WHAT IF I CAN’T HEAR YOU?

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Deaf Services Queensland
Aged care Forum
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This presentation will

• Introduce Deaf Services Queensland
• Give a snapshot of Deaf people, culture and identity
• Take you to a journey with Deaf seniors who want to access aged care
• Identify challenges and barriers deaf people experience in aged care
• Give you some tips and ideas how to provide deaf friendly services
Deaf Services Queensland

• Leading end to end provider of support services and information to Deaf and hard of hearing people across Queensland

• Operating since 1903

• Our Vision: Individuals and community empowered, connected and achieving
Deaf Services Queensland

• A state wide not-for-profit organisation
• 6 Offices: Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough and head office in Brisbane
• Outreach locations: Charters Towers, Ayr, Yeppoon, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Maroochydore, Caboolture, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Gold Coast
Ageing Well services

- Ageing Well team provides
  - information on aged care and other aged related topics
  - Home care to eligible seniors
  - Friendly visits to deaf seniors in residential care
  - Home care services in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Rockhampton
Deaf people

- 95% of Deaf children are born to hearing families
- Most hearing families with Deaf members do not sign
- Deaf people do not view themselves as being disabled
- It is hearing (mainstream) society that makes Deaf people disabled
- English is a second language, many are not proficient
- Interpreters are not just for Deaf people but for hearing people who don’t know Auslan
Facts on Deaf people

- Not all Deaf people are literate
- Auslan is not the same as English
- Only 70% at best can be lip-read
- Informal supports, friends and family are not always fluent in Auslan. Often do not sign at all
- An affirming nod does not mean the person has understood
- Support person is not the interpreter and cannot support and interpret simultaneously
Deaf culture and community

• Deaf people have their own language, their own community and identity

• Deaf people, their language, the Deaf community is one of the LEAST understood of all disability cohorts and cultural linguistic minorities
# Cultural differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEARING CULTURE</th>
<th>DEAF CULTURE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal questions = nosey</td>
<td>Personal questions = expected</td>
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<tr>
<td>If late, no questions asked</td>
<td>If late, must know why</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money is a private subject</td>
<td>Money is discussed</td>
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<td>Goodbye = 1 time possible hug</td>
<td>Goodbye = many times with a hug expected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use ‘sandwich’ approach for feedback</td>
<td>Be clear and straight to the point with feedback (blunt)</td>
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<td>If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say it.</td>
<td>Personal comments (positive or negative) are a sign of caring</td>
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Aged care and Deaf older people
First contact with My Aged Care

- Contact made by phone
  - National Relay Services (NRS) available
  - However not all seniors have equipment or/and know how to use NRS
First contact with My Aged Care

- Contact made by internet
  - Online referral form not easy to find on MAC website
  - Sign languages are not an option of a client's native language when completing the form
Referrals and assessments

• How to inform a client about their referrals and assessment meetings when deaf people cannot take phone calls?

• If a mobile number is given;
  • MAC call centre calls three times, if not reaching a client, they will remove them from the register

Make sure information given to MAC highlights specific communication needs of a client!
Face-to-face assessments

- Always a qualified interpreter to ensure accurate communication and information gathering
- A pen and paper is not adequate for communication
Accessing services

- Information on aged care is complex and has a lot of terms and concepts that are not familiar to deaf seniors
- Provide enough time to explain and answer questions
- Unpacking concepts and terms
Service delivery

- Good communication between clients and support staff is a key for high quality, individualised and consumer directed care and services
- Deaf clients cannot learn your language -> you need to learn their language
Lack of Auslan interpreting services

- No funded interpreting services available for deaf people over 65 years old if a nature of an appointment is non-medical
- Who will pay for interpreting costs?
Representative of a client

• MAC doesn’t share information to a third party (family members, friends etc.) without first getting a consent from a client

BUT

What if a client can’t hear them on the phone?
• A medical certificate needs to be provided to MAC prior to a nomination of a representative
• What if a matter is urgent?
What can you do?

• Have a qualified interpreter always when communicating important information e.g. assessments, support planning, home care agreement

• Written messages: short and clear

• Keep your deaf clients well informed: e.g. who will visit when?

• Respect their rights to access services in a fair and equal way
Questions?

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*Deaf individuals and the community empowered, connected and achieving*