

TRANSCRIPT

Effective Communications with Law Enforcement Officers (Police)

Question 6: Handcuffing

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Understood. Now, suppose a Deaf person is arrested. They've done something wrong and the police have arrested them. Most of the time, the police handcuff a person in the back, but for Deaf people, it's important to be handcuffed in the front of the body, so that they can still communicate using sign language. What advice do you have on not only helping police to understand that you are Deaf, but also conveying the importance of handcuffing Deaf people in front of the body. I know that police may have concerns handcuffing in the front because of the threat of physical force and for safety reasons. But, for a Deaf person, this is where typical police protocol conflicts with their need for communication. What suggestions do you have to best handle this situation?

Chief Ted Baran, Director of Campus Security at Gallaudet University

Great question. First, I want to mention that each police department has their own policy about handcuffing. Some require it to be done in the back regardless. Some departments will allow handcuffing in the front if the person is cooperative. Really, it depends on each department and what they decide. But again, if a Deaf person is handcuffed either in the front or back, the first thing is to cooperate. That's important. If you're not cooperative-if you're belligerent, agitated, or yelling, , it will give the appearance that you're not cooperative. And police will be more resistant to allowing you to be handcuffed in the front. But, once you identify yourself as a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person, you can try your best to show the police that you need to be handcuffed in the front. But, there also have been issues with handcuffing in the front as a threat to the police. So, its important to be cooperative and allow the officers to feel that they can trust you enough to be handcuffed in the front. I'm hoping that more and more police departments will allow for handcuffing in the front in their policies. I know that's what you're working on and that's great. When I conduct my trainings with police officers, one of the first things I do is encourage handcuffing in the front when they arrest a Deaf person. This will allow them the opportunity to communicate. So, I'm hopeful word will spread.

