

Deaf & hearing-impaired adoptions Center checklist

Whatever you might think, you do have members, friends, and visitors to your centre with hearing impairments. Loss of hearing is generally agreed to be the most isolating of all physical disabilities. With our average age rising, this is a rapidly increasing issue in our sangha.

What is loss of auditory acuity?

Hearing loss can span from having some degree of loss ranging from mild to profound to having a hearing loss of such severity that communication is not possible with auditory means.

People who are hard of hearing may use speech to communicate. They may or may not use personal hearing aids. Even if they have personal hearing aids, additional assistive listening devices may be required to access speech at a distance, on the phone, in noisy surroundings, and in other situations. Hard of hearing people supplement the auditory gaps by using speech reading and contextual clues.

People who are deaf do not depend on hearing for communication. Communication is completely dependent on visual information, including sign languages, which are specific to certain regions. In North America the language is American Sign Language.

How to use this list

The Shambhala international working group on Accessibility and disability (A&D) is charged with helping and guiding accessibility efforts for both physical environments and electronic media. Too often accessibility guides provide long lists of expensive to implement solutions. What we are trying to do in this document is to match accessibility adaptations to realistic expectation of resources at *your* centre. This does not necessarily mean spending money, many effective solutions to accessibility challenges are homemade. Making the adaptation your self can be both cost effective and precisely tailored to the situation at hand. So in reading these notes, think of how you might be able to put together a system that will work for you. You also might want to join the accessibility forum group in the Shambhala network site ([URL here](#)) as well as check out the list of resources for hard of hearing problems we have put together ([URL here](#)).

The list of adaptations presented below are divided into 4 groups, roughly corresponding to increasing size of the centre. The suggestions are generally accumulative, so that ideas used in smaller centres could be successfully implemented for some situations by larger centres.

Contact us

We have several websites:

- The A & D working group Shambhala network group
http://Aliquamdignissim.dui_non/
- The Accessibility and disability network web pages:
<http://shambhalanetwork.org/shambhala-org-3-0/community/accessibility-and-disability/>

The websites, besides containing discussion forums also have lots of useful downloadable documents (like this one)

You can email us at AandD@shambhala.org

or post to:

Accessibility and Disability working group
Shambhala international
Some address
Halifax, NS Canada
B4T 5R6

1. Small – *rented or shared space, less than 100 members, often do programs in rented space*

- ☐ Do program application forms include a question concerning if the person is deaf or hard of hearing and request information about what would help that individual?
- ☐ Is the lighting focused on a teacher's face sufficient for speech-reading purposes?
- ☐ Sometimes having someone transcribing the talk on a notebook computer, sitting next to a deaf or hearing-impaired person, has worked successfully.
- ☐ For several people this could also be done with a large monitor or TV screen, or with a projector.
- ☐ Portable PA systems (e.g., the Fender Passport Deluxe PD 250, which costs about \$300, although it is somewhat bulky). Can be used in rooms without a permanent sound system installed.
- ☐ **Preparing Program Staff**
 - At residential programs in particular, coordinators and other staff involved should be sensitized to disability issues, and trained to help people with disabilities deal with problems they may encounter. A system needs to be in place to insure this always happens. Coordinator/s (or designee) needs to make contact with the participant, one-on-one, to discuss any special needs. Ideally, this would be done well in advance of the program. The coordinator should also take the responsibility of checking in with the disabled and/or aging person throughout the program.
 - Ask for information on what special needs or disabilities might need accommodating in the program registration progress
- ☐ **Accessibility Information to Include in Your Printed Announcements.**
 - From the Unitarian Universalist "Disability 101" web site. "It is a good thing for us to model good accessibility practice by including information on registration forms and program materials about accessibility accommodations that we make." See: <http://www.uua.org/accessibility/27066.shtml>

2. Medium – long term rent or owned space 100 – 150 members, host regional events

- ☐ Is there any additional equipment for the deaf or hard of hearing at talks?
 - The type of equipment that is appropriate depends on many factors.
 - Check with your deaf or hard of hearing members as to what is most suitable for them.
- ☐ Is there a sign language translator or translator service available if needed?
 - A translator who is a Buddhist would be ideal. It is usually impractical to have a sign language interpreter available at all times.
- ☐ For people with hearing impairments, rather than those who are deaf.
 - Is there a way to provide amplification in smaller rooms where classes take place?
- ☐ Does one of your telephones have the option of raising the volume (and large size keypad)?
- ☐ Sign Language Interpreter:
 - A number of centres use, or have used sign language interpreters at various times, one example is described above in Meditation Instruction for the Deaf-Blind which is also at Meditation Instruction for the Deaf-Blind at http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/viewarticle.php?art_id=146
 - Hiring people to do this can get expensive; however there may be options of Work-Study credit, (getting program credit in exchange) for signing.
 - See also the Shambhala Network discussion topic Sign language discussion (<http://shambhalanetwork.org/groups/accessibility-and-disability/forum/topic/sign-language-discussion/>)
 - Ten Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter at <http://uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/disability101/hearingimpairments/26846.shtml>
 - A local disabilities support organization may be able to direct you to an available interpreter. The Yellow Pages may also list interpreters. Someone familiar with the general subjects would

be ideal.

- Talk to other churches that may occasionally provide interpreters – they may be able give you some local names

☐ Wifi – computer based transcription services

- You can hire one of these and have your computers microphone send the talk (or have it plugged into the PA) and they will in real time send back to a computer the transcribed text. This is quite popular in England – it is even done in rather small conferences (albeit accessibility workshops)

3. Large – owned space (typically) 150 – 600 members, large range of events & spaces

- ☐ Do you have any fast typists, who could transcribe a talk, as it happens, on a laptop computer?
 - A deaf or hard of hearing person could sit next to the typist and read the talk on the laptop. This could also be done with a large monitor or TV screen for several people.
- ☐ Is there a computer with e-mail/chat/msn messenger capability in the centre that a deaf person can use instead of a telephone? Perhaps with a Braille receiver.
 - Cell phones with text messaging could be used as well.
 - TDD devices are less practical.
- ☐ Do you offer a regularly scheduled open house with a sign language interpreter on hand, that could be advertised in the deaf community? Is there a significant deaf community in your area that makes this a worthwhile approach?
- ☐ For people with hearing impairments, rather than those who are deaf.
 - Is the main shrine room of your centre equipped with an amplification system? Have you looked into Induction Loop Amplification?
 - Who in your sangha already needs or would be helped by Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)?
 - Do a survey and make a list.
- ☐ Is there any additional equipment for the deaf or hard of hearing at talks?
 - The type of equipment that is appropriate depends on many factors.
 - Check with hard of hearing members as to what is most suitable for them.
- ☐ Sound Systems for Shambhala Centres
 - The document Sound Systems for Shambhala Centres is in the Files Best Practices category at <http://shambhalanetwork.org/groups/accessibility-and-disability/documents/?category=7540>.
- ☐ Conference speakerphone connection for meetings and talks <http://shambhalanetwork.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/group-documents/284/1292117315-Conferencespeakerphoneconnectionform meetingsandtalks.doc>
- ☐ *Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)*
 - Wireless Sound systems
 - Wireless Sound systems tend to be more expensive and probably unrealistic for smaller centres, depending on the demand. However large land centres and bigger urban centres that have programs for many dozens or hundreds of people might well need these. They also need some amplification device that can be used in different listening

environments. For instance, if there are classes in various rooms or tents.

- There are certainly already a number of people whose experience of programs would be very much improved with a system like the ones mentioned here. What is going to help is very individual and there are a lot of choices. Before deciding on any ALD system it would be good to consult with your members about their specific needs.
- Induction Loop Amplification.
 - Installed to operate with existing sound system. These work with any hearing aid and cochlear implants that has a “T” coil, which is now in many hearing aids (50%) in the US and most in Europe. This is standard in churches in the UK and probably other European countries. Induction Loop also works with personal receivers. Because it works with hearing aids tends to be much easier for users, than FM systems, and possibly cheaper as should require fewer personal receivers with ear buds or headphones (about \$100 each). But it is less mobile than FM systems as it needs to connect to a wire going around the whole, or part of, the room. Probably the best choice for centres who can afford it and have, or soon will have, enough people who need it. The loop system is a barrier to those with electrical sensitivity disability (over half of those with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities). However it is relatively easy to create “Loop free” areas. This is discussed in the footnote under Induction Loop System, page 4, in the “Hearing Accessibility Handbook – A Guide for Congregations, also listed under Resources. Area needs to be checked before installation to insure there are no sources of strong electromagnetic fields that can interfere with the system. This can also be done with the personal receivers. More info on the specs at www.ovalwindowaudio.com/loopintro.htm & www.ovalwindowaudio.com/satellitespec.htm More information at HearingLoop.org.
- FM sound systems that are connected to the main sound system or have their own microphone.
 - These can have 1) a receiver connected to a loud speaker for several hard of hearing. 2) Wireless receivers for individuals that interface with the PA system, and allow the person through earbuds or headphones to adjust the volume for their specific needs. These receivers would have to be provided for each user. This would look like an iPod or a Walkman. See “FM Systems” below. These tend to be more expensive and perhaps unrealistic for most centres, depending on the demand (although may be down to around \$600 now). However large land centres and a few bigger urban centres that

have programs for hundreds of people might well need these. In terms of the number of receivers the ADA says, "The minimum number of receivers to be provided shall be equal to 4 percent of the total number of seats, but in no case less than two. Signage complying with applicable provisions of 4.30 shall be installed to notify patrons of the availability of a listening system" from "Assistive Listening Systems - Bulletin 9c: For Providers at <http://www.access-board.gov/Adaag/about/bulletins/als-c.htm>. Some FM systems have receivers with neck loops that work with hearing aids that have TCoils.

- Infrared (IR) light system. In an IR system, audio signals from any source are conveyed to listeners via infrared light waves (using light emitting diodes) invisible to the human eye.
 - Ordinarily, strict line-of-sight is necessary between an IR emitter and the transparent lens on the receiver, but this can be modified in rooms with light-colored surfaces. Has the advantages of more privacy and it is not affected by ambient electromagnetic interference. Tends to be more costly than other systems. IR Listening Systems: Key Stats (includes manufacture contact info) at http://svconline.com/audioplayback/products/avinstall_ir_listening_systems/index.html
 - ALD advice: Sangha member Stefan Carmien has been active in audio work for over 35 years and has set up assistive listening systems at seminaries. He can give advice to centres on equipment. carmien@gmail.com.
 - Williams TGS whisper system (radio wave transmitter/receiver). Dechen Choling has used a Williams TGS whisper system for simultaneous translation and hearing support for several years. The cost is under \$ 1500 for one channel and 20 receivers. <http://www.williamssound.com/catalog/tgs-pro-737> – (in any case you can't go wrong with a model number like the whisper system)
 - A good overview of ALD systems is here: <http://www.access-board.gov/Adaag/about/bulletins/als-c.htm>
 - Before any new construction solutions such as the ones above should be part of the budget.
- ☐ Permanent sound systems in every room used as a shrine room or classroom. However this will not be enough for many with hearing loss. Some centres have headphones attached to the sound systems, that helps some members.

4+. Land centres – Our main land centres (KCL, DDL, SMC, & DCL) are covered in separate program. However here are some topics to think about.

- ☐ New construction
 - Always include ALD (as well as simultaneous translation support) as fundamental to the budget and not as an add-on ‘if we have time/money available’
- ☐ Large events
 - Always poll for hearing disabilities at the first interaction with participants – typically this will be registration months/weeks in advance
 - Always include, if needed, ASL services as part of the budget of large regional/ international programs. If you have not bought an ALD system these can be rented (ask us if you need help). These, if needed, should be part of the programs budget at the same level as food and rental cars.