

Venue Assistive Listening Toolkit

Legislative Compliance



Hearing Loss – A Growing Challenge

Did you know that over 40 million Americans have a measureable degree of hearing loss? That's around 17%. Compared with some of the other disabilities that Americans have, like the 1.4% with physical disabilities and the 0.14% with visual disabilities, this number is pretty staggering. The number of Americans dealing with hearing loss is on the rise due to aging and lifestyle. Noise induced hearing loss will happen to most of us as we age and it is currently on the rise in our children due to changes in their lifestyles, as well.

As you can see, hearing loss among Americans, both young and old, is a growing challenge. Just because one is hard of hearing, does not mean that they want to miss out on the things that they love doing, like concerts, movies, the theatre, and sporting events. So, what can be done? As a venue manager, you have a unique opportunity and a legal compliance responsibility to provide people who have hearing loss with the tools they need to continue doing what they enjoy doing.

Assistive listening products help solve frustrating problems like background noise, reverberation, and poor acoustics for the hard of hearing who visit any venue. By providing these types of products, you can reach a wider audience and create more opportunity for increased business. According to government accounting, businesses that made accessibility improvements experiences a 12% increase in business. Disabled Americans have \$175 billion in discretionary spending power and consumer power over \$220 billion annually.

Below you will find an Assistive Listening Toolkit created specifically for venue managers. This toolkit was compiled as a resource for venue managers to better understand what's required by law to accommodate an individual with hearing loss and to help build awareness for those with hearing loss when they want to enjoy an experience in a venue like yours.

What do you need to know?

Every day, individuals with hearing loss experience difficulty hearing or understanding speech:

- In meetings,
- In places of worship,
- In theaters and movies,
- In public spaces, like airports and municipal buildings
- And while shopping at a mall, at a pharmacy, or visiting their bank.

In these situations, assistive listening devices can make a world of positive difference. These devices are also required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

There are many people who can benefit from assistive listening devices who are simply hesitant to ask for them. They either don't want to call attention to themselves, they don't want to be a bother to anyone else, or, they don't know that the accommodation is available to them. As a venue manager, you can play a part in letting your visitors know that you provide assistive listening devices. By doing this, you're making the Hard of Hearing (HoH) community aware that you support their needs and that you want them to have a great experience at your venue.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Signed into law in 1990, the ADA prohibits discrimination by requiring accessibility to a variety of public and private buildings. The ADA has requirements for new construction, alterations, or renovations to buildings and facilities and for improving access to existing facilities of private companies providing goods or services to the public. Essentially, owners of public facilities must remove barriers and provide people with disabilities with accommodation equal to, or similar to, that available to the general public. This includes providing **assistive listening devices** (ALDs) for hard of hearing people.

What is an Assistive Listening Device (ALD)?

When someone with a hearing disability is in a venue, they are often only a few feet away from a given sound source and in a noisy environment it can be difficult to hear. Assistive listening devices (ALDs) expand the functionality of hearing aids and cochlear implants by helping to separate the sounds you want to hear from the background noise in venues and public spaces; they enable you to hear a speaker or audio source when you're in different types of venues.

Here is how an ALD works. An assistive listening device consists of a microphone to collect sound, a transmitter to send the signal across a distance, a receiver to intercept the signal, and any one of several different listening attachments to send the sound from the receiver to the user's ear, hearing aid, or cochlear implant. Each device should have individual volume control making it easier for the user to adjust the volume level at which he or she is comfortable. Some devices work with hearing aids and cochlear implants and some work without the need of a hearing aid. If you are a venue manager, however, it is important to note that some of your ALDs will need to be hearing aid compatible. The recent ADA changes, which took full effect as of March 15, 2012, state that "Twenty-five percent (25%) minimum of receivers provided, but no fewer than two, shall be hearing aid compatible. The hearing aid compatible assistive listening device (ALD) means "telecoil or T-coil compatible." A telecoil is a small, inexpensive copper coil found in most hearing aids. It is also found and build into cochlear implant processors.

Remember, ALDs can help greatly when a Hard of Hearing person leaves his or her home to visit a venue. Venues are required to provide ALDs at no extra charge.

What makes the ALD hearing aid compatible?

A neck loop is an insulated loop of wire worn around the neck that transmits the information to the telecoil in a user's hearing aid through a magnetic field. Many people prefer to use neck loops, because they have the opportunity to listen with both ears without having to wear headphones. Users with hearing aids or cochlear implants can use ALDs with headphones or earbuds, if they choose to. However, they may prefer to take their hearing aids out when using the ALDs due to potential feedback problems. If a user does not have hearing aids or cochlear implants, he or she can use an assistive listening device with headphones or earbuds.

Another added benefit of telecoils is that they work with hearing loops. If a venue is using a hearing loop, the only receiver a user needs is the telecoil in his or her hearing aid or cochlear implant. Using a telecoil and

hearing loop together is seamless, unobtrusive, and wireless. And a user does not have to obtain extra equipment.

What types of venues must meet the ADA requirements?

Venues or assembly areas must meet the ADA requirements for assistive listening devices. Assembly areas include, but are not limited to: classrooms, lecture halls, courtrooms, public meeting rooms, legislative chambers, motion picture houses, auditoria, theatres, playhouses, dinner theatres, concert halls, performing arts centers, amphitheatres, arenas, stadiums, grandstands, and convention centers.

Each assembly area required to provide assistive listening will provide **signs** informing patrons of the availability of the assistive listening system. These signs will comply with the *International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss*.

In Venues, Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants Aren't Enough

Hearing aids and cochlear implants can work wonders to improve speech understanding in quiet environments and during one-on-one conversations, but there are some situations, like hearing speaker who is more than a few feet away, hearing in noisy backgrounds, and hearing in poor acoustical environments that are still quite problematic for people with hearing disabilities. These situations typically happen in different types of venues where hearing aids and cochlear implants simply aren't enough.

Our mission is to provide assistive listening tools and resources, as well as enable advocacy for broader assistive listening device (ALD) adoption and awareness. Our main focus within the Hard of Hearing (HoH) community is on commercial awareness. In other words, our focus is on how the Hard of Hearing community is affected when they are outside of their homes and in more public spaces. This topic is not discussed enough and is often misunderstood. There are great solutions and technologies available for the HoH Community that venues can provide to make a better and more enjoyable experience for their patrons, while meeting the ADA requirements.

What Can I Do, So Visitors Know That I Offer Assistive Listening?

- Display signs
- Train your box office staff and guest services staff on being ambassadors for assistive listening services in your venue,
- Create a promotion plan around assistive listening devices in your venue.

9 Ways to Promote Assistive Listening Devices in Your Venue

There are many ways to participate and promote assistive listening devices in your venue. They can range from simple to elaborate. Explore your resources and choose which ways are right for your venue.

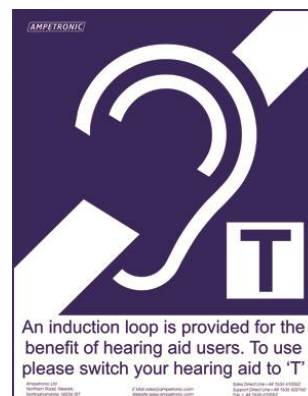
1. Become involved with your local Hard of Hearing (HoH) advocacy groups, such as the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Chapters, Sertoma (Service to Mankind), and various Loop Movements across the U.S.

2. Get involved with Hearing Loss Awareness Month. This provides your venue with a prime opportunity to get involved with the HoH community and enables you to promote your venue as an advocate for those with hearing loss.
3. Consider getting an official Proclamation signed by your Governor, City Mayor, County Mayor, etc. declaring May as **Hearing Loss Awareness Month**. Please note: this should be done two to three months in advance as local governments need to plan and schedule ahead of time. The request to do this should be sent to: Director of Correspondence and Declarations and/or Coordinator or the Communications Director
4. They may issue a Hearing Loss Awareness Proclamation, which could then lead to other opportunities. You can use this proclamation as a photo opportunity and invite others to join you. Consider inviting members of your local HLAA Chapter, as well as others from the HoH Community. You can also use the photo and proclamation to create a press release about how your venue supports Hearing Loss Awareness and the HoH Community.
5. Host an event for Hearing Loss Awareness Month at your venue. You can create Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and add your event to various Community Calendars in your local community by contacting your local media channels. Consider getting in touch with local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations to promote your event.
6. Use the Hearing Loss Advocacy Logos at your venue. These logos are available to download for free at www.listentech.com/advocacy/hearing-loss. Use them in your ads, on your website, or on your own stationery to promote awareness.
7. Stage a musical performance. Celebrate Hearing Loss Awareness with a concert in your community. Distribute assistive listening devices or information on ALDs and setting up a demonstration and/or table will give you an opportunity to tell the hearing loss awareness story. Local news may cover the story, as well, which will promote your venue's involvement.
8. Pick a charity to support your hearing loss advocacy. This is often the best opportunity to launch a charitable giving program. There are many who offer hearing aids for children when a hearing aid is financially out of reach. There are numerous charities that benefit hearing loss and hearing loss awareness. Pick one and make a donation of your time and resources.
9. Conduct a behind-the-scenes tour of your venue showcasing assistive listening. Nothing tells the story of hearing loss and assistive listening better than seeing and hearing the technology first hand and in its setting, whether it's installed permanently or for an event. Give the tour to your local media, government officials, school groups, businesses or community organizations to show them the assistive listening technologies and explain why you support it.

Assistive Listening products can definitely help solve some of the frustrating problems that the Hard of Hearing face on a day to day basis. As a venue manager who provides these types of products, you are not only complying with your legal responsibilities, but you're also being part of the solution. Being an advocate and a supporter of the HoH community allow you and your venue to enjoy the benefits of having a wider audience and it allows many people to continue to enjoy doing what they love to do.

Sample Signage

An important part of the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance policy is signage identifying the availability of assistive listening devices. More stylized signage is available to help venues promote the availability of assistive listening devices in programs, digital signage, mailers and more.



Sample Proclamation

WHEREAS, hearing loss awareness is improving people's lives through life improving assisted listening technology; and

WHEREAS, assisted listening equipment allows government proceedings to be recorded, allowing for a more active and involved citizenry; and

WHEREAS, assisted listening (AL) equipment and services are used to protect our nation's people and infrastructure through command and control facilities; and

WHEREAS, millions of students are receiving an enhanced educational experience through use of AL communications technology; and

WHEREAS, the AL industry provides improved entertainment value to millions of sports fans and concert goers; and

WHEREAS, during this event, across the community outreach projects will be performed by hearing loss advocates.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, **(NAME/TITLE)** do hereby proclaim

Month Day, 201X

as

Hearing Loss Advocacy Week (or whatever the event is)

In **(CITY/STATE)**.

Signed this **(DATE)** day of **(MONTH)**, 201X

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

(Your name here)

(Your telephone number here—include a cell phone # or a number to a voicemail you check regularly and your email address; also include a number where you can be reached on the day of your event.)

(Your company/venue/organization's web address here)

HEADLINE ABOUT YOUR EVENT

(Your City, State) (Date of Release) – (Name of your company/venue) will host a (type of event) on (include specific time and date of event) to promote advocacy for assistive listening and the Hard of Hearing Community.

(Describe Your Event—include a brief two to three paragraph description of your event. It's a good idea to answer the following questions: who, when, what, where, and why. Successful press releases also often include a quotation from someone involved in the event, so try to incorporate one in your press release, if possible. It's a good rule of thumb to keep your press release to one page.)

Paragraph One: Talk about the details of your event

Paragraph Two: Talk about why you're hosting your event and try to incorporate a quotation about it.

Paragraph three: Sum things up.

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(Insert a general statement about your company/venue at the end of your press release.)

Sample PSA

General Event Information

Event Title:

Event Category:

Event Start Date:

Event Start Time:

Enter a note about the event time ("arrive early," "registration closes at 2 p.m.")

Description of your event long version:

Description of your event short version:

Who is your audience:

Event Image:

Artist/Group:

Artist/Group Web Address:

Artist/Group Email Address:

Venue Information

Venue Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Country:

Map:

Telephone:

Web Address:

Email Address:

Presenting Organization Information**Name:****Telephone:****Web Address:****Email Address:****Designation:** N/A for profit not-for-profit**Sample Community Calendar**

Venue

Name of Event and Location:

Event Information

Date

Name

Details

Time

Description Long Version:

Description Short Version:

Admission:

Media/Links

(Here you can add an image or upload a video)

Event Contact

Name

Phone

Email

Website

Submitter Information

Email

Phone