deaf but who do not necessarily identify with the Deaf community.

In addition, children who are deaf are usually referred to as "deaf" because they may not yet have been socialized into either the Deaf or the non-Deaf culture. If they use Sign as their first language, they are referred to "Deaf".

("big-D") Deaf

A sociological term referring to those individuals who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on Sign language. Their preferred mode of communication is Sign.

D/deaf

Used as a collective noun to refer to both those "Deaf" people who identify with the Deaf culture and those "deaf" people who do not.

deafened (Also known as late-deafened.) This is both a medical and a sociological term referring to individuals who have become deaf later in life and who may not be able to identify with either the Deaf or the hard of hearing communities.

hard of hearing

A person whose hearing loss ranges from mild to profound and whose usual means of communication is speech. It is both a medical and a sociological term.

hearing impaired

This term is not acceptable in referring to people with a hearing loss. "Hearing impairment" is a medical condition; it is not a collective noun for people who have varying degrees of hearing loss. It also fails to recognize the differences between the Deaf and the hard of hearing communities.

person who is deaf

Acceptable but overly sensitive substitute for "deaf".

manual deaf, Signing deaf

A deaf person whose preferred mode of communication is Sign language.

oral deaf

A deaf person whose preferred mode of communication is verbal and auditory. An oral deaf person who can both Sign and speak can be considered "Deaf" if he/she is accepted as such by other Deaf persons and uses Sign within the Deaf community.

deaf-mute

Unacceptable. A deaf person may choose not to use his/her voice; this does not make him/her a "mute".

deaf and dumb

Offensive.

Deaf-plus

Although it has been used for many years to refer to people who have disabilities in

Deaf Issues

- Audism
- Captioning and Video Accessibility
- Cochlear Implants
- Deaf Culture vs. Medicalization
- Definition of "Deaf"
- Diversity
- Education
- Employment and Employability
- Health Care
- Human Rights
- Immigration and Medical Admissibility
- Income Tax, Customs Duties, and Postage Rules
- International Concerns
- Interpreting
- Language
- Literacy
- Official Languages
- Physician-Assisted Suicide / Physician-Assisted Dying
- Political Participation and Activity
- Seniors
- Social Security and Assistance
- Statistics on Deaf Canadians
- Technology and Technical Devices
- Telecommunications
- Terminology: Deafness
- Transportation
- Universal Design
- Universal Symbols of Access
- Youth

addition to deafness, the preferred terms now are "Deaf with mental disabilities," "Deaf-blind," "Deaf with CP," etc.

Non-Deaf Term used to distinguish between the Deaf community and all other people: hearing, hard of hearing, deafened, and oral deaf.

Sign Language

The official language of the Deaf community. Should always be capitalized, just as English and French are capitalized, because all three are legitimate languages. (We recognize that capitalization of language/culture names is not a common feature of most languages, but it is so in English.)

TTY

The proper acronym for the special devices used by D/deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people to communicate with each other through the telephone system. The French term is ATS.

TDD

No longer acceptable as the acronym for special telephone devices.

TT (Text Telephone)

Used in some European countries and by the Federal Communications Commission of the United States as a substitute term for "TTY". Not accepted in Canada because it is a hearing-invented term and because the Sign for it is impolite in ASL.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

The Canadian Association of the Deaf
203 - 251 Bank Street
K2P 1X3
(613)565-8882 TTY
(613)565-2882 Voice
(613)565-1207 Fax
www.cad.ca

