



10 Workplace barriers for individuals who are deaf or Hard of hearing

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may encounter career barriers resulting from various aspects of their working environment. It is important to understand your disability rights in order to ask for reasonable accommodations so that qualified workers with disabilities have equal employment opportunities. However, if individuals with hearing loss do not understand their rights and do not advocate for their needs, they may be impeding career and work advancements. Persons with hearing loss are challenged with both environmental and attitudinal barriers. Common workplace challenges are described below.

1. Physical and structural barriers, especially background noise, create significant barriers for individuals with hearing loss.
2. Accessing communication from multiple speakers in group meetings, including staff and departmental meetings, is challenging.
3. Work related social interactions that occur in informal conversations, networking, and casual information sharing may result in feelings of exclusion.
4. Individuals may be reluctant to disclose information and needs about personal hearing loss and the necessary accommodations to address them.
5. Individuals may experience limitations as a result of the organization of their job and seek work in a quiet environment or avoid working directly with the public.
6. Interacting with individuals who have accents, soft voices, or school age children can be difficult.
7. "Listener fatigue" can impact performance; therefore individuals with hearing loss need to continuously manage their environment in order to continue to perform well on the job.
8. Negative attitudes of coworkers or employers who get frustrated with the added effort to communicate can result when these individuals have a poor understanding or limited tolerance for hearing loss and do not want to repeat what was said. Coworkers may view the person with hearing loss as "incompetent" or "rude".
9. Accommodations such as interpreters, TTYs, flashing alarms may be difficult to obtain.
10. Some environments have technologies or equipment that interfere with radiowave transmission causing problems with hearing aids and FM systems making it difficult to use hearing assistive technology.

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