Assistive Listening Devices

What are Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)?
ALDs (Assistive Listening Devices) are amplification systems designed specifically to help people hear better in a variety of difficult listening situations.

There are ALDs designed to amplify
• Television
• Theaters
• Speakers and presenters
• Meetings and group discussions

What Types of ALDs are Available?
• Personal Amplified Systems
• Infrared Systems
• FM Systems
• Loop Systems
• Soundfield Systems

How are ALDs different from Hearing Aids?
ALDs help overcome background noise in many situations. Because the microphone for the ALD is placed near the sound source (the television or presenter), the ALD amplifies the desired sound and minimizes the background noise. In contrast, a hearing aid has a microphone near the user’s ear. All sounds are amplified, including background noise. ALDs can be used with or without a personal hearing aid.

Where can I get an ALD?
The DSDHH staff at your regional center can discuss your needs, demonstrate equipment and help determine what will work best for you. Some equipment is available through DSDHH programs and other resources. Once you select a system, the DSDHH staff can

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assist you with available resources or provide catalogs from which you can order the desired equipment. After you receive your system, the DSDHH staff can provide technical assistance, installation and training.

Did You Know . . .?
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you have the right to request accommodations such as an ALD.
- Movie theaters often have ALDs available upon request.
- Before going to a meeting or public event, you can request an ALD be made available.

Examples of Assistive Listening Devices

Personal Amplified Systems
- Have built-in microphones so the speaker does not wear a microphone.
- Are portable systems that can be used indoors or outdoors.
- Great for one-on-one conversations and listening to the television, radio or speakerphone.
- Helpful in the car or when you cannot face the person who is speaking.
- Can be used with a variety of headphones or neck loops for hearing aids with a telecoil.

Examples of Assistive Listening Devices

Infrared Systems
- Transmit sound by harmless, invisible light beams.
- Must be used indoors, away from fluorescent lights.
- Receiver must remain within sight of the transmitter since the signal cannot penetrate people or objects blocking the beam.
- Can be used with a variety of headphones or neck loops for hearing aids with a telecoil.
- Can directly connect to a television or radio to provide a better sound signal.

FM Systems
- Wireless sound transmission by radio waves.
- Work well indoors and outdoors.
- FM signal penetrates walls and ceilings.
- Can be used with a variety of headphones or neck loops for hearing aids with a telecoil.
- When multiple systems are used, separate broadcast frequencies are needed.
- Small transmitter and microphone are worn by the person speaking.
- Speech signal is broadcast to the receiver worn by the person with a hearing loss.

Loop Systems
- A loop wire is placed around a listening area.
- The person speaking wears a small transmitter and microphone.
- Speech signals travel through the loop wire.
- The telecoil in the hearing aid (or headset) picks up the energy from the wire and amplifies the sound for the listener.
- Designed to work with any hearing aid equipped with a telecoil.
- A special receiver and headset are available for people who are not using hearing aids.

Soundfield Systems
- Signal transmitted to a single receiver, which is connected to speakers.
- The person speaking wears a small transmitter and microphone.
- Volume can be adjusted to the listening needs of the users.
- No headphones or hearing aids are required.
- Beneficial to all listeners, not just those with a hearing loss.
- Ideal where a large PA system is impractical or where amplification is needed for a group of people.