



## GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

# ODHH Monthly Bulletin

September 2011

## A message from Director Lisa Kornberg

The recent earthquake and hurricane Irene have reminded all of us about the importance of being prepared. Are you and your family prepared for an emergency? September is National Preparedness Month, so now is a good time to make or review your emergency plan. Check out the FYI section for more information on staying prepared.

September is also a great time to recognize the heritage, culture, and accomplishments of the Deaf Community. Governor O'Malley has proclaimed September 18 - 24 as Deaf Awareness Week in Maryland, and ODHH is participating in a number of activities to commemorate this special week. Is your organization doing something for Deaf Awareness Week? Let us know and we will spread the word.

Finally, don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates about emergency preparedness, Deaf Awareness Week, and more!

Until Next Month,  
-Lisa

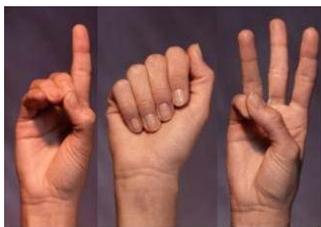
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## Governor O'Malley Proclaims September 18-24 Deaf Awareness Week in Maryland



Governor Martin O'Malley has proclaimed September 18-24, 2011 as Deaf Awareness Week in Maryland. The proclamation calls upon all Marylanders to observe the week and recognize the abilities and potential of our fellow citizens who are Deaf.

"In Maryland, we are united in our belief in the dignity of every individual," said Governor O'Malley. "It is in the interest of the State to work together to ensure that those who are Deaf have equal and full access to

resources, services, and opportunities for participation in all aspects of community life."

The purpose of Deaf Awareness Week, also known as International Week of the Deaf, is to celebrate the culture, heritage, and language unique to Deaf people of the world. The intent of the week is to show the diversity, accomplishments, and



**September is**

**National**

**Preparedness Month**

With earthquakes and hurricanes threatening the east coast, National Preparedness Month (NPM) could not come at a better time. The eighth annual NPM's theme will be "A Time to Remember. A Time to Prepare." The campaign seeks to transform awareness into action by encouraging all Americans to take the necessary steps to ensure that their homes, workplaces and communities are prepared for disasters and emergencies of all kinds.

### Resources

- [Be Prepared](#)
- [Rochester Red Cross: Disaster Preparedness in the Deaf Community](#)
- [Videos in ASL](#)

### Quick Links

potential of the Deaf community. As a part of Deaf Awareness Week, Marylanders are encouraged to increase awareness, understanding, and support for individuals who are Deaf.

In recognition of Deaf Awareness Week, ODHH is hosting basic sign language classes for State employees. The Office will also participate in the National Aquarium's Deaf Awareness Day on September 24th. If you would like more information and a \$3 off coupon for the Aquarium's Deaf Awareness Day, please contact ODHH at [odhh@gov.state.md.us](mailto:odhh@gov.state.md.us).

## Still Receiving Federal Benefit Payments by Paper Check?

Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury, Financial Management Services



Have you heard the news that the U.S. Department of the Treasury is phasing out paper checks for federal benefit payments? All federal benefits will instead be paid electronically. If you receive Social Security, Supplemental Security Income or other federal benefit checks for yourself or on behalf of someone else, you must switch to an electronic payment option by **March 1, 2013**.

Don't wait for the deadline to make the switch. Take action today and start immediately enjoying the many advantages electronic payments have to offer:

- **Safety** - No risk of lost or stolen checks.
- **Ease** - No need to make a trip to cash or deposit a check.
- **Control** - Your money will be on time, every time.
- **Fast Access** - You will have access to your money sooner.

It's fast, free and easy to make the switch to one of the two Treasury-recommended electronic payment options for your federal benefit payments:

- **Have a bank or credit union account?** Sign up to receive your money by **direct deposit**. Your federal benefit payment will go straight into your checking or savings account on payment day each month and be accessible from virtually anywhere.
- **Prefer a prepaid debit card?** Switch to the **Direct Express** Debit MasterCard card. Money is posted to the card account on payment day each month. You can make purchases, pay bills and get cash anywhere Debit MasterCard is accepted. Optional deposit notifications and low balance alerts by phone, email or text message are available for free. There are no sign-up fees, overdraft fees or monthly fees. Some fees for optional services may apply. For information on card fees and features, visit [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org). No bank account or credit check required.

To switch to direct deposit or the Direct Express card, contact your federal benefit agency office, visit the Treasury Department's **Go Direct** campaign website at [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org), or call the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at (800) 333-1795. For direct deposit, you can also make the switch at your local financial institution.

## Spotlight on: Maryland Accessible Telecommunications



For many people, using the telephone is a luxury that they take for granted. However, for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, communicating by phone can be a daunting or seemingly impossible task. Missing words or mistaking meaning can lead to some avoiding the telephone altogether. Fortunately, current technology offers solutions for those who cannot use a standard phone.

[ODHH Website](#)



[Contact Us](#)

[Maryland.gov](http://Maryland.gov)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

## ODHH on the Move

### BCASCO Forum for the Hard of Hearing

Fri, September 9  
9:45 AM - 12 PM  
Towson United Methodist Church  
Towson, MD

### Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Meeting

Weds, September 14  
1 PM - 4:00 PM  
MDOT Headquarters  
Hanover, MD

### Hearing Loss Association - Frederick Chapter Meeting

Sat, September 17  
10 AM - Noon  
Roy Rogers  
Frederick, MD

### Quality Health Care for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: ADA and Other Considerations

Fri, September 23  
8:30 AM - 12:30 PM  
Gallaudet University Kellogg Conference Center  
Washington, D.C.

### Deaf Awareness Day at the National Aquarium in Baltimore

Sat, September 24  
9 AM - 3:30 PM

National Aquarium  
Baltimore, MD

Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT), together with Maryland Relay, has been providing free assistive telephone equipment in Maryland for more than a decade. Devices such as amplified phones, captioned telephones, ring signalers, and TTY machines are available at no cost to qualified Maryland residents. The MAT program serves customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or have a cognitive, mobility, or speech disability. Assistive telephones can greatly increase independence, reduce frustration, and help deaf and hard of hearing people stay connected with family and friends.

The MAT program provides free telephone assessments. Because everyone's hearing loss is different, a variety of specialized telephones are available to meet a range of communication needs. Five evaluation centers are located in Maryland so customers (or those interested in buying their own equipment) can come to try out phones and learn which is the most appropriate. After customers receive their telephone, MAT can also provide free training and installation.

To be considered for the MAT equipment distribution program, applicants must:

- Be a Maryland resident
- Be at least 5 years old
- Be a recipient of SSI (Supplemental Security Income), SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), TDAP (Temporary Disability Assistance Program), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), VA (Veterans), SSA (Social Security) benefits or Pharmacy, Medical, Housing Assistance, or be able to prove a Financial Hardship.
- Be certified as having one of the following disabilities: mobility, blind, low vision, cognitive, deafblind, speech, deaf or hard of hearing, and have difficulty using a standard telephone.
- Have telephone service in the home or apply for phone service (unless you are applying for a wireless device).

**For an application and more information about the MAT program, please contact:**

Maryland Accessible Telecommunications/Maryland Relay  
301 W. Preston Street, Suite 1008A  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Website: [www.mdrelay.org](http://www.mdrelay.org) (MAT Application is under 'Free Equipment')  
Phone: 800-552-7724 (V/TTY/VP)

**Questions? Comments? Contact:**

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<http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/>

**Forward email**



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