

Subject: Press Release: Justice Department Reaches Agreement with Medical Care Provider on Accommodations for Deaf, Hard of Hearing

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Department of Justice  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Justice Department Reaches Agreement with Medical Care Provider on Accommodations for Deaf, Hard of Hearing

The Justice Department announced today that it has reached a settlement agreement with urgent and primary health care provider Medbrook Medical Associates Inc., under which the company will provide sign language interpreters and other auxiliary aids and services to patients, their family members, and their companions who are deaf or hard of hearing at the Medbrook Medical Center in Bridgeport, W. Va.

"Effective communication, particularly in the medical context, is essential to ensure that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can receive appropriate health care," said Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "This agreement will assist individuals with disabilities obtain equal access to medical services that are available in their communities."

The ADA requires health care providers to ensure effective communication with patients, family members and companions through the provision of sign language interpreters, assistive technology, and other auxiliary aids and services. Under this agreement, a person who is deaf or hard of hearing will be able to benefit from the same services as every other patient.

The agreement requires Medbrook to:

- \* Establish nondiscriminatory policies for providing effective communication for people with communication disabilities, including the provision of sign language interpreters;
- \* Post a notice of the policy in its waiting rooms;
- \* Train staff on the policies;
- \* Ascertain how to provide effective communication to Medbrook patients and their companions by using an effective communication assessment form;
- \* Pay \$4,000 each in compensatory damages to the complainant and his spouse; and
- \* Pay \$1,000 in civil penalties.

The Department's investigation of Medbrook was in response to a complaint filed by a man who uses sign language as his primary means of communication and sought Medbrook's services on an urgent care basis. In his complaint, he alleged that Medbrook denied his request to provide

him with a sign language interpreter, stating that it did not hire interpreters and that his wife, who herself was ill, would need to interpret for him. According to his complaint, although the complainant's wife informed the receptionist that she did not feel qualified to interpret, did not know the signs for medical terminology and was ill, Medbrook refused to provide an interpreter and gave the complainant's wife no option but to interpret for her husband.

More information about the ADA or this agreement is available at the Justice Department's toll-free ADA Information Line at 1-800-514-0301 or 1-800-514-0383 (TTY) and at [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

Source: <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2008/December/08-crt-1071.html>

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