

Get in the Hearing Loop

A program of the Hearing
Loss Association of America

GET IN THE HEARING LOOP!

Here's How to Make it Happen in Your Community

The need for readily available assistive listening systems and devices in day-to-day living for people with hearing loss is one of the driving forces behind the **Get in the Hearing Loop** campaign.

Listening devices that connect easily and unobtrusively are most likely to be used. Induction hearing loop systems accomplish this goal. If you would like to help encourage the installation and use of more hearing induction loop systems here are some guidelines.

Getting Started

Do Your Homework

- **Understand the facts.** You and those who know you recognize the need for more hearing induction loops in the community. However, people who have never come across hearing loops before will have no idea why you would want to spend money on an invisible solution to an invisible problem. You need to be able to talk to people about the benefits and limitations of induction loop systems. Develop a basic understanding about how hearing loop systems and telecoils work. Do some research online to become familiar with this technology. Here are two websites with information on telecoils and hearing loops:

- hearingloss.org/content/get-hearing-loop
- www.hearingloop.org

There are literally hundreds of videos addressing some aspect of hearing loop technology that have been posted on YouTube.com. These are excellent for demonstrating and explaining technology to you and personnel at large venues. Some of the demonstrations are captioned as well. Demonstrations range from understanding how hearing loops work, testimonials, HLAA chapter accomplishments, how hearing loops work in specific venues such as houses of worship, New York City subways, theaters, workplace, and home, how to install (a 4-part series posting is included), and addressing issues related to hearing loops. Visit YouTube.com for helpful information.

- **Use various types of hearing loops yourself.** This will help you to explain the benefits to others.
- **Create opportunities for others to try them out as well.**
- Visit the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** by visiting ada.gov and become familiar with the regulations and requirements for assistive listening systems in various public accessible facilities.
- Know the alternatives to loop systems and be able to explain why the loop would be best for a particular place. For information on other assistive technology visit hearingloss.org.

Building Momentum

Create a Coalition

It's possible for one person to make change happen, but it's more effective to engage and mobilize people to help you achieve your goals.

- **Find groups to champion the project locally and meet regularly**
 - Get in the Hearing Loop campaign members – HLAA chapters as well as Sertoma and Lions Clubs have national and local programs supporting hearing loss initiatives
 - Representatives from the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services in your state
 - Representatives of other organizations of and for people with hearing loss
 - Hearing health care providers and audiologists
 - Nonprofit organizations working with people with hearing loss
 - Electrical engineers or other technology advisors
 - Kiwanis, Rotary, Business and Professional Women's Foundation and other civic groups

- **Work with professionals**
 - **Find and work with hearing induction loop installers** (often an audio/visual firm) in your area who have a solid reputation and who adhere to the international standard for loop installation. While consumers can advocate for access, when it's time to install a loop system, you will need to be able to turn to reputable installers who can talk about such details as cost and time to install a loop system.
 - **If you cannot locate a firm with hearing loop expertise**, encourage one or more audio/visual firms to include loop technology as part of their menu of services and technology available.

- **Reach out to the community**
 - **Strategize** a campaign: target doable, visible projects in the community.
 - A good place to start is with houses of worship, particularly if you know a member of a congregation who has hearing loss and is struggling to hear the services in the worship venue.
 - Other possible projects are public auditoriums, theaters, library meeting rooms, and community or senior centers.
 - **Prepare an "elevator speech."** An elevator speech is an introduction to the subject in the time it takes to convey an idea to someone during the short ride in an elevator. You will be most successful convincing others to install loops if you have marshalled the facts and can present them in a concise, coherent manner. Prepare a short speech that has the salient points. Practice it so it flows smoothly.
 - **Include human interest stories.** Knowing how many people are impacted is one thing; making it concrete with personal stories will ensure your audience remembers it. We learned of an aunt in a nursing home whose eyes lit up when she finally heard through the loop; the father who didn't get the jokes until he heard these through a loop; the grandmother who was able to hear her granddaughter's wedding ceremony after a loop

was installed in the sanctuary. If you know a real-life example of success using a hearing loop, tell that story. Your story will likely hit home more readily than numbers alone can convey.

- **Prepare handouts** and obtain Get in the Hearing Loop brochures (available from HLAA) to leave behind at meetings.

More Campaign Tactics

- Make presentations to civic organizations: Lions Clubs, Rotary, Kiwanis, church groups, or senior centers – use the Get in the Hearing Loop PowerPoint presentation. (located on the HLAA website).
- Work with audiologists, dispensers, doctors, and hospitals willing to loop their own waiting rooms.
- Write letters to local newspaper editors, *Dear Abby*, or *Hints from Heloise*.
- Cultivate media contacts and ask them to run human interest stories on successful installation and the reaction of people with hearing loss who use the facility.
- Set up a website to publicize your efforts; use Facebook, Twitter and Blogs.
- Check with city/county officials about distributing brochures and information about the campaign at libraries, community and senior centers and at community events.
- Work with advisory boards for hearing aid dispensers and/or push for legislation to require the dispensing of hearing aids with telecoils.
- Once a venue is looped, you can turn to these people who use the loop for testimony to its effectiveness.

Celebrate Success!

- Make sure every member of your team gets credit for their contributions.
- Make the inauguration of a loop system a public event to garner more visibility. Don't forget to publicly thank your team, and all the people who made it happen.
- Success breeds success: use your success to invite more people to the table to help get loops installed in other places.