

NEVADA COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

(DRAFT) Position on Accessibility for People who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Accessibility for people who are deaf or hard of hearing has evolved through decades of advocacy and legislative action. Early movements for disability rights led to significant milestones, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibited discrimination in federally funded programs. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 further cemented the rights of individuals with disabilities, requiring reasonable accommodations in employment, education, transportation, and public spaces. Despite these advancements, accessibility barriers persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to ensure equitable communication access in all areas of life.

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is dedicated to advancing policies that promote full accessibility and inclusion. Ensuring effective communication and eliminating systemic barriers are fundamental to the rights and well-being of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Accessible Communication in Public and Private Sectors

Ensuring accessibility requires proactive measures in both public and private sectors. The Commission supports the following:

- Requiring American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters in public service areas, including government offices, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions.
- Mandating real-time captioning services for live broadcasts, meetings, and events.
- Ensuring video relay services (VRS) and video remote interpreting (VRI) meet quality standards, with proper training for personnel on their use.
- Expanding the use of assistive listening devices and hearing loop systems in public venues such as theaters, conference halls, and transportation hubs.

Accessibility in Employment and Education

Equal access to employment and education is essential for economic and social inclusion. The Commission advocates for:

- Strengthening workplace accessibility requirements, including ASL interpreters, captioning, and assistive technologies.
- Expanding employment programs that support deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in finding and maintaining meaningful work.
- Requiring educational institutions to provide comprehensive accommodations, such as sign language interpreters, notetaking services, and captioned materials.
- Enhancing training programs for educators and employers to increase awareness and implementation of accessibility measures.

Policy Recommendations:

To further support accessibility for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, the Commission recommends the following actions:

1. **Legislative Enhancements:** Strengthen state laws to mandate accessibility standards in all public and private institutions.
2. **Funding for Accessibility Programs:** Secure financial support for businesses, schools,

and healthcare providers to implement accessibility measures.

3. **Accountability and Compliance:** Establish oversight mechanisms to ensure adherence to accessibility laws and address violations.
4. **Public Education Campaigns:** Promote awareness about the rights of individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and the benefits of accessible communication.
5. **Professional Training Requirements:** Implement required training for educators, healthcare providers, and public service employees on accessibility best practices.
6. **Technology Advancements:** Encourage the development and adoption of innovative accessibility solutions, including AI-driven captioning and real-time ASL translation services.

Proposed Next Steps (Call to Action): To make meaningful progress in accessibility for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the Nevada Commission urges the following actions:

- **Advocate for Policy Change:** Work with legislators to pass and enforce stronger accessibility laws.
- **Engage Businesses and Service Providers:** Encourage compliance and best practices through partnerships and training initiatives.
- **Expand Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate the public on accessibility needs and the legal rights of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.
- **Enhance Monitoring and Reporting:** Develop tools for tracking accessibility complaints and identifying systemic gaps.
- **Increase Funding Opportunities:** Secure grants and incentives for organizations implementing accessibility improvements.

Conclusion: Full accessibility for people who are deaf and hard of hearing is a civil right that must be upheld through proactive policies and systemic change. The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocates for equitable access in all areas of life, urging policymakers, businesses, and community leaders to take action in removing barriers and fostering inclusion for all Nevadans.