

NEVADA COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

(DRAFT) Position on Captioning for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Captioning is an essential accessibility tool for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH), supporting equal access to information, entertainment, and communication in various public and private settings. As technology and communication methods evolve, the need for comprehensive and accurate captioning becomes even more critical to removing barriers for the D/HH community.

Captioning allows D/HH individuals the increased opportunity to participate in society by providing access to auditory information in written form. Whether it's following a news broadcast, understanding public announcements, or engaging with entertainment content, captioning bridges the communication gap and promotes equality. Beyond the D/HH community, captioning also benefits individuals learning English as a second language, children developing literacy skills, and others in noisy or quiet environments where audio is inaccessible.

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocates for the implementation and enforcement of captioning across media, public spaces, and communication channels to foster inclusivity and accessibility.

Focus Areas for Captioning

1. Media Captioning

- Mandate comprehensive captioning for all televised and streamed media content, including news, entertainment, and educational programming.
- Advocate for real-time captioning during live broadcasts, ensuring accuracy and accessibility in urgent and time-sensitive situations such as breaking news or emergency alerts.

2. Airport Captioning

- Ensure that all public announcements, gate changes, delays, and emergency information in airports are available in written form through real-time captioning on monitors and displays.
- Equip airport facilities with clear visual communication tools to assist D/HH travelers in navigating services and security.

3. Captioning in Restaurants/Bars, Medical, and Legal Settings

- Require captioning to be enabled on all televisions in public venues such as restaurants or bars, and gyms to ensure equal access to entertainment and news.
- Implement policies mandating captioning during patient consultations, medical procedures, and hospital communications to guarantee informed decision-making and patient understanding.
- Provide captioning services for all legal proceedings, including courtroom activities, depositions, and consultations, ensuring transparency and equal access to justice.

4. Public Communication

- Enforce the use of captioning for all public service announcements, political events, and government communications to ensure that D/HH individuals can access critical information.

- Develop partnerships with public transit systems to provide captioned updates on delays, schedule changes, and emergency instructions.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Strengthen Captioning Standards

- Advocate for strict adherence to the FCC's captioning quality standards, including accuracy, synchronicity, completeness, and placement.
- Promote the adoption of captioning requirements across digital platforms, social media, and streaming services.

2. Increase Awareness and Compliance

- Launch public awareness campaigns to educate businesses and service providers on the importance of enabling and maintaining captioning.
- Establish mechanisms to monitor compliance with captioning requirements in public and private settings.

3. Expand Real-Time Captioning Availability

- Invest in technology and training to increase the availability of real-time captioning services in Nevada.
- Provide grants or incentives for businesses to implement captioning solutions in their establishments.

4. Engage Stakeholders

- Collaborate with airports, medical facilities, legal professionals, and public venues to develop tailored captioning solutions that meet the needs of D/HH individuals.
- Involve the D/HH community in evaluating the effectiveness of captioning initiatives and identifying areas for improvement.

Proposed Next Steps (Call to Action): Captioning is not just a tool; it is a necessity for creating an inclusive and equitable society. Policymakers, businesses, and community leaders must work together to prioritize and expand captioning access across all areas of public life. By addressing the needs of D/HH individuals, we can break down barriers and foster a more inclusive Nevada.

Conclusion: Accessible communication is a fundamental right for all individuals, including those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. By enhancing captioning standards and ensuring their implementation across media, public spaces, and essential services, we can create an environment where everyone has equal access to information and opportunities. The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing remains committed to advocating for these necessary changes to promote accessibility and inclusivity.