

# If a Deaf Person Comes to a Meeting....

There is an estimated 2,437-3,481 deaf alcoholics in Snohomish County.

According to the US Census, there are 24,367 people that are deaf or extremely hard of hearing people in Snohomish County. An estimate for how many are alcoholic could be anywhere between 2,437 and 3,481.

Do you know what your home group would do to carry the message if a deaf alcoholic came to your meeting? Some Questions and Answers:

## **Are there online sites that a deaf alcoholic can utilize?**

- One source of online meeting information is the Online Intergroup of AA ([www.aa-intergroup.org](http://www.aa-intergroup.org)). One specific meeting that is active is Wednesday Text and Chat (information provided at [www.aa-intergroup.org/directory\\_specialty.php?code=dhoh](http://www.aa-intergroup.org/directory_specialty.php?code=dhoh)).

## **Is there AA Material for the Deaf Alcoholic?**

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book) and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions are available in ASL

- The GSO has rewritten the following material for reading and signing: "Twelve Steps", "Twelve Traditions", "A Brief Guide to A.A.", "A Deaf Newcomer Asks", "Is A.A. for You?", "Is A.A. for Me?", "Do you Think You're Different?", "How it Works", "This is A.A.", "A Newcomer Asks", and the Serenity Prayer.
- The following pamphlets have been identified as helpful for Deaf alcoholics "Twelve Steps Illustrated", "Twelve Traditions Illustrated", "Is A.A. for me?", "It Happened to Alice", "What Happened to Joe?"

## **Aren't there already ASL interpreted meetings in Western Washington Area 72?**

- Yes, there are meetings in Vancouver, Seattle and Tacoma. Otherwise, there are no reported meetings (i.e. in the ASL Calendar) elsewhere with the exception of one meeting once a month in Edmonds (both cities are at the southern end of Snohomish County).

## **Can't a deaf person just read the written materials provided if they cannot attend the meetings?**

- Clearly understanding the written English materials will depend on the deaf person's educational background. ASL is most often the first language of the deaf person, whereas English is their second language. American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language, and **not** a written language. ASL has its own linguistic rules, and includes visual cues for tone of voice and emotional content. ASL is a conceptual, visually spatial language with no direct word-for-word translation to English. Thus, knowledge about Alcoholics Anonymous (i.e. "carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic") is not communicated very well to the Deaf community, especially through written English.

## **If the Deaf Alcoholic can lip read, what should I be aware of?**

- According to the Feb.-Mar 1976 Box 459 (from GSO), "Reverend Richard Russo, New York, nonalcoholic expert on teaching the deaf, if they can read lips, they miss about 40% of what is said; so sign language is a must."
- A more recent non AA publication puts the figure at 30%. Most deaf people I have talked to say comprehension is less than 40%, never more. The following can hamper effective lip reading -the speaker is chewing gum or eating, has an accent or mustache, and there should be no backlighting.