



## Getting Started: Deaf People and Mental Health Settings

**Target audience:** *Mental Health professionals working with Deaf individuals who wish to learn more about the intersection of deaf people and mental health. This is not an exhaustive listing. For additional information on this topic, please consult the Deaf and Mental Health bibliography listing or contact our office.*

- Deaf people are more likely to experience abuse, neglect, and **trauma** throughout their lives due to:
  - o Lack of communication with family, peers, public
  - o Inadequate language exposure
  - o Inadequate fund of information
  - o Lack of exposure to/knowledge of role models/peers
  - o Lack of control in decisions
  
- Deaf patients in **mental health treatment** likely to arrive with more complicated case and stay longer.
  - o They are often unprepared to receive services (language, fund of information).
  - o Behaviors may be substituted for language.
  - o Services may replicate earlier traumas.
  - o Prelingually deaf produce language and behaviors analogous to those traditionally identified in hearing people with schizophrenia.
  - o Language deprivation/dysfluency has clinical implications that are often misattributed to diagnostic symptoms.
  - o Etiology of Deafness can impact cognitive development, developmental development, language acquisition, family view, fund of information, and understanding of the world.
  - o Language deprivation can impact treatment approaches.
  - o Some treatment approaches, such as DBT and CBT depend heavily on language, discourse, and/or the use of materials that depend on literacy skills.
  
- Individuals who lose their hearing later in life may experience it as disabling and isolating, and oftentimes will face rejection or frustration by family members and discrimination by others. They often experience grief, anxiety and depression.