

[Rebecca] Welcome. We're very happy to have you here today. My name is Rebecca Martin, and I'm with the Grand Facilitation Team at the Rutgers University Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. And I'm working to coordinate the "New Jersey Inclusive Healthy Communities Training Series," and IHC Academy Trainings. Thank you for joining us today for the presentation by the staff of Allies in Caring whose IHC project focuses on training members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, as community health workers supporting other deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in South Jersey.

Before we begin, I have a few housekeeping notes. I'd like to let you know that we're recording the training today. We also have enabled captions for the event, and there are two interpreters which will be highlighted as speaking continues, as well as presenters. Spotlights, pardon me.

There will be time for questions and answers towards the end of the conversation today, so please feel free to add any questions that come up in the chat, or hold them until the end and we'll allow you to unmute and ask directly if you prefer. Given your interest in today's training, we'd like to send you updates about future IHC training opportunities. If you would like to opt out of that, you can send me an email, and I'll place my email in the chat in a moment.

And then, there are screen-reader accessible slides available for today's presentation. And in a moment, I will also place the link for their download in the chat as well. And then, finally, I'd like to take a moment to express our deep appreciation to Peri Nearon and her team at the New Jersey Division of Disability Services for making this training series, and the IHC grant program possible.

Now, without further ado, I will give the floor to Allies in Caring.

- [Ivette] Thank you so much for the invitation to share our experience with everyone. And I also want to start by thanking Peri Nearon for her vision. I think it's a remarkable step that she offered this, and to join her and you, Rebecca, for all your support. And, of course, my team, Octavio, Luisa, and Ron, who are amazing, and you'll discover more about their wonderful contributions, and

[inaudible] also who has been a consultant for us. And I just want to say a couple of words about why this is so important to me and to each one of us in the team. I'm a child of deaf parents, and I also have two deaf siblings. And, so from a young age, 5 or 6 years old, I started interpreting for my parents and my siblings in Mexico, where we don't have the American Disabilities Act.

And, so we, my brother and I who are here, interpreter for my deaf siblings since elementary school to high school. And, so that was fun sometimes and sometimes hard, but I always in my heart long for a community effort because people, just like teachers and my relatives used to say, "Help your family. Help your family."

And sometimes you feel like I wish more people were helping my family, and supporting their well-being and health, and that it would not be only on the few relatives. So you'll think that in the United States, because we have the American Disabilities Act, that deaf people and their relatives have more opportunities and resources available, but it's still a struggle.

Interpreters are a treasure, and it really sometimes very difficult to find interpreters, and not all the organizations and agencies can or want to support having an interpreter. So this effort that the Inclusive Health Communities has made possible for us through their funding and support is really helping us change system and get more people on board so that the community, we all together can ensure that deaf people have the opportunities and resources that helps them give their best.

This is very important to me because we tend to label deaf people by what they lack. But what we as a society are missing is that they have so much to offer, so many gifts that are needed for our communities. So, through this program, we are making possible for deaf people to offer their gifts that are needed in our community.

So, I'm going to let now the team talk a little more about what our work has been about. And, so I'll pass it over to Octavio.

- [Octavio] Hello, everyone. My name is Octavio Maldonado, and I run in [inaudible] for South Jersey & Hard Hearing Coalition for the Allies in Caring.

So I'm very excited to be working with all of you today.

- [Rachel Matthews] And the next individual is saying, "Hi, yes. Hi. My name is Luisa. This is my sign name. My role is a community liaison working in schools, VR settings, and different types of events, and hosting them. So thank you so much for joining us today."

- [Ron] Hello, my name is Ron Popowski. I was born and raised in a deaf family.

I have two deaf brothers. I went to a school for the deaf in New Jersey, in Trenton, Katzenbach, K-12. After graduation, I went to Gallaudet University

and got my degree in Biology. And I work as a wildfire biologist for the past 30 years with Federal Services.

Recently I retired, and now I have joined this coalition, this organization as a volunteer. I spend a few hours a week with these individuals to work on several different projects and programs. So I just want to welcome you all.

- The agenda, Octavio? Okay, I'll go ahead.

So, the team is going to cover, like, just give a background of what are the barriers that deaf people experience so that you have an understanding. What are the services that we are providing, the benefits of creating an inclusive workplace that has been the focus of our initiative.

And also, we want to give you some tips for all of you who want to create more inclusive workplaces, how you can make it happen in your organization, and how you can make services available for deaf people. And then, just some discussion about audism that maybe it's a new concept you haven't heard, but we are going to share it from the perspective of deaf people, and some remarks about the American Disabilities Act, and the purpose, and why we need a pipeline of deaf health professionals.

So that's what we are going to cover today. Next is Octavio.

- Next slide. Perfect. So, we have some several barriers within the health and well-being of the deaf community, and there are several issues and discrimination in regards to different culture that is different than the hearing community.

Also, we have, many people in the deaf community are very isolated, very lonely. Because of those barriers, because there's not enough interpreters, not enough employment, health services that are provided. In addition to that, like I stated, there's not enough interpreters and accessibility to closed captioning services and technology.

And that's been a very slow process. People often think that deaf individuals can't, that there is limitations, that they are not smart because of the fact that they cannot speak, and that they're less educated, inadequate because of that. But, really, there's several barriers in regards to those resources that are not being provided, and so we want to explain more about the skills that we can provide to enhance the deaf community and education.

You know, in our culture, with the deaf, we cherish our culture. You know, we identify we can use our facial expressions. And people might notice that as being a little bit different, but that's how we express things in the deaf

community. You know, if we had no expressions in our face at all, it would be harder for people or even for us to be able to understand our feelings, our affects, our emotions.

And so we have a variety of that within our deaf community, and our culture, and our language. Next slide. So, as you can see here on this slide, I just wanted to, kind of, briefly touch on this. We have a collaboration of different services.

We have workshop trainings, we have social events. We have Deaf Spotlights, we have ASL classes. We have a variety of different things that we expand upon within our program, as well as behaviors of health services as well. Next slide. As you can see, collaboration is essential, not only with the deaf organizations, but also within the state agencies, other public accommodations, hospitals, schools, other resources that the deaf culture can actually support and advocate in regards to certain avenues.

It really is a collaboration. And in some cases, some people see that collaboration as a barrier, but it's our goal and our mission to be able to provide those resources, to provide that education to be able to show that we have deaf programs and accessibility that not only benefit the deaf, but also, you know, individuals as a whole that might not necessarily be aware.

We want to be able to collaborate our community together versus segregate them, I guess you could say. And that is why collaboration is essential. It's an essential opportunity because we do not want...if other people can...has certain skills, abilities to enable them, that is a perfect partnership for us to be able to collaborate together, to work together as a whole.

- Next slide. Now, most of our services is in regards to navigation services. And what that means is that the deaf community is...workers, CHW. We'll be expanding on that more, but they are working with 144 hours of contents and training, and additional hands-on training in regards to learning, in regards to the medical field, about diabetes, stress, anxiety, learning more about resources and the healthcare system as a whole.

They really go in depth in regards to a lot of medical training, under the Camden Community College Department of Health. Also, community health workers, it's very important to be able to help the healthcare professionals because we've noticed that there's not many deaf professionals.

And community health workers are essential because they are certified in that, you know, they have a degree. And, you know, most professionals have a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education, but for CHWs, it's nice because they can be able to help, kind of, advance and support the deaf community in

regards to those areas that maybe other people might not be aware of or unfamiliar with in regards to this particular culture.

So it's very nice that CHW is able to advocate and educate other individuals about deaf individuals' needs, their culture as well, and also provide resources and collaboration as a whole within that organization. Next slide. So, as you can see here, I'll let you, kind of, take a minute just to read this. Community health workers.

This is our vision and all that they do, their roles and responsibilities in regards to, you know, healthcare education, basic needs, socialization, documentation and stuff like that. We help social workers and other professionals and stuff like that navigate within the deaf community and providing resources and such.

So, for example, suppose someone's looking for housing, or food stamps, or anything like that, you know, they might not know anyone in the deaf community. They might, kind of, not know what to do with this individual. And most staff, like I stated, feel very isolated in regards to being able to find those resources.

And so sometimes, especially at hospitals or in other healthcare facilities, deaf people, individuals feel extremely overwhelmed. In most cases, those words, the terminology is extremely complex at times. And so, you know, community health workers are able to, kind of, bridge that gap, accommodate a little bit, match the language needs, advocate and create clarity and understanding within a very complex environment, because, you know, English might not be their first language.

And so we help, kind of, bridge that gap a little bit in regards to advocating and supporting in that role. And also, we are experts, obviously, within the deaf culture and the needs of that. We have video, relay interpreting services. We also have what we call VP, which is video phone services.

We have different types of technologies and resources that we can provide as well, which is essential. And with that, it creates less stress and being able to make a better environment and improvement all the way around.

Next slide. Okay. So, now I want to talk about workshops and trainings. We have them on a monthly basis, and we have various events on different topics in regards to healthcare or going to different types of places and presenting in the hopes of people learning for their benefit and for application.

It's not just for learning, but they can also help us as well, because we have services that they need and vice versa. And so we want to be able to partner with, you know, domestic abuse centers. And so we have monthly different

topics and events that we are constantly rotating on a monthly event. And then we also have very successful workshops and trainings that we have established, as well, in regards to workshops and other different types of trainings in very different places, in various different topics.

Next slide. We believe that socialization and the community outreach is key. It is essential because many deaf people, like Octavio has already mentioned in the past, are extremely isolated. And it is important to bring community together to have similar mindsets, ideas, language. Whether regards to even if the parents are deaf and the kids are hearing, whatever the case may be, that environment as a whole allows them to be able to collaborate and find connection.

Some senior citizens, as well, have become extremely lonely. Some of their friends have passed away, and they feel, like I said, very isolated. And so these social events, through various organizations, presentations, trainings, they feel more included.

And it keeps them out in the community, it keeps them vibrant, it keeps them feeling that they have a purpose to live, and, of course, that is important for their longevity and their health as well. You know, and it's important to include adults, also, with children, as well, to influence them their language acquisition. Especially with deaf access and language, you know, adults have a lot of benefit to attribute to the next generation.

Next slide. Since about January, we have been doing what we call Deaf Spotlight. And what that actually includes is we want to hear from deaf individuals to show people, and also deaf youth, that we have deaf leaders, that we have deaf role models, and that there are various different deaf individuals, you know, that connect with them in regards to life, their family, and different roles.

We have... - Eight wheel, or?

- We have eight wheel. For example, so for emotional or knowledge, finances, physical, social, spiritual, array of different needs that we could match for a particular individual to help explain to individuals that when they're watching the videos, they can, you know, learn from.

And that's not just a right or wrong. It's about showing a deaf role, and what that individual can become in the future, to help inspire youth and engage them within their community and in life path.

- I'm going to move on to the next slide, please. We do provide ASL classes, American Sign Language classes. And the purpose for these classes is to



provide support for those hearing persons who might want to learn a little bit of sign language.

And that would allow them to socialize with deaf persons. There wouldn't have to necessarily be a barrier there to communication. And when a person feels like they want to continue to learn, well, they can in turn advocate for other people once they have that language, and having that ability to communicate not just with ASL, but about the deaf culture, about the devices that we use, the technology that we use that allows access.

Move onto the next slide. Let's talk very briefly about the word "audism." Deaf persons have historically had a challenge, access to resources...and funding.

We may not even know that there are resources or funding out there available to us, and that we might be able to connect with.

And...more reason is audism. It's the perspective of hearing persons or the attitude that hearing persons might have about individuals who can't. I don't think it's intentional.

It's more about their ignorance than it is anything else. It's about their ignorance of the deaf community, and what our needs are. And it's sometimes just about educating people about exactly what we need, and who are deaf people? What's our culture? How can we fit into the mainstream, in society in general? I thought there's definitely a disconnect there and there's some segregation, and there's a perspective or perception of us as a group of people that we're broken, that we're disabled, and we need to be fixed.

And I think, more than anything else, we want to tell them it's, you know, we may not be able to hear, but instead of that, we have all these accessible devices, and interpreters, and other access available to us that would provide more equal access for us. And it's about educating people about those resources.

Just thinking about deaf and hard-of-hearing people in society and how you benefit from that. I think it's just becoming more cultural-sensitive with the different groups of people out there, and how we...or what our needs are, what our traditions, our cultures, our communication looks like, and how we might be able to be involved in new communities as well.

And I think that increasing cultural sensitivity would allow for that. You know, I think deaf people become very creative problem solvers. I think a lot of groups out there are.

We come up with ideas that are best for us, what works best for me and other people like me. and I think it's also important for all of us to come here together

and talk about ideas about how to remove barriers, or receive services, or have access to different organizations, and how we can all contribute to society, and otherwise, I mean, how will we ever see any kind of improvement?

You know, deaf people are very visual thinkers, very visual learners. We do depend on visual cues and we depend on our eyes for almost everything, all information intake, and...you know, screens with interpreters, captions they allow us to understand the information that is presented to us.

And that's some of the resources that I'm starting with. Thanks. Move on to the next slide, please. The strategies for increasing diversity and inclusion. And really, I mean, deaf people are not all the same.

We do have a variety of deafness that is also deaf-blind persons or deaf people who have Down syndrome. There are deaf people who are hard of hearing, there's some deaf people who don't sign. And, so we wanted to show you just a short video just to get a better idea. I also just want to talk about why a deaf person might be hired and what resources we might be able to provide them to let them do their jobs.

If you're thinking about, "Maybe, well, we don't know anything about having working with a deaf person," then we'll give you a little bit more information about that how you can best support an employee who is deaf or hard of hearing. I'm going to go ahead and start the video.

- Is there sound in the video?

- [Valerie] ...view me as a deaf person, some view me as hearing, but it's not one or the other.

- [Jessica] Deafness is a spectrum. It's not just one definition.

Someone like myself who's late deafened.

- [Valerie] I am deaf in one ear and hearing in the other. Some people view me as a deaf person, some view me as hearing, but it's not one or the other.

- [Felicia] I was born deaf. My father is deaf in one ear, so it's hereditary.

- [Bruce] I'm the youngest of five siblings. The three youngest are deaf-blind.

- [Shira] I switch between deaf and disabled because I'm also a little person.

- [Kriston] Being deaf is a big part of who I am, but that's not my only identity. I'm a person of color, bi-racial, half black and half-white, and gay.



- [Tanya] This condition I have is called Usher Syndrome. It's a hearing and vision loss.
- [Rachel] I grew up oral.
- [Matthew] A lot of people consider me hard of hearing.
- [Shilpa] People do call me hearing impaired, but I'm not, I'm deaf.
- People think being deaf is a bad thing, but I see it as a positive thing. The culture, language, and history make me who I am today.
- The deaf-blind community, tactile ASL, use of space, the culture, all became a part of me.
- I'm learning little by little about pro-tactile and I can't wait to learn more. I am most comfortable with speaking English.
- People with additional disabilities have to think about access and what they want. Do they know what they need?
- Throughout educational years I used note-takers. I didn't have interpreters, because I didn't know sign language. I didn't know ASL until I was 14.
- I used cued speech and was mainstreamed throughout high school.
- I went to a public school in the morning, then a deaf school in the afternoon. It was the best of both worlds. The instructors used ASL, which I found to be more inclusive.
- I was in both deaf and hearing classes. I wore that bilateral hearing aid cinched across my chest. Very unpleasant.
- I got a cochlear implant when I was 15, and went through intensive speech therapy.
- In high school I would sit to the far right since I could hear on my left side.
- In large group discussions where there's dynamic conversation, I use interpreters.
- In my own experience, captioning and interpreting together are the most effective.
- I want more of a long-term, designated interpreter. Someone who knows me well, who knows my work.

- As a black person, I want my interpreter's voice to match me. My culture can't be overlooked.

- People automatically think deaf people are all the same, but that's not true. We have layers upon layers.

- When you meet us, have an open mind and open heart.

- And I think it really is really important to, sort of, showcase the variety that the deaf community encompasses basically. I mean, there's some people who sign, some people who don't, some people who are stronger or have stronger use of American Sign Language, and others who are signing more English-like in the way that they use sign language.

And some have an accent, even a signing accent. And, so these are important things to know, that when you hire a deaf person, it's not one size fits all. You're going to have some things that you may need to accommodate for one person that you may not need to for another.

And then there's also tactile sign language and other things that are provided for persons who are also deaf-blind. And there are just things out there that you can use to encourage or promote a good working environment for people who have disabilities and who are deaf or hard of hearing, and that there is a variety of options.

And so, I'm going to introduce you a little bit to our staff. We have a ASL teacher, a person who teaches ASL classes once a week, and this is... - No.

It's actually Octavio and Luisa are teaching sign language in Allies in Caring to the staff so that the hearing staff can communicate with the deaf staff.

- Yeah, sorry. Luisa and I are teaching the hearing staff of the places where persons are hired so that they can communicate with each other.

And...sorry, a short video we want to show you. So, anyone can learn to use sign language. Let me start a short video for you.

All right, thank you. As you can see, it's important that we're going to expose the hearing staff to sign language so that there's some communication happening.

Particularly, mostly it's a hearing company, and you may not feel comfortable. And it's just another way that you can lessen the barriers that deaf persons experience, is at their work. They can feel a little bit more comfortable about being able to communicate with some of the staff there. And, so, Luisa and I are

trying to teach hearing staff that, you know, they can learn this language, that there is a rapport that they can develop with the deaf persons working for them.

Sometimes they'll write back and forth, sometimes you might use gestures. And depends on who the deaf person or how effective that might be, but they're still being exposed to different things about deaf culture. And especially a little bit more for working with a person who's deaf or hard of hearing, you might be able to consider hiring one in your company, or other hospitals or other healthcare settings.

Just one of the things that we feel like is a great resource. We'll move on to the next slide. So, let's talk about direct communication. Now, direct communication for a person who's fluent in American signings, we have two different columns here.

I'm going to talk about one as a deaf to deaf person. Or it could be a hearing person who knows sign language. So it's direct communication. And by indirect communication, we mean someone who's using an interpreter or some other form of communication in between, or bringing in a third party to provide that communication.

So, I want to talk more about the direct communication right now. If a deaf person is signing and it's just the two of us, it's much easier for us to establish a rapport, to support each other, to understand each other. There's a clear message there, there's interaction, and there's probably less words that are needed where we can get right to the point.

Our tone of voice, what they mean, the intonation, how they're expressing themselves, that type of thing is much more readily accessible. And how we might problem-solve between the two of us, it would be much easier because it'll be very direct communication.

Also understanding a little bit about deaf culture and what the preferences are in regards to that. Now, moving into the interpreters, so a little bit different. Using the interpreter means that there is a third party involved, and you're opening your process to another person.

It takes more time. You have to sign. The interpreter will then speak what I said to the hearing person who hears it, and then they'll make their response. And then interpreter will sign back to me what's been said, and I'll watch the interpreter. It does take a little bit longer. It is a longer process. Sometimes an interpreter might misunderstand what happens, and then you might have a communication breakdown.

But the increase in communication time is one thing that's considered. Sometimes a deaf person might try to communicate through their emotions and they feel like there's not that disconnect...or there's a little disconnect there because they have to navigate through an interpreter. They're not able to express themselves as clearly.

And they maybe filter out some information as well. And then there's language choices. I mean, have a way to explain how this person's feeling. There's also a risk of transference of information. That happens quite frequently.

And also, there's a fear that confidential information might get out there with the use of an interpreter, that other people might learn about what's happened in this setting if it were to get out there if the interpreter broke the confidentiality clause of their ethics.

It's a lot of things that affect the dynamics in a group as well. So just different things to think about. You know, some [inaudible] really great processes than others. You know, really depends on the place where the person's working.

They have a deaf person who has an accent. An interpreter may have an accent as well. And whether they're from the East or West, and they may sign just a little bit different. There's also different dialects within sign language. So it's... - And also, interpreters in general, you know, you want to make sure that you feel that connection with that interpreter.

That way, they better can understand you, and vice versa. And once they get used to your signing style, it's just more fluent as far as communication, because if you're constantly adjusting to a different accent or to a different signing style, it can really, kind of, delay the communication process. Okay. Next slide.

Thank you. Thank you. All right. Now, it's very, very important in regards to accessibility. We have several accessibility issues.

You know, we experience them on a daily basis. Many of you might not even necessarily realize that, but several of us have phases of several challenges and an array of different settings and environments. For example, going to the bank. And I'm just trying to talk to a banker, and so just to try to get a mortgage, or...you know, we have to make arrangements ahead of time.

We can't just go in there. You know, and that's our life every single day. We have to make those arrangements in order to do daily activities. And that takes time to set up, which is something that, you know, as hearing individuals, you guys, most of us don't even have to think about it in that regard. But we as deaf

individuals have to think about setting up appointments, we think about...when you think about TVs, websites, social media, not all those

[inaudible] places, not all those websites, not all those videos are closed captioned, or are actually accurate. And so, to be able to, kind of, learn that information and the same resources that you guys are provided to the general public is not always easily accessible to us. Deaf individuals are hungry for information, and learning and knowledge as well, and, unfortunately, on a daily basis, we experience several frustrating moments.

And, so it's very important on a daily basis and in our life to be able to have accessibility and opportunities for interpreters, for closed captions, for, you know, having screens that are more visual and graphic as far as pictures and such, different tools that we can utilize to gain the same equality of information that is accessible to all for everyday life.

To provide that inclusion, to provide work opportunities, training opportunities, and opportunities to feel more included and equal. Not just us against everyone else in society, but to create that environment where there is fairness, that, you know, we don't want to beg.

Deaf individuals don't want to beg for access. And so all we want is to be able to have the same independence and inclusion that everyone else also has at the workplace, because we are independent, and we don't want to rely on other individuals to "help" us. We are independent as well. We just need certain tools to be able to do that.

Whether that be through a service of a sign language interpreter or to gain access of information, or perhaps through accessibility, through captions, whatever the case may be. But we might depend on other devices, so we're not depending on individuals for that accessibility.

Now, values. Deaf individuals have values, as well, in regards to our language. And often we as children, as early childhood acquisition, that is deprived from many individuals for language.

And that could be from any stage, level of age, that language could be deprived. And, so language is a very essential piece in regards to who we are, and in regards to communication. And especially for our behavioral norms.

And, thank you.

- Oh, I want to just make a summary. So, we, Octavio, Luisa, and Ron, have been sharing the work that, thanks to the Inclusive Healthy Communities, we

are doing in the community both internally, creating a culture for this time where other members of the staff can learn to be inclusive.

And then, in our larger communities where deaf people among each other and among agencies that provide services to deaf people, we start collaborating. And then, we also are educating the larger community about not only the needs of deaf people, but the gifts that the deaf people can offer.

That's what the Spotlight is. So, I want to give back a couple of examples before I move directly to this setup of how this work...what we are being able to do through these collaborations and having deaf staff involved. So, for years, there has been a need for summer camps or opportunities for deaf kids to participate in a summer camp.

And especially, there's one in North Jersey, but in South Jersey we haven't offered that. And in [inaudible] where...and I think [inaudible] located, there is another family who...a school that offers a summer camp for hearing kids, and they had a person who reached out to them asking if they could include a deaf kid, if kids could go to their program.

And then, since I know about Allies in Caring and the work that we are doing with deaf people, they reach out to us, and we are working now together to offer a summer camp for deaf kids. And, so we are combining our resources. So they have the expertise and the location to offer this summer camp, and we have the connection with the deaf community so that it will be affordable to them to hire deaf counselors, and if they can offer this program not to only one kid, but up to more kids.

So through this collaboration, we have created a flier, and we are talking to schools and other organizations, and advertising to other kids. And we have helped connect this great program with deaf counselors. And we have helped in the process of interviewing the applicants.

So, because we have this collaboration, then more opportunities and resources can be available to deaf people. We are collaborating with another organization that offers education for prevention of domestic violence, and so it's the same.

We're just combining our resources and making the information and resources, opportunities available to all deaf people. And, so I just wanted to give that example. And now I want to move to just continue to emphasize why is Allies in Caring choosing to center deaf people. As you can see, the people who are leading this project are deaf.

And I strongly believe that we could not have been offering all these services and resources if they were not centered in the work. And there are many



reasons why. One is because Luisa, Ron, and Octavio being deaf are passionate about this work.

So it's natural to them. They are doing it because there's lived experience. So there's something powerful on having lived experience so that when one has lived experience, one has the empathy, the passion, and also one has the knowledge and the networks.

Like, they, together, know people, other deaf people that has knowledge and skills, and they can help pass the word. And also because they are known, other people trust Allies in Caring because they probably...other deaf people can trust other deaf people.

That's very natural. It happens also, like, I'm Latina among Latinos. If we see someone that looks like me, understands my language, my culture, I feel there's more trust there, and I feel more comfortable joining and participating. So that's the advantage of having deaf team.

And so, the other advantages has to do with also having the possibility of direct communication that also Luisa mentioned. But I am aware that we have wonderful interpreters, Rachel, helping us. And I want you to know that we very much appreciate the work of the interpreters, and it is really key.

Also, we need technology, we need interpreters, and we need to center deaf people. So all of those are necessary. And we are talking about, for example, when we talk about the risk of breaking confidentiality, we know that there are entrepreneurs who are great and who follow the privacy requirements.

But, yeah, just talking about other instances. But we have a lot of respect for you as interpreters. And I'm going to go over a couple of things just for us to...even those who are...there's interpreters who are not certified, or relatives or friends who sometimes interpret for others and that the community is not aware when sometimes a doctor, a nurse, or a teacher might ask their relative to interpret, that there are some risks with that.

And so that's why we want to mention this. So, what works when we want to support deaf people is to build cooperative relationships rather than paternalistic relationships, or what we might call benevolent relationships. So, sometimes maybe the parent or the sibling might take on the role of interpreter.

But if the person is not aware, the interpreter starts making the decision and speaking for the deaf person. So that's a judgment to the deaf person. What we want is to encourage relationships where we respect and we are cooperating with the deaf person, really listening and being at the service of the deaf person.

And that's what helps the deaf person then bring out their skills and knowledge. And, so we in Allies in Caring has been very important for us to attend to that. Like, rather than assuming that I as a hearing person know better, really reminding ourselves that the deaf person is the expert in many ways.

They are the expert. Actually, each person is always...we are the experts of what is important for ourselves. And so that's what we want to know. And the leadership that we practice is certainly servant leadership. And what that means is that we really pay attention to how we can support.

I prefer to use the word "support" than "help" because helping sometimes just is a subtle difference. But in helping, we might think that we know better what the other person needs, and we have the solution. But supporting implies that we ask, that we get information from the person about what they already know, what they don't know, what they want and what steps they are ready to take, and how we can support those steps that they want to take.

And, so the role of the community health worker is very important to us in that. It's, kind of, the role that really we are hoping to expand, where we want more deaf individuals to become resources for other deaf community, to support other deaf people.

And the other point that I'm looking here at the slide that I want to make is one of the challenges that we find with the very well-intended American Disabilities Act requirement for organizations to provide interpreters is that sometimes the employers cannot provide it because they don't have the means.

So there are many challenges, like, even if there is a mandate to provide them. So, what we are thinking in Allies in Caring is, how do we share the burden as employer and the deaf employees who need the support, or the coworkers.

In the case of Allies in Caring, we are asking our employees who are hearing to also learn sign language so that they can communicate. So, ideally, as we think of creating a culture that is more inclusive, we want to ask everyone to participate in that challenge so that we create an inclusive environment, so both as the co-workers, see who is interested, and as employer, really make it as interesting and as compelling for the other workers to want to learn sign language.

And for the employers, we are creating a toolkit, but also we can continue to work with the funding system to always keep in mind and look for funding that will help us pay for interpreters. And as employers, we can also think about, how do we invest in the training and development of deaf employees so that at some point they become the leaders of the program, and they can be the ones running and providing direct services?

So that's what we are doing now. We are creating a pipeline of deaf workers that could then become the leaders of the program and become the direct providers. So that way, we make sure that all the programs that we want to offer are fully available for deaf people. So, we can go to the next.

And the advantage of creating a pipeline of deaf health professionals, one of the advantages is that there will be more direct communication between deaf recipients of services and the deaf providers. And we know from research that when there is direct communication, we need to have better health outcomes for the patients, for many reasons.

One of the reasons is because having a person that looks like you, that relates to your language, there's a sense of empathy and relatedness that is important, that helps develop their relationship. But also, as I said before, if somebody has lived experience, they also have a lot of resources that they can offer.

So they have more information. Like, a deaf person knows what are the [inaudible 00:57:59] and what town use the sign language. Or, like, where can you go to socialize with other deaf people? Or what kind of apps can you use to communicate? Or what kind of events you can attend where other people will be there.

So a deaf person has a wealth of resources that happens. So, like in the Latino community, in the black community, that when you have someone with lived experience, you suddenly have access to more information and more resources.

And then, also a sense of hope that comes from seeing someone like looks like you that is taking a leadership role, that has managed or overcome adversities and is doing well. So a lot of benefits come from that. Another advantage of creating a pipeline of deaf professionals...and I hope that also other organizations who are working with blind people or with people with other disabilities will consider an investment in creating this pipeline.

Okay. They will see also that one of the problems that exist in the disability community is the lack of employment, meaningful employment. So with this initiative, we can also create employment opportunities that contribute to the health and well-being of deaf people.

And also, we will produce expense in interpreting services if we have more deaf direct providers. In addition to that, we can improve access to services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people because if you have tried to find ASL interpreters, like we did this time for this presentation, is a struggle many times.

Interpreters are wanted by, like, so many agencies, and they are not sufficient. So that would also...you will make sure that you can improve access to services

for deaf people. And also, if you are concerned as an employer, if you hire deaf individuals as providers, how they will do, I want to say that this is much more easier now with technology.

We have closed captions, we have email, online messaging, texting. And there's so many apps that you can use to communicate with deaf people so that if speaking, or calling, or hearing is not as required as it used to be before, and you can also through video conferencing services like Zoom, or you can use interpreters sometimes.

And so it is possible for deaf people to participate in meetings using remote interpreters. And also, deaf people are much more connected to social media now, so they can also interact and socialize that way. So it's possible to support this initiative of creating more employment opportunities for deaf people, and centering deaf people so that we make sure that there's increased access to services and opportunities.

Next. So, I just want to thank you all for your time and invite you to continue learning more about the deaf community, not only their needs, but their challenges, and to consider in supporting deaf people to join your team and work with you.

And we are here to support your efforts. We have a toolkit to help you navigate, including deaf people both in the services that you want to provide or if you want to hire someone deaf for your team.

So thank you so much for your attention.

- Thank you very much. It's been really great to hear about this. I feel like I personally have learned a lot that I didn't already know, and so I'm very excited and very thankful to you for that. I'd like to open up the floor to anybody who would like to ask questions.

You can unmute and ask if you like, or you can put it in the chat, however you prefer to do it. I guess while we're waiting for other people to ask questions, I will ask one. As someone who would like to be a deaf ally, what are some of the first steps that I could take to be sure that I'm making things more inclusive or supporting deaf culture in my region?

- Octavio, you want to speak?

- I think it's important to be willing to contact other people. Like, our program is great with having certain resources and providing information about culture. And also improving opportunities and forming coalitions. I think that's the biggest thing, is just having access to all that information and working together.

And, you know, to make sure that we keep in touch and you keep networking with other people. And I think that's when trust comes and that communication comes, that you'll see the support is out there. And I think the more that's evident, now you'll get to trust the deaf community.

- I just wanted to add that, well, if it's possible and it's in your availability of time, learn sign language. And if you can't learn sign language, just check with every...if you know there is a person...I know you're already an ally, but I'm just saying

[inaudible 01:05:15] and you're asking the question on behalf of other people. But to make sure asking the audience there's deaf people, or, like, if you're going to offer a program, offer closed captioning or ASL interpreting for those who are interested. So just keep it always in the awareness that there might be a deaf person who's interested.

And if there is a workshop or whatever is being offered, consider offering it in sign language, or just mention that if somebody is interested, you'll be willing to look for an interpreter. I know it's not always possible, but just making the offer. I know Ron might want to say something.

I see him wanting to contribute. Okay, no. Yes. Thank you.

- I see Ali.

- [Ali] I have a comment. This is Ali. I was born, raised in South New Jersey. And when I was coming, there's not a lot of services for deaf and hard people. I'm really thrilled this organization was established.

I think it's a great boon for us, and I'm really happy to see this. And I was interested in seeing your part about building a community, and the accountability within the community. I think that's great. I work for a hearing agency now. I'm the only deaf person who works there. I do teach American Sign Language to the hearing persons here, how to use interpreters.

So the burden's not just on me. The interpreter request is not just on me, it's also on my hearing [inaudible 01:07:09]. So my colleagues also know what to do, what's expected, and I think that's been great. And I really appreciate your presentation today.

Thank you.

- Thank you. I see that there's a question in the chat. It says, "I am intrigued by the idea of the deaf healthcare worker employment pipeline. It appears to have double benefits employment for DHOH people and services for the DHOH

community. Is there a field where you see a lot of potential? Are you having success with any particular kind of healthcare jobs?"

- Yeah. I think that the field is the community health worker. That's what we are. The reason that we are thinking of that role is because it doesn't require a...you can be a community health worker with a GED or high school diploma. And higher education for deaf people has been a challenge because of all the barriers that deaf people experience.

And, so I think it's a good start to start with the community health worker role that makes it available for...there are many deaf people who are very skilled. They have a very useful lived experience that can be a support for other people, but they just don't have the credentials. And so I think that if we start the community health worker...and Allies, again, has an apprenticeship program.

And at the same time, for those who are interested in going to college and can do it, and we support their training and their credentialing process because for other roles, like to become a therapist, you have to obtain a license. And so that's where we struggle, that we do have some deaf people with a master's degree, diploma, but they have struggled to pass a licensing test.

Like, they tried three, four times, and it happens with other languages, too, but I don't know how where everybody. Like, the licensing process, there are many barriers for deaf people that they can't pass the test because the test is, kind of, very English skill-based rather than...anyway, sorry. But it's just very difficult.

So at the moment, we are working with the community health workers supporting other professionals with higher degrees to pass their tests so that they can become a therapist. But I think in other fields, nursing, I think is the same in other fields that the test is a barrier, passing the test.

- Thank you.

- I think, just keep it back in your mind that...many deaf people experience employment barriers, because English is not the first language, and typically American Sign Language is.

There are a lot of deaf and hard-of-hearing people who've had language deprivation experiences as well. And 90% of all deaf children have hearing parents. And hearing parents aren't inherently born with the ability to sign. And so there's a lot of different things they never learned from their parents, so just never had access to.

Things about finances or other things, you know. And deaf people have been typically and historically isolated. And they don't learn this information until



they're exposed to it at a much, much later age. So, if you think about all the things that you just learned through osmosis by the ability to hear, they don't have any of that access. And so, it isn't until... - Adverse childhood experiences.

Adverse childhood experiences of language deprivation. Yes.

- Deprivation has, you know, that's just some of these other barriers. And so there's a lot of, you know, millions of people who may have experienced this around the world, unfortunately. And so there are a lot of barriers out there. There's things we can overcome. There's also other barriers, drug use, availability of resources. And then there's the hearings...parent's responsibility for their deaf child...and how they have access to the world.

- And also in regards to deaf individuals, they've missed so much information over the years, and so, in regards to finances, in regards to health. And so, you know, the education is minimal at best. And so those are all barriers that are encompassing in regards to the issues that we face, and healthcare is no different.

I mean, and that is why we have healthcare training in regards to 144 hours plus teaching them in regards to, you know, the medical terminology support, advocating. And it's a benefit all the way around. It increases the percentage of unemployment rates, as well, in regards to that.

For instance, it also helps create jobs. So, thank you.

- Are there any other questions?

- Hey, I want to mention something, that working, like...I'm thinking, how do I put this? Because of precisely when Octavio mentioned that deaf children experience language deprivation because most of them are children of hearing parents who don't sign, so they don't have the same vocabulary and information that we just get very easily.

A lot of what we learn now is because we hear it, and we are sometimes not aware of how much...like, what we know is not because we are reading books. Like, really because we are hearing from the radio, from TV, from going to the Wawa and hear conversations. So a lot of...we get so much information from there the deaf people don't get. So, even, like, people with a bachelor's degree who have a lot of intuitive knowledge, and have a lot of concept and ability, like ambition ability, don't have good writing skills.

And, so I see that employers sometimes hesitate to hire deaf people because they think, "Well, like, when I see their writing, it doesn't seem professional. It

doesn't seem like I can trust this person. Or, how is this person going to communicate?"

So, our team has been very creative. Like, they have found their ways to improve their language skills. So I do think that to create this pipeline, we need to really have an open mind and an open heart to know that, actually, the people who need services don't need perfect English skills.

They need a person who has the capacity to build good rapport, a person who cares, who has the information, who can communicate with them. The person doesn't need to have someone with perfect writing skills. And so, as employer, we need to be more flexible and really think about that, and continue supporting our staff in developing their skills, their English skills.

I think that's going to be important to us.

- Thank you. I'm not seeing any other questions. Does anyone have any?

- Ron says, "Great presentation."

- Okay. So [inaudible]. Thank you. Thank you for coming. Thank you to the interpreters. They did a great job.

- Yes.

- Octavio, Ron, so thank you very much. Thank you to you all.

- Thank you all so much. Oh, sorry, Ron.

- And also, Ron is stating, "Thank you, Rebecca. Thank you so much for hosting this. Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you to the interpreters as well."

- Thank you all very much for being here and for a wonderful presentation. I also have to say that the interpreters have been instrumental, and I really appreciate all of your hard work today. And we want to always make sure that we thank the Division of Disability Services who made this possible. And I think personally this has been one of my favorite webinars we've done so far, and I just really feel like you've given us so much information that's really useful, and hopefully will help us throughout the state to make a more inclusive experience for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

So thank you again, and thank you to everybody who participated. Have a wonderful day.

- Bye.

