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>> BETH LOY: Hello, everyone and welcome to the Job Accommodation Network's Monthly Webcast Series. Today's program is called "Back to Basics: An Introduction to Hearing-Related Accommodations". We would like to welcome everyone. And we hope that everyone is doing well. Our presenters today are Teresa Goddard and Brittany Lambert. Now, before we start the program, we do need to go over a few housekeeping items.

First, if any of you experience technical difficulties during the webcast call us at 800-526-7234 for voice and hit button 5 or for TTY call 877-781-9403. Second, toward the end of the presentation, time allowing, we'll have a question and answer period. You can send in your questions at any time during the webcast to our email account at question@askJAN.org or you can use our question and answer pod located at the bottom of your screen. To use the pod just type in your question and hit submit to the question queue.

On the bottom of your screen you'll notice a FileShare pod. If you have difficulty viewing the slides or would like to download them, click on the button that says, save to my computer.

And finally, I want to remind you that at the end of the webcast, an evaluation form will automatically pop up on your screen. In another window.

We really appreciate your feedback. So please stay logged onto fill out the evaluation form.

So, let's get ready to start today's program. Teresa, take it away.

>> TERESA GODDARD: Thanks, Beth good afternoon and welcome to the "Back to Basics: An Introduction to Hearing-Related Accommodations". I'm Teresa Goddard, team lead for JAN's Sensory Team and Brittany Lambert also from the Sensory Team and I will be discussing hearing-related accommodations. We have lots of examples for you today based on the questions that we have been receiving here at JAN including some related to the current public health emergency. We really hope you enjoy them.

Now I'm going to give you a brief overview of what we're going to be talking about today. We'll be talking some basic tips to remember when accommodating an employee or applicant with a hearing-related need. Along with examples. Related to telework and social distancing. Manufacturing settings and healthcare. Hopefully we'll have time to get to lots of your questions, too.

Now on to the basics. So you're probably already aware of this but I just wanted to start with a brief list of the types of tasks that might require some type of an accommodation. So some examples are interacting with customers, supervisors and co-workers. Getting information and asking questions during meetings and trainings. People need to be able to do that in real-time in order for an accommodation to be effective.

Communicating by telephone is something that comes up a lot. Meeting safety standards, can be a challenge, particularly when PPE is required and the person is a hearing aid user. People often need accommodations in order to respond appropriately to auditory signals like alarms. And taking vital signs can also be an issue.

And just quickly we're going to go over some typical accommodations and I will expand on this and Brittany will, too, as we go along. One of the most important things that you can do to increase understanding and sound perception for an employee who is hard of hearing or who uses hearing aids is to improve the signal-to-noise ratio. This means making the sound that the person needs to respond to or the words that they need to hear louder than any background noise.

The word signal stands for the sound or words that the person is trying to hear. Noise standards for background sounds that the person needs to ignore or filter out.

There are two ways to improve the signal-to-noise ratio. One is to make the signal louder. And the other is to reduce or absorb background noise. And practically speaking, it's really a good idea if you can do both. Allowing alternate means of communication, such as interpreters or text-based communication can be helpful, especially if the person is deaf and uses sign language. Or is a person who became deaf later in life and uses written language as their preferred method of communication.

Text-based communication can also be helpful if you can't improve the signal-to-noise ratio quite enough to make words and sounds easy to hear and the employee is hard of hearing or uses hearing aids.

Another approach is providing Assistive Listening Devices or devices that amplify sounds and words that the person is trying to hear. This is one way of improving the signal-to-noise ratio. There are many types of Assistive Listening Devices. If you have an employee who is a hearing aid user, I always suggest trying to get input from their audiologist or from a representative of the company who makes or distributes their hearing aids. Some Assistive Listening Devices are designed to work with specific types of hearing aids. Others can work with many types.

Still others work best if a person uses headphones but does not use hearing aids. As with any assistive equipment, it's important to find the right equipment to meet the needs of the individual. And allow them to perform the essential functions of the position.

You can use a similar approach when choosing equipment for telephone access. In many cases, the type of hearing aid, for example, the brand and model, may dictate your options. There are many types of alerting devices to let someone know that a particular sound is occurring.

One example of a company that makes alerting devices is Silent Call Communications, which makes devices that can be used to alert someone to emergency alarms, doorbells, ringing telephones, alarm clocks, and other environmental sounds.

It is also important to make sure that all employees with disabilities, including those with hearing-related needs, are included in emergency evacuation and preparedness plans. Part of this may include ensuring that strobe lights are available and installed to alert employees to fire alarms or other relevant alarms. This approach might be combined with other accommodations such as a Buddy System or policy or procedure that ensures that areas are double checked to make sure that everyone is included in a drill or an evacuation.

Next I would like to talk about some communication basics.

Interpreting services are one of the most important and common ways of communicating with someone who is deaf.

For individuals who are deaf and use American Sign Language, as their primary or first language this will most likely be the most appropriate accommodation for many situations and settings. Situations where it's important to ensure accurate and complete communication, such as interviews and performance reviews, are examples of times when it may make sense to consider providing an interpreter.

Interpreter services can also be vital to ensure equal access to training opportunities and effective communication in meetings.

Interpreting services can be provided either on an in-person or community-based basis or remotely by a Video Remote Interpreting services also known as VRI.

A service called Video Relay Service or VRS, is used when someone needs interpreting services during a telephone call. You can find information on interpreting services on the JAN Website. There's also information on how to hire an interpreter at RID.org and Vinya which you see learning disability on this page is an example of a can be that may be able to assist in streamlining the process of selecting and scheduling an interpreter. Remember that sometimes the situation may require that you have an interpreter with certain types of certifications. Or with things like security clearances. So make sure to consider those things when you're selecting an interpreter.

Also individuals who are deaf-blind may require tactile interpreting.

Now, not everyone who is deaf or hard of hearing will benefit from interpreter services. Some people may not know sign language because they became deaf later in life. And others might be hard of hearing and use primarily assistive listening devices and hearing aids or text-based communication to provide support.

When someone is hard of hearing or uses a hearing aid, an Assistive Listening Device or sometimes they are called assistive listening systems, if they are installed in a space like a conference room, is an option that you might want to use when communicating one-on-one or in groups. Be sure to consult an audiologist when assisting an employee who uses hearing aids.

Next I would like to talk about the telephone.

Now, you can always contact JAN for information on how to figure out what type of equipment might work best. But here are some keywords to remember.

A telecoil is a feature that some hearing aids have and some don't have. If a person's hearing aid has a telecoil, that opens up some options because the telecoil can be used to connect a person's hearing aids to the phone. So that's important information to know.

Some hearing aids also have Bluetooth connectivity.

That can open up other options for connectivity. However, in settings where people need to limit their use of Bluetooth devices for security reasons, it can also pose problems.

Finally, some telephone amplifiers are designed to be used without hearing aids. So it's important to know if the employee whom you're attempting to accommodate uses hearing aids or not.

It's also helpful to know the brand and model number. And whether or not the hearing aids have features like Bluetooth or telecoil. In some cases an employee may need an adapter or an accessory in order to effectively use their hearing aids while on the phone. In other cases, an amplified telephone or another type of telephone amplification that can be added to an existing phone might work better.

It's important to find an individualized solution that meets the employee's needs and allows them to perform the essential functions of their job.

Pictured we have the speech Adjust-a-Tone from a company called Hearsay. It comes in various models but the one we see used most typically is about $155. This is designed to plug into the phone. Some models can be used with hearing aids that have a telecoil. Other models work best if the person doesn't use hearing aids and just needs amplification.

If you're looking at the picture, you'll see several sliders labeled bass, mid and treble. Those sliders can be adjusted by the user. So that the amplifier can be used to meet their unique hearing needs.

Another option is relay.

Some employees might need to use a relay service in order to place or receive telephone calls.

This means their call is routed through a center where a Communications Assistant or an interpreter, can assist by producing captions or using sign language to interpret what the person on the other end of the line is saying and they can also speak the words that someone is typing or signing and they say those words aloud so the person on the other end of the line is able to make or receive a phone call using a standard phone. A lot of people think if you're doing a video relay call with a person who is deaf, people on both sides need to have a videophone. That's not so. The person who is deaf and who is using the relay service and getting interpreting support during the call does need to have a videophone or a computer that has video relay software on it.

But the person with whom they are speaking can use any phone.

It's also helpful to remember that not all relay services involve sign language. We still do get calls and emails from people who use TTY here at JAN. So a lot of people think that TTYs aren't really in use anymore. But in fact, I answered a question from a TTY user just last week.

A TTY is a type of text-based telephone where the person who is deaf or hard of hearing types what they want to say. The Communication Assistant says outloud. And then the Communication Assistant types what the person on the other end of the line is saying.

So just keep in mind if you have a relay user in your office specialized equipment such as a TTY, a captioned phone, which is displays live captions of the call, or a videophone might be needed by the employee.

Finally, in some cases, it might make sense to limit the need to use the phone by focusing on alternate methods of communication. Such as email and instant messaging. Many people prefer texting as a method for quick impromptu communication a policy measure might make sense in order to allow for this in some workplaces and occasionally you'll find that someone is well set up to use their hearing aids with a personal cell phone. In that case it might make sense to either have the calls forwarded to a phone that works for them or provide a different phone from your standard desk phone and perhaps allow the person to use a mobile phone for work.

Of course everything depends on the situation and the setting. All of this is individualized.

Next I would like to talk about situational awareness.

Sometimes an accommodation need might not be related to communication. But rather to being aware of and responding to sounds in the environment. Such as alarms, emergency alerting systems, doorbells and so on.

As with communication-related accommodations the exact nature and degree of a person's hearing loss, whether or not the person uses hearing aids, and if so, what type, are all factors to consider when selecting equipment.

What works for one employee might not work for another because of differences in both the type of assistive technology that works for them and their individual and unique hearing needs.

Below are some examples of ways to support an employee who needs to attend to environmental sounds.

Alerting devices can use light or vibration to alert the listener or the user that a sound is occurring.

Assistive Listening Devices and assistive listening systems help to improve the signal-to-noise ratio. So that people can be aware of the sound more easily.

In some cases, Hearing Aid Compatible equipment might be the most practical choice. Or for cochlear implant users, cochlear implant compatible equipment may be needed. Just like you would contact the hearing aid company to find out what type of Assistive Listening Device is compatible with a particular hearing aid, you can contact the audiologist or the cochlear implant manufacturer to find out what might be compatible with what the person is using.

Another approach is assigning to a workstation where visual monitoring systems can be used or where things like mirrors and cameras can be used to provide additional visual information. Vibrating pagers, vibrating clocks, vibrating timers, decibel meters and sound-analyzing software might also be helpful depending on the situation. So an example of where you might use a decibel meter is where a person needs to know that a sound is occurring. Or that the sound level in a room has changed. But they don't need to know lots of detail about what the sound is.

Sound-analyzing software can be as simple as an app. But it can allow you to actually visualize the waveform of the sound. In other words, you can kind of see how loud the sound is and what time changes are occurring.

So next Brittany is going to tell you a little bit about how to adapt some of our typical workplace accommodations during this time of social distancing. Take it away, Brittany.

>> BRITTANY LAMBERT: Thanks, Teresa.

Sometimes it's necessary for employers to adapt and modify an accommodation in order to ensure that employees with disabilities are still able to perform job duties in unusual circumstances. Take the current changes that have been made to the workforce in light of COVID-19. Many employees are now teleworking full time in jobs that were previously done onsite. How might remote work introduce new challenges that employers and employees should be aware of? One challenge for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing may be the provision of CART or interpreting services if the person brought a CART person to meetings for important how can they ensure that these resources are available for employees now working remotely? Telephone access can also pose unique challenges many employees who are deaf or hard of hearing will use accommodations to ensure their office phones are accessible.

This equipment, however, may be designed specifically for landline phones and may not help the employee if they are working from home and don't have a landline. Similarly other types of equipment that are often used on hand such as communication access devices or portable texting technology may not be quite as usable during isolated work.

While practicing social distancing, employees may experience difficulty while adjusting to different meeting modalities.

So how might changing from in-person to virtual meetings pose a neat -- virtual meetings pose a need for adapted accommodation, for example? If an employee who was used to using a device or service to captions the speech of a co-worker sitting next to them, what options do they need to consider to ensure equal participation in a Zoom meeting, for example?

Exploring captioning options within the employer's chosen virtual meeting software can become critical.

Tactile cues and moving closer to hear better are also not feasible options for employees due to the need for social distancing.

This can be especially challenging for employees with dual hearing and vision impairments who rely on tactile feedback to gain information.

The current health crisis has also necessitated the use of Personal Protective Equipment or PPE. This can include facial masks, gloves, really anything designed to protect the wearer from contact with potentially dangerous materials.

These materials can pose unique challenges to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Standard face masks limit lipreading. And while there are clear face masks designed to address this, they are in short supply during the current pandemic.

It can also be challenging to determine who is responsible for covering the cost of PPE.

Let's look at an example an employee usually used a TTY for telephone communication or used other communication methods in the office.

Her employer temporarily restructured her job so that she would not have to make or receive telephone calls while at home.

However, as social distancing measures continued, the employer decided that they were unable to continue excusing her from calls for the duration of the public health emergency.

As an accommodation, the employee had a personal TTY device at home that was first explored to be used. But it was actually designed for use with landline phones. And the employee didn't have one of those at home. Due to the cost.

The JAN consultant asked what type of phone equipment she had on hand. Her iPhone had internal TTY software and was also compatible with certain external TTYs. The consultant directed her to information on how to use the TTY functions and suggested arranging a test call before beginning to make and receive actual calls for the work setting.

Now, here is another example from a retail setting. A butcher in a grocery store was hard of hearing. She had difficulty understanding customers' questions and requests. Moving closer was not an option. Asking customers to repeat themselves sometimes worked. But often agitated the customers. Hearing aids were not an option that the butcher felt ready to pursue due to the cost.

The JAN consultant suggested trying a low-cost Assistive Listening Device with a microphone that could be pointed in the direction of the customer. Now, this is something that we hear very frequently on JAN's Sensory Team. There are a lot of employees who for various reasons aren't able to get a hearing aid at the time be it for financial reasons or they have just made the personal decision that that's not right for them. And in that case, sometimes an Assistive Listening Device can be a much more affordable alternative that while not as customizable can still be helpful for these types of situations.

As consultants on JAN's Sensory Team, Teresa and I frequently get calls regarding accommodations for employees and applicants who are deaf or hard of hearing in a manufacturing setting.

Here are a few typical concerns that employers may have.

The use of hearing protection may be difficult for hearing aid users as well as those who do not wear hearing aids but have limited hearing capability.

Working around equipment can also be challenging and often poses safety concerns for employers.

Communication is another big concern. How can employees communicate effectively with co-workers regarding important sometimes time-sensitive information?

Telephone use is, again, going to be important to consider. And lastly, responding to equipment sounds and emergencies is often necessary and again this is an area where a lot of employers have questions regarding safety.

Let's explore the use of hearing aids and the use of hearing proceeded. In-the-ear hearing protection may interfere with hearing aid use so your typical in-the-ear hearing aid. For example over-the-ear can cause interference when placed on top of the hearing aid. So what if an employee took out their hearing aid in terms of when protection must be worn? This has different challenges as well using hearing protection without hearing aids may cause difficulty telling the direction of a sound source and difficulty communicating.

Hearing aids alone will likely not meet OSHA standards. Now for more on this subject you can refer to the hearing conservation for the hearing impaired worker resource that's linked here.

Establishing paths and rules can be incredibly important within your Accommodation Toolkit for a manufacturing setting with heavy traffic and lots of equipment. Consistent rules help to enhance safety. Consider establishing set paths of travel for industrial vehicles and pedestrians. And try not to have overlap whenever possible to avoid it.

Paths could be created using industrial tape, paint or ropes. Establish and enforce rules regarding all moving equipment, forklifts and vehicles to stop and flashlights or beep the horn as intersections.

Providing visual cues can be a useful tactic for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Now there are both high tech and low tech options for this. The employer can consider installing flashing strobe lights on moving vehicles. Installing a directional worker alert system that provides a visual warning of oncoming vehicles. Installing industrial mirrors around the work environment in strategic locations. Or the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing may be willing to voluntary wear a hat or vest of a unique color to serve as a warning to others to be cautious.

Now, this is an area where we would recommend that the employer not push it. This would need to be voluntary. So you don't want to coerce an employee to do something that could essentially disclose their disability. Or that there's something different about this individual. But it may be something to talk with the person about and see if they are interested or willing to volunteer to do so.

Fostering effective and understandable communication is important in any job setting. But can be particularly crucial in a manufacturing setting where failures to follow certain instructions may be hazardous. Use visual skills to support communication. This could mean choosing PPE that does not block the view of the speaker's mouth. This could mean using prepared forms where common questions or tasks can be checked off rather than insisting on vocal conversation.

It could mean providing CART/captioning services. Or using notes, texting apps and captioning software when appropriate.

Using visual reminders and cues could also be considered. So use printed signs to serve as reminders and post written instructions whenever possible or necessary.

Consider developing hand signals rather than relying on spoken instruction.

Use prepared forms where common questions or tasks can be checked off. And use notes to clarify information communicated verbally.

You could also use mainstream devices and services as well as portable communication access technologies.

So here is another example. Two employees who worked in close proximity to each other but were not in line of sight of each other needed to communicate in order to time their actions while operating the equipment that was blocking their view. Usually workers called out to each other. But one employee could not hear well enough for this to work.

The JAN consultant responded to the call by providing information on devices for typing back and forth. Captioning devices were ruled out due to potential interference for background noise. The employer decided to try a device called the UbiDuo which operated using proprietary wireless signals and is designed specifically for typing back and forth. Mounting systems were also discussed to create a little bit more of a hands-free system.

In another example, a supervisor in a manufacturing facility had to be available to emergencies at the plant. He was hard of hearing and used hearing aids but took them out at night. When this happened, he wasn't able to hear the phone. Even if he noticed the phone ringing, he had difficulty getting the hearing aids back in place in time to respond effectively.

As an accommodation, the employer purchased a telephone amplifier which could be used without hearing aids similar to what Teresa talked about a few slides ago as well as a lamp flasher and bed shaker to alert him to the phone ringing.

Now, let's look at a challenge dealing with alerting.

An applicant who was deaf was being considered for a position in food manufacturing. He was applying for a position operating a coffee rooster. The job required him to take actions at various times during the roasting process. But the times were not predictable. Workers usually used their hearing to listen for the first crack and then for the sound of the beans moving through the machine.

The employer and JAN consultant discussed vibrating timers but concluded these wouldn't be precise enough to ensure proper operation of the machine. Using touch to detect vibration was ruled out because the equipment was too hot to touch during some parts of the process.

The consultant explained the use of a free software program that could be used to view the waveform of a sound and suggested trying to see whether it was possible to use a visual cue to notice when to perform the required actions.

And now Teresa is going to tell you a little bit more information about typical barriers in a healthcare setting.

>> TERESA GODDARD: Thanks, Brittany.

So first I would like to start this section by talking about some of the typical barriers that an employee with a disability related to hearing might experience in the healthcare setting.

Some common opportunities for accommodation include using a stethoscope and taking blood pressure readings. Communicating with patients, family members and co-workers. Using the telephone. Responding to equipment sounds and emergencies. And participating in meetings or trainings.

Let's look at some examples on accommodating healthcare workers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

So here we have an example regarding stethoscopes. A local Government agency providing healthcare to children asked JAN for accommodation ideas for three of their nurses. The nurses had hearing loss and difficulty using their stethoscopes. They were seeking information on where to obtained amplified stethoscopes as well as information on an employer's responsibility to pay for amplified stethoscopes.

Now, this issue of who pays is kind of an interesting point. Because sometimes a stethoscope might be something that an employer provides on a routine basis to the employees. And if a person with a hearing-related need needs a specialized type of stethoscope, then it's likely that the employer may have to pay for that. Sometimes, however, a stethoscope might be classified as a tool of the trade and something that the employee would typically provide on their own.

From a practical standpoint, though, even though amplified stethoscopes and other types of stethoscopes like visual stethoscopes can be expensive, it might make sense for an employer to consider providing it to ensure that the person can take vital signs effectively.

So if you want to know more about the pay issue, and who is responsible for covering the cost of a stethoscope in a specific situation, I would suggest that you reach out to JAN and talk it over with one of us.

Pictured we have the CORE stethoscope, which is from a company called EKO. That's spelled E-K-O. So this particular model runs around $300. And what's really interesting about it is it pairs with an app that let's you actually see a visual representation of the sounds that are coming through the earpiece of the stethoscope.

It can connect with certain types of hearing aids. And it's designed to work with hearing aids that are made for use with iPhones. It can also be used with headphones. Now depending on the model of EKO stethoscope that you're looking at, you might not actually be listening through standard earpieces like this. You might actually be able to send the sound into, say, Bluetooth headphones.

It's kind of important during our currently public health emergency. Because we've had questions from clinicians who want to be able to listen to a stethoscope but not be connected via wire. They want to be able to have their head be a little bit farther away. Just for safety and social distancing purposes.

And this is a company that has some models that allow for that.

So the CORE offers both the features of an acoustic stethoscope like people typically use and an electronic stethoscope. And the difference is an electronic stethoscope can be amplified a little differently. Works a little bit differently with hearing aids. And some, like these models from EKO, can be used to give you a visual representation that let's you see heart sounds and lung sounds.

And the way you would see that is it would be displayed on an app on a phone.

Now, when I first started at JAN, all of the visual stethoscopes that were on the market actually had a little screen attached. But those seem to have gone by the wayside. I think they are more expensive to produce.

Now, for about $50 more in the $350 range, EKO also has a product called the Duo. And that actually combines a digital stethoscope with a single lead ECG.

So what I always suggest is if you're considering stethoscopes, you might want to work with the audiologist, especially if there's a hearing aid involved, because there are different options for different hearing aids.

I also suggest working with the clinician to understand their experience of working with different stethoscopes. And what they think would be most effective for them.

The Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses, which we'll talk about a little later, also has a good reference on stethoscopes.

So let's see what happened in this particular example.

Oh, in this particular example, the JAN consultant talked about an employer's responsibility to pay. And then the employer referred to the references on stethoscopes so that they could make an appropriate choice for their clinicians.

So we're going to talk a little bit about stethoscope options. You might take vitals in a different way. For example, some people do better if they are able to use an automated blood pressure cuff rather than a manual cuff where you would need to listen with a stethoscope while taking blood pressure.

If taking vitals is not an essential job function, you might request that another professional take those vitals. So perhaps another nurse or a nursing assistant might be able to take the vitals.

Using an electronic amplified stethoscope Hearing Aid Compatible stethoscope or visual displayed stethoscope like we talked about on the previous page to assess heart, lung and bowel sounds might be an option. And again, the electronic blood pressure monitors are easier for some people to use. Now those can be an issue for some of your patients, however. Some people just don't respond as well to the electronic blood pressure monitors. So you have to balance the needs of the patient, as well.

Another important factor to consider is improving the signal-to-noise ratio.

Right now our hospitals and doctors' offices don't have a lot of visitors. But I know in normal times at Ruby Memorial Hospital, the rooms can get very crowded with family members and well wishers. It's okay to ask them to quiet down when listening to heart, lung and bowel sounds and when taking blood pressure and when it's feasible you might do some other things like close the door. If there's noisy equipment that could be silenced temporarily. Maybe do that.

Just when you're listening to those heart, lung and bowel sounds or taking blood pressure.

Oh, here is the accommodation. The JAN consultant provided the caller with information on various types of amplified stethoscopes, vendors of amplified stethoscopes and related products. Such as hearing aid-compatible stethoscopes and visual stethoscopes and they also discussed guidance on tools of the trade and how this could impact the employer's responsibility. We do have a document that we can send out to you via a link, if this comes up. But we're always happy to discuss it with you.

So in the picture, those small black things next to the stethoscope, those are actually called silicone ear tips. These particular ones are from a company called Steth-o-mate and they are designed for a -- Steth-o-mate they are designed for a specific purpose these are for in the canal hearing aids these are hearing aids that go right in your hearing canal. And they are pretty inexpensive. You can use them to modify a standard stethoscope temporarily for a cost of about 30 to $35. It let's you wear your hearing aids while also using the stethoscope. They just slip over the earpieces. Create a little extra airspace.

So you can see there's a broad range of options in the Hearing Aid Compatible stethoscope category. Picking the right one can be a bit of a challenge. But I always suggest looking at all of the options. And trying to see what's going to be the best fit for your clinician.

So next I would like to talk about a communication-related example. This one actually involves another type of hospital worker. A chaplain.

The chaplain was having difficulty hearing when talking to patients and families. He had hearing aids but they just didn't work right anymore. Hearing aids don't last forever. And even when a hearing aid is still working somewhat, sometimes it really needs to be adjusted.

And he wasn't ready to repair or replace his hearing aids or even to go in and see if there was anything that could be done in terms of programming to make them work a little bit better.

But the employer could no longer overlook the communication difficulties that he was having. Because they were really having an impact on his ability to communicate with the patients and their families.

So the employer contacted JAN for information on employer obligations with regard to hearing aids. I think they were actually thinking about either purchasing them or how they would respond in case he might ask about that.

And they also wanted to know if there were other potential accommodation options.

So pictured we have a set of hearing aids.

So let's talk a little bit about communication with patients, family members and co-workers. Earlier on today we talked about Assistive Listening Devices. And those can range from the small, portable, low-cost option from Williams that Brittany included in one of her examples. All the way up to very sophisticated types of accessories that are used for use with specific hearing aids.

So sometimes getting an Assistive Listening Device so the person can hear voices a bit better might help. That might be used with a hearing aid. Or you might look at a model that can be used without a hearing aid, if the person doesn't have hearing aids or if they are working so ineffectively that the person thinks taking them out and using an Assistive Listening Device would work better for some things.

Another thing that you can do sometimes is use prepared forms where common questions or tasks can be checked off as you go along. And where perhaps you might even be able to show the form, point on the form when communicating with someone. So use that visual cue.

But using the prepared forms can be helpful, also, because it can limit the amount of speaking that has to take place.

Some clinicians use hand-written notes to clarify information that's communicated verbally.

Pictured we have an example of a clear face mask. This one is from a company called Safe'N'Clear. That's safenclear.com. And this is a medical type mask. It's a little bit more expensive than some standard masks. So a box of 40 would go for about $60 or a case of 400 for about $500.

These masks are a little bit difficult to acquire currently during the current public health emergency. They were still taking orders when I last checked. But the expected ship date is pushed back to mid May, May 12th I believe.

And they are also limiting customers to I believe one case at a time.

Because these are just very much in demand. I think some people are willing to buy any masks that they can source. And also -- masks that they can source. And also there's great demand for these to serve clinicians and patients who need to lipread. And are having difficulties with that. Because everybody is wearing a mask now in most medical settings.

Now, there is a product in the pipeline that's going to have a little bit of a bigger window. Some people don't feel like the window on this one is very big.

But like I say, this is the one that's available at least to order now. Some people are experimenting with homemade type masks that have a window where they might use a clear vinyl for their window and fabric for the rest. If you actually get on the Internet, you'll see lots of examples. Just like everybody else is making homemade masks and sharing their patterns. Our communities in the world of disability are doing that, too.

Let's talk a little bit more. Portable communication access technologies to communicate with patients and co-workers might be an option. And these are things that will give you live captions of the conversation. So you can see what's being said.

Some examples in this category of Interpretype Interact-AS and sign tell. Now the right one for the situation is going to vary, interpretype is designed to run on a pair of laptops and they can actually direct you to sources where you can find medical carts that work well with their device. People like a very portable option might prefer the Interact-AS which runs on something that's more like a tablet.

Sign tell is another company that makes these type of things. And they also have an accessible intercom system.

There are also devices to support communication by typing.

This could be a dedicated communication device.

Like the UbiDuo.

Or it could be as simple as sharing a computer and a keyboard and typing back and forth.

There are also some apps that can be used for messaging. An example that's free and encrypted is called Signal and there's an app that's designed to provide automatic transcription of a face-to-face conversation. And it's from a company called Ava spelled A-v-a. But particularly for the apps even though a lot of privacy concerns and regulations may be a little bit more relaxed during this current public health emergency, that's not going to last forever. And to be sure of what the requirements are right now, you might want to check with your Legal Team.

So let's talk a little bit more about our chaplain. What happened in the end is the hospital supplied the chaplain both with hearing aids, which in most cases an employer would not be required to do.

And with other assistive devices now we don't know the exact type of device supplied because that wasn't specified in our follow-up data. But during the call, we talked about the same variety of communication access devices that you saw on the previous slide.

Pictured we have an image of Interact-AS. And that is one of the things that came up in the conversation.

Let's talk about a nurse.

So this is a common scenario. A nurse with a hearing impairment was having difficulty on the phone. This particular nurse worked the night shift and she had to talk to doctors on the phone to answer questions, that kind of thing. She was having difficulty hearing over the phone. And she wanted to go to the day shift thinking other people could take over most of the talking by phone during the day.

But unfortunately there weren't openings on the day shift sometimes the simple solution is always the first to get ruled out.

So the employer purchased a telephone amplifier which enabled the nurse to hear effectively over the phone. The one you see pictured here is just a various basic slip-on type amplifier for old style receivers. This was super popular when I started at JAN. Gosh, about 11 years ago.

They are less popular now. And I think it's because they are a little bit difficult to adjust but what's cool about them is you can take them from phone to phone to phone. And for phones with those older style receivers, they are pretty much interchangeable. This particular one I believe runs about $40. Phone amplifiers like this are available from multiple vendors. So an example would be Harris Communications. Hear more may also have them if you're looking for something like this. Please get in touch. I would be -- please get in touch I would be happy to show you a lot of options.

Now I want to talk about an alerting device challenge. A lab tech with deafness was unable to be alerted when someone was using the doorbell, didn't know when people were coming into the area. So the employer contacted JAN for suggestions on how to overcome the barrier.

So pictured we have a doorbell translator from Silent Call Communications. And the idea is when someone presses the doorbell, the system will send a wireless signal to a strobe light or a lamp flasher or a vibrating pager.

So in this particular case, the employer did agree to add a flasher to the doorbell so that there would be a visual cue that the employee could see when someone used the doorbell. At the time of the follow-up call, they were planning to install that in about a week.

So here you can see an example of a strobe light. This particular one is also from Silent Call but there are a lot of device vendors but it wouldn't have to be a strobe light like this. You could use a variety of receivers to hook up for this type of system. You could have a lamp turn on or off or a vibrating pager or a strobe light, something like this.

All right I've got another one for you an employee needed to attend periodic licensure trainings but they had difficulty taking effective notes and remembering information. There are a lot of ways to accommodate someone in a meeting or training. Of course if a person needs interpreter services there's really no substitute for that. But text-based support and notetaking assistants certainly have their place other things you can do that are helpful are to provide written materials like outlines and agendas. Give the person a note taker. Record the meeting or training. And provide transcribed notes. Get a CART transcriptionist. Or allow for some of the communication access technologies that we were talking about earlier.

In this case, the employee was provided with an iPad. And apps that would record the trainings. This enabled her to listen to the trainings as many times as needed. She was also provided training on how to use the device and the apps. So one possibility is Audio Note. There are many others. And I literally love talking about them. We don't have a lot of time left today. But if you want to know more get on JAN chat and ask because I love talking about these things.

For those who use hearing aids or are hard of hearing, you might provide or allow use of an Assistive Listening Device. Consider the installation of a hearing loop or an FM system. And also noise abatement materials to absorb unwanted noise. It's also good to remind participants of good meeting etiquette like talking one at a time and you can use a microphone to repeat questions and comments from other participants. If you have one person leading the meeting who uses a microphone there are also good array microphones that might be helpful in a smaller meeting. Also providing adequate lighting and a good line of sight to any screens that you're using for captioning and to the speaker could be very helpful.

So here is an example. An employee asked for a Bluetooth streamer to assist with access to meetings and trainings and to enhance day-to-day conversation. Now the employer wanted to purchase it but they also wanted to make some rules about how to keep it from being damaged. A lot of times employers are concerned that the equipment they purchase might get damaged and have to be replaced.

So they contacted JAN for information about how ownership of a product interacts with control of a product.

And in this case, the employer's HR department decided to go ahead and provide the device instead of allowing it. And so one reason for doing that is the rule of thumb is he who buys it owns it and thus controls it. And that gave them the level of control that they were seeking.

Next we have pictured some Bluetooth compatible equipment. So we have talked a little bit about how Bluetooth can be used to connect a phone to a hearing aid. But it can also be used to connect other sound sources, as well.

It's always a good idea to contact an audiologist or a hearing aid vendor.

When you're looking at Bluetooth-related products.

Next I would like to talk a little bit about participating in meetings and trainings. For ASL users. It's usually best honestly for effective communication to just go ahead and provide either an onsite or a video remote sign language interpreter during meetings or trainings when you need effective communication.

Sometimes it might be necessary to do that in order to ensure equal access to the benefit of employment that training can be.

And again, written materials, outlines, agendas, adequate lighting, good line of sight, these can always help.

I want to share with you just a couple of resources before we go.

One is the Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses. Also known as AMPHL.

They have a wealth of information not only on strategies and technologies but they also promote advocacy and mentorship of healthcare professionals with hearing loss. And they are a great resource for anyone who is working in or interested in the healthcare field. Their Website is amphl.org. And one of the things I love best on their site is their review of stethoscopes.

Another resource is the National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities. NOND. And this is an organization for nurses not only who are deaf or hard of hearing but also for nurses with other disabilities. If you're looking for an accommodation option, they are a great resource.

And that wraps up my slides for today. So JAN consultants can be reached typically 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. by phone. That's Eastern Time. 800-526-7234. Right now we're able to receive voice mails but a much more efficient way to reach us currently is by email. JAN@askJAN.org and you can also use the online chat function at askJAN.org to have a live chat with a consultant or employment specialist. We would love to hear from you.

>> BETH LOY: Thank you, Teresa. And thank you, Brittany.

And it looks like we're just about out of time. So what we're going to do is wrap up. And we'll try to get back to you with the questions that you did submit when we post the archive to this webcast today.

So we thank you for attending. Thanks also to Alternative Communication Services for providing today's net captioning.

We hope the program was useful. If you need additional information about anything we talked about today, please let us know. And if you want to discuss an accommodation, please feel free to contact us at JAN.

As mentioned earlier, an evaluation form will automatically pop up on your screen in another window. As soon as we're finished. We appreciate your feedback. So we hope you'll take a minute to complete the form. Again, thanks for attending. This concludes today's program.

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