

How youth can develop social capital

Social capital refers to the value and benefits that arise from an individual's relationships, connections, and networks with others in a community or society. For most young people, having social capital is beneficial in transitioning to postsecondary education and employment. For adolescents who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), social capital can help them deal with the challenges they will likely encounter after high school.

There are two types of social capital - bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital stems from strong, close ties and networks that provide social, psychological, and practical support and usually include family and friends. Bridging social capital involves weaker ties with a broader range of people through extended social networks, providing different perspectives and links to external resources and information.

Recent research has recommended that adolescents who are DHH could best be supported to develop and use social capital by:

- **developing deaf connections** - DHH role models and mentors, involvement in the Deaf community.
- **promoting positive self-image and self-acceptance** - embracing their identity.
- **preparation for postsecondary education and employment** - work experience and tertiary disability services.
- **fostering community connections** - for example, volunteering - promotes inclusion and develops networks.
- **communicating with family and friends** - practice effective communication, provide advice and share experiences, encourage the use of assistive technology, and help promote self-acceptance and self-advocacy.

Click on the links for more information.

