

Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

March 8, 2022

Dear Ms. Cafferata,

As we continue to navigate through the COVID recovery process with the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), we would like to bring to your attention a disability access concern:

Communication Access Issues Related to Contacting DETR in the Unemployment Insurance Process.

During the pandemic, the Commission expressed concerns regarding communication access in regard to the Unemployment Insurance Division, specifically for individuals who are deaf and trying to access services. At the time, DETR made adjustments to ensure there was reasonable access for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. However, it has come to our attention that access is no longer available.

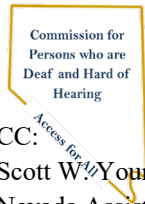
The Unemployment Division still remains inaccessible for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, in particular for those who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language. There remains extended wait times in the phone queue and individuals who use ASL must call with the assistance of an FCC-funded relay interpreter, who must wait on the phone with the individual there by impacting the ability to serve other individuals who are deaf. In addition, once an individual's call is taken, it can be difficult for the interpreter to effectively interpret based on a lack of background and/or expertise in unemployment. This has resulted in the loss of benefits and additional hardships.

The Commission is asking DETR to re-evaluate their processes and policies, especially to ensure people who deaf and hard of hearing have appropriate access and accommodations to the services offered by your Department. As the Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation, your agency should be an example of good accessibility practices and have mechanisms in place to ensure equal access for all of Nevada's citizens, whether there is a pandemic or not.

We would appreciate if you would respond what will be done to ensure ADA compliances and equitable treatments for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community regarding UI issues. I can be reached by nvdeafcommission@adsd.nv.gov.

Thank you,

Eric Wilcox



Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

CC:
Scott W. Youngs, Project Director
Nevada Assistive Technology Resource Center

Jack Mayes, Executive Director
Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center