

What factors should a student who is deaf or hard of hearing consider when choosing a professional, trade or vocational school for careers such as EMT (Emergency Medical Technician), massage therapy, firefighting, truck driving, and others?

The work world today abounds with a variety of job choices, and choosing the right career is an important decision. Talents, interests, skills, and abilities are important elements in choosing the perfect job as is considering costs—in time as well as money—of getting the training required by a given profession.

Professional, trade and vocational schools offer an array of job and professional training that can lead to employment in cosmetology, firefighting, massage therapy, truck driving, medical and dental professions, the building trades, computer programming or repair, and plenty of others. Many of these professions do not require a college degree but do require some type of training and may require a high school diploma or GED.

Before investing time, effort, and money in a training program it is important to research and understand the requirements of a chosen occupation. This includes understanding any potential barriers or challenges that might be encountered. Some professions allow trained applicants to be hired and to begin working immediately. For others, successful completion of the training or coursework is only the first of several requirements, which may include passing certification or licensing exams prior to being able to work in the field.

Licensing, certification, or employment requirements may call for essential functions such as physical strength, mobility, and, in some cases, communication and language skills. Requirements may vary from state to state, so it is important to be aware of the occupational prerequisites in those states where individuals plan to work. For example, in some states, individuals who are deaf can become truck drivers. They can drive intra-state but they can't drive inter-state because the licensing requirements vary, and not all states will allow truck drivers with a hearing loss to get a license. As strict and inflexible as these requirements may seem, legal action has sometimes been effective in modifying them.

When choosing a training program, find out if the training program or school falls under the jurisdiction of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and if so, which title:

- **Title II** requires that state and local governments give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities, including education. Many schools and vocational training providers that receive federal funding will have experience in providing accommodations. They will have procedures in place for requesting and getting the right accommodations to ensure that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to the same educational opportunities as hearing students.
- **Title III** applies to private training programs or schools whether or not they receive federal funding. Under Title III, public accommodations must comply with basic nondiscrimination requirements that prohibit exclusion, segregation, and unequal treatment. This includes effective communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, many private “proprietary” or “trade” schools and training programs may be unfamiliar with the ADA, have no established disability services offices or established procedures to handle the provision of accommodations. In these cases potential students who are deaf or hard of hearing need to understand their legal rights and responsibilities and be ready to self-advocate and work with the school to get the accommodations they need. Getting access to many of these programs may be complex and could require careful planning and take considerable time and effort.

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In summary, successfully pursuing a dream job requires:

1. Knowing the requirements of the job.
2. Knowing the applicable laws and regulations.
3. Knowing your rights.
4. Knowing how to plan ahead.
5. And knowing how to self-advocate.

Resources:

EEOC on being qualified for the job
<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/jobapplicant.html>

U.S. Department of Transportation physical qualifications for drivers
http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/administration/fmcsr/fmcsrruletext.aspx?rule_toc=760§ion=391.41§ion_toc=1781

Medical Examination Report for Commercial Driver Fitness Determination
<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/safetyprograms/Medical-Report.pdf>

Firefighter who is deaf describes his career (ASL)
<http://flashovertv.firerescue1.com/Media/2502-How-To-Be-A-Deaf-Firefighter/>

The Life of Rescue Personnel – Article from the Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Loss website: <http://www.amphl.org/firefighters.php>

Court rules UPS must consider driver applicants who are deaf or hard of hearing
http://www.winston.com/siteFiles/publications/Bates_v_UPS.pdf

**Visit www.pepnet.org for additional information and resources
or for a listing of outreach specialists by state/territory**

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