

Empowering the Deaf Workforce: Skills Development at Rochester Deaf Kitchen

Program Objectives

Participants will:

1. Gain practical work experience in food pantry operations in an environment with direct communication access.
 2. Develop transferable workplace skills with an emphasis on communication in ASL and accessible visual tools.
 3. Build confidence in advocating for their communication needs in workplace settings.
 4. Understand the value of inclusive and accessible work environments.
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Program Duration and Structure

- **Duration:**
 - 6-8 weeks per participant cohort.
 - **Schedule:**
 - 4 hours per week (split into 2 sessions).
 - Sessions combine on-site hands-on training with workshops focused on communication access and self-advocacy.
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Core Modules and Activities

1. Accessible Food Pantry Operations

Objective:

To provide participants with hands-on training in managing a food pantry while emphasizing the importance of direct communication in a Deaf-centric workplace.

Activities:

- **Inventory Management with Visual Accessibility:**
 - Training on tracking donations using visual spreadsheets and color-coded labels.
 - Logging incoming food donations using tracking software or manual logs
 - Organizing inventory by food type, shelf life, and distribution priorities.
 - Practicing ASL-based communication for coordinating restocking and storage.
- **Stocking and Shelving with Team Communication:**
 - Real-time ASL instructions on arranging food items and managing storage spaces.
 - Use of visual aids (e.g., diagrams, labels) to support collaborative tasks.

- **Food Safety Training with Deaf-Centric Materials:**
 - Learning food safety protocols using ASL videos and accessible written guides.
 - Discussing how clear visual instructions ensure safety and inclusion.
 - Learning the importance of sanitizing workstations, storage areas, and customer-facing areas.

Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will demonstrate proficiency in pantry operations while relying on direct ASL communication and visual tools to support teamwork.
 - Participants will demonstrate proficiency in tracking inventory and ensuring food is safely stored and handled.
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2. Direct Communication and Customer Service

Objective:

To enhance participants' confidence in serving customers using direct communication methods, with ASL as the primary mode of interaction.

Activities:

- **Greeting and Assisting Customers in ASL:**
 - Role-playing customer service scenarios where participants practice clear ASL instructions.
 - Using visual aids or written notes to communicate with non-signing customers.
- **Solving Communication Barriers:**
 - Teaching participants how to advocate for direct communication access in workplaces.
 - Exploring tools like video relay services (VRS) and text-based apps to support communication with hearing individuals.
- **Conflict Resolution with Empathy:**
 - Role-playing scenarios to handle misunderstandings or conflicts calmly using ASL.

Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will display confidence in providing excellent customer service while ensuring their communication needs are met.
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3. Teamwork in an Inclusive Environment

Objective:

To foster teamwork and leadership in environments where communication access is prioritized.

Activities:

- **Group Task Coordination in ASL:**
 - Assigning roles for pantry operations and leading group tasks through ASL-based instructions.
- **Leadership Development in Deaf Spaces:**
 - Participants rotate as team leaders, ensuring all instructions are accessible in ASL or visual formats.
- **Building Collaboration Between Deaf and Hearing Team Members:**
 - Teaching hearing volunteers basic ASL to improve collaboration.
 - Creating workflows where both Deaf and hearing team members can interact effectively.

Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will showcase leadership and teamwork skills in environments where communication access is prioritized.
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4. Workplace Readiness with a Focus on Communication Access

Objective:

To prepare participants for job success, including self-advocacy for communication access in hearing-centric workplaces.

Activities:

- **Resume Writing and Job Applications with Accessibility in Mind:**
 - Highlighting Deaf-friendly workplaces and certifications that emphasize accessibility skills.
- **Mock Interviews with ASL and Communication Access Tools:**
 - Practicing job interviews with Deaf interviewers or ASL interpreters.
 - Teaching participants to request interpreters or accommodations for job interviews.
- **Advocating for Communication Access at Work:**
 - Role-playing scenarios where participants negotiate for interpreters, captions, or visual tools.

Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will demonstrate confidence in requesting communication accommodations and navigating workplace expectations.
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5. Special Projects Emphasizing Visual and Direct Communication

Objective:

To provide advanced participants with opportunities to create solutions that promote accessible communication in workplace settings.

Activities:

- **Designing Visual Communication Tools for the Pantry:**
 - Developing ASL-friendly instructional videos for future pantry volunteers.
 - Creating visual signage (e.g., color-coded shelving, donation guides).
- **Accessibility Advocacy Campaigns:**
 - Planning community events to raise awareness of communication barriers faced by Deaf individuals.
 - Using social media to promote accessible services at RDK.

Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will gain creative problem-solving skills while advancing accessibility initiatives at RDK.
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Assessment and Reporting

- Weekly feedback sessions will assess progress in communication skills and technical competencies.
 - Final evaluations will include:
 - Hours worked and tasks completed.
 - Self-reflection from participants on their communication growth.
 - Feedback from RDK mentors on participants' ability to navigate work environments with direct communication access.
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Why This Focus Matters

1. **Empowering Deaf Individuals:**
 - Ensuring direct communication in ASL creates an environment where Deaf individuals can thrive and focus on skill-building rather than overcoming barriers.
2. **Building Accessible Workplaces:**
 - By providing participants with tools to advocate for communication access, this program equips them to navigate mainstream workplaces with confidence.
3. **Strengthening the Community:**
 - Through real-world experience in an accessible Deaf-centric workplace, participants will gain skills that benefit both their personal growth and the broader Deaf community.

Expanded Module: Food Safety Training for Food Pantry Operations

Objective

To equip participants with the knowledge and skills to handle, store, and distribute food safely in compliance with state and local health regulations, while using accessible communication methods such as visual aids, ASL instructions, and hands-on practice. Participants who complete this module with satisfactory results will receive a "Food Safety Awareness Certificate".

Training Duration

- Total Time: 3-4 sessions (1.5 hours each).
 - Format: Hands-on training, group discussions, and role-playing exercises.
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Topics Covered

1. Introduction to Food Safety

- **Why Food Safety Matters:**
 - Understanding the impact of improper food handling on public health.
 - Discussing real-world examples of foodborne illnesses.
- **Basic Principles of Food Safety:**
 - Clean: The importance of personal hygiene, handwashing, and workstation cleanliness.
 - Separate: Avoiding cross-contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods.
 - Cook: Ensuring food is cooked to proper temperatures.
 - Chill: Maintaining safe storage temperatures for perishable items.

2. Safe Food Storage

- **Understanding Food Storage Zones:**
 - Dry storage: Proper shelving techniques, stacking rules, and humidity control.
 - Cold storage: Organizing refrigerated and frozen items.
 - FIFO (First In, First Out) Method: How to rotate stock to prevent spoilage.
- **Hands-On Activity:**

- Participants practice labeling donated food with expiration dates and sorting items into appropriate storage zones.
- Use of color-coded bins to visually indicate "Use First," "Safe," and "Discard" categories.

3. Temperature Control

- **Safe Temperature Ranges:**

- The "Danger Zone" (40°F - 140°F): Understanding how bacteria grow rapidly within this range.
- Safe temperatures for cold storage (below 40°F) and hot food holding (above 140°F).

- **Using Thermometers:**

- How to calibrate and use a food thermometer to check temperatures of cold and hot foods.

- **Temperature Logs:**

- Creating and maintaining daily temperature logs for refrigerators and freezers.
- Example fields for logs:
 - Date/Time
 - Equipment Name
 - Recorded Temperature
 - Staff Initials
 - Corrective Actions (if needed)

- **Hands-On Activity:**

- Participants practice checking refrigerator and freezer temperatures, recording them on sample logs, and identifying when corrective actions are needed.

4. Food Receiving and Inspection

- **Checking Incoming Donations:**

- How to inspect for signs of spoilage, contamination, or damaged packaging.
- Identifying and rejecting donations with signs of:
 - Mold, pests, or off-smells.
 - Broken seals or bulging cans.

- **Hands-On Activity:**

- Participants sort through a mock batch of food donations, identifying safe vs. unsafe items using visual checklists and ASL-based instructions.

5. Handling Perishable Foods

- **Proper Handling Techniques:**

- Guidelines for distributing frozen or refrigerated items to customers.
- Minimizing time perishable foods are exposed to the “Danger Zone.”
- **Transportation Safety:**
 - Using insulated containers or coolers for transporting perishable food items.
- **Hands-On Activity:**
 - Participants practice packaging perishable items for distribution while maintaining cold chain integrity.

6. Cleaning and Sanitizing

- **Cleaning Procedures for Food Contact Surfaces:**
 - Using a "clean, rinse, sanitize" method.
 - Proper use of cleaning solutions and sanitizers.
- **Waste Management:**
 - Safe disposal of expired or spoiled food.
 - Maintaining cleanliness in trash and recycling areas.
- **Hands-On Activity:**
 - Participants clean a workstation using step-by-step instructions in ASL and visual posters.
 - Practice safely disposing of spoiled items following waste management protocols.

7. Allergen Awareness

- **Understanding Common Allergens:**
 - Identifying the top allergens (e.g., peanuts, dairy, wheat, soy).
 - Reading food labels to identify allergens.
- **Preventing Cross-Contact:**
 - Using separate tools and equipment for allergen-containing foods.
 - Labeling allergen-free items clearly.
- **Hands-On Activity:**
 - Participants identify allergens in a mock set of donated food items and practice labeling and segregating them properly.

Visual and Accessible Tools for Training

- **Temperature Log Templates:**
 - Use large-print, color-coded templates for recording fridge/freezer temperatures.
 - Include ASL video tutorials on how to fill out temperature logs.
 - **Step-by-Step Posters:**
 - Laminated posters detailing procedures for safe food handling, thermometer use, and cleaning protocols.
 - QR codes linking to ASL videos for quick reference.
 - **Interactive Training Materials:**
 - Use real-life scenarios (e.g., spoiled vs. fresh produce) for hands-on learning.
 - Visual "Go/No Go" guides to assess food quality.
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Evaluation and Reporting

- **Weekly Assessments:**
 - Participants demonstrate skills like recording temperature logs, sorting donations, and handling perishable items.
 - **Final Evaluation:**
 - Participants are observed and assessed on the following:
 - Proper use of thermometers and accurate log recording.
 - Adherence to food safety protocols during distribution.
 - Ability to explain food safety concepts in ASL to peers.
 - **Certification:**
 - Upon successful completion, participants receive a "Food Safety Awareness Certificate" acknowledging their skills in pantry operations.
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