

Best Practices for Communicating with Veterans Who Have Hearing Loss

Gain Attention

- **Say the Veteran's name** or **gently wave your hand** to ensure the Veteran is ready to hear you.
- **Clearly identify yourself.** State your name and your role.

Position for Success

- **Face the Veteran directly**, standing or sitting about **4 feet away**, so the Veteran can see your face and lips.
- **Walk beside the Veteran** to **maintain eye contact**.
- If **pushing a wheelchair**, **stop and face the Veteran** when speaking.

Be Seen and Heard

- Speak **clearly and naturally**. **Avoid shouting** as it can distort speech.
- **Slow your speech** and **pause** between sentences.
- Use **gestures**, **facial expressions**, **visual aids**, or **written notes** to reinforce understanding.

Choose a Quiet Space

- Choose **quiet, well-lit areas** for conversations.
- **Minimize background noise.** Closing an open door or turning off a television helps.

Communicate with Care

- **Ask the Veteran** how you can best communicate with them.
- Encourage **one person to speak at a time** and use hand signals for visual cues.
- Ask the **Veteran to repeat back instructions** or guidance to **confirm understanding**.
- **Repeat, rephrase**, or **summarize** key points for clarity.
- Be **patient** and allow extra time for processing and responses.
- **Engage directly with the Veteran** to ensure they are included in the conversation, rather than speaking primarily to their family member or caregiver.