

# COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY GUIDANCE FOR STATE AGENCIES



# GUIDANCE ON COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY

The intent of this presentation is to provide key guidance related to provision of information and messaging which is accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind and visually impaired.

Guidance includes how to:

Secure sign language interpreter (SLI) services

Secure real time captioning/CART for remote meetings (teleconference, video conferences)

Improve accessibility of press briefings, public service announcements, and other forms of communications and messaging



## SECTION 508 COMPLIANCE

“Section 508 Compliance” refers to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires federal government websites to be accessible to people with disabilities.

This law covers a range of issues related to internet accessibility for people with disabilities

The CDC estimates that approximately 17% of adults have enough difficulty hearing, and approximately 13% of adults have enough difficulty seeing, that it interferes with their ability to receive information.

Ignoring the accessibility needs of your audience can lower your page views, limit your website statistics, and narrow (if not isolate) your target audience. More importantly, it can prevent access to vital information.



# ACCESSIBILITY BEST PRACTICES

Whether web content is intended for use by the federal government, the private sector, or a nonprofit, 508 Compliance and accessibility best practices for all users should be met well before design or development are executed.



## SECTION 508

Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is a federal law mandating that all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities.

508 Compliance involves developing website, document, and presentation content that can be used by people with limited vision or blindness, deafness, seizure disorders, and other disabilities.



# WHAT DOES 508 COMPLIANCE AND ACCESSIBILITY ENTAIL?

There are a number of ways in which you can make your site accessible for people with disabilities. These are some of the major features of 508 compliance:

Closed Captioning and Subtitles

Screen Reader Capability

Accessibility with the keyboard

Transcription



# CLOSED AND OPEN CAPTIONING

Closed captioning is text included to provide people who are Deaf and hard of hearing access to audio content for video files with audio components. Closed captioning can be turned on or off by clicking the “CC” option.

Open captions appear automatically and are displayed without clicking a caption option.

Captions are commonly used for TV, movies, and video for years, providing a transcript of the spoken words on the screen.



# CAPTIONING ACCURACY

Captioning is sometimes auto-generated through voice recognition software, for instance on platforms such as YouTube.

Auto-generated captions are commonly inaccurate depending on the sophistication of the software.

Auto-generated captions should be edited for accuracy of grammar and spelling in order to avoid #captionfails.

Captions can also be manually entered. Captions should include all spoken message content which matches the audio without omissions.

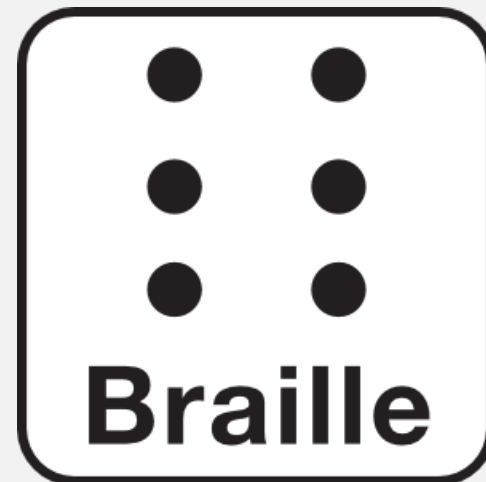




# TRANSCRIPTS

Captioning alone may not be accessible to people who are deafblind (those who have degrees of both vision and hearing loss).

Transcripts of the full audio content should also be provided in order to provide access for people who use braille readers along with other assistive technology.

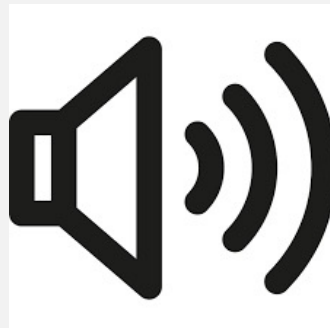


## SCREEN READER CAPABILITY

Websites should be built with the ability to be accessed with a screen reader. Many visually impaired people, as well as those with cognitive and/or learning disabilities, use screen readers to read aloud the text found on webpages.

These screen readers convert digital text into synthesized speech, pairing with documents and spreadsheets.

All graphic or visual information presented (graphs, charts, clip art, etc.) should have visual description information attached



# ACCESSIBILITY WITH KEYBOARD

Users who have motor disabilities or who use screen readers can be dependent on keyboard-only visual indicators, which need to be programmatically indicated as well.

This includes the need for programmatic indication of focus used by the browser to indicate where interactions should occur for assistive technology.

For example, links, buttons or input fields can be controlled with the tab, arrow, or other keys rather than a mouse click to increase access for all.



# SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

A qualified sign language interpreter (SLI) is a professional who facilitates communication between persons who are deaf and those who are hearing.

An SLI interprets a spoken English message into a manual or sign language (typically American Sign Language [ASL]) or a signed message into a spoken language (typically English).

SLIs can provide services onsite, through Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services, or through Video Relay Services (VRS).



## QUALIFIED SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has two resources posted on its website to assist you in locating a qualified SLI.

- One is the list of interpreters who participate in the agency's Interpreter Services Program Manual and Service Agreement.
- The second resource is a Directory of Qualified Interpreters. The Directory includes interpreters who may not have signed on to the Service Agreement yet.



[VDDHH website](#)

## CART SERVICES

The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) describes Computer Assisted Real-time Translation (CART) services as “the instant translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real-time “software.”

The text produced by the CART service can be displayed on an individual’s computer monitor, projected onto a screen, combined with a video presentation to appear as captions, or otherwise made available using other transmission and display systems.

CART Services may be provided on site or remotely.



# HOW DO I FIND A QUALIFIED CART PROVIDER?

**CART vendors include but are not limited to:**

- **Cavalier Reporting & Videography**  
415 4th Street, NE, Suite 4  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
Telephone: (434) 293-3300
- **iYellow Captions, LLC**  
requests@iYellowCaptions.com  
(785) 633-5665



**Service fees for CART providers will vary.**

# REMOTE CALL CAPTIONING

Specifically for captioning remote meetings on conference call platforms (e.g. CISCO, Zoom, Google Hangouts Meet) which utilize a dial in phone number, you may want to use Virginia Relay's Remote Conference Captioning (RCC).

RCC allows people who have difficulty hearing what is said during conference calls to have a clearer understanding of the conversation and participate in the call more effectively.

To request RCC services, complete the RCC Scheduling Request Form or call Virginia RCC Customer Care at 877-339-2665 (Voice).

The person scheduling the call must be a resident of Virginia; RCC is free for Virginia residents. Virginia Relay users are guaranteed access to RCC Services if scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. RCC Services may also be available for emergency situations with a two-hour notice.





VDDHH  
INTERPRETER SERVICES PROGRAM  
CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, please contact VDDHH Interpreter Services at [isp@vddhh.virginia.gov](mailto:isp@vddhh.virginia.gov).

Leslie Hutcheson, ISP Manager, 804-662-9703.



# REFERENCES

[FEMA Factsheet on 508 Compliance](#)

[Department of Justice 508 Compliance Facts](#)

[Section 508 Compliance](#)

[508 Compliance Checklist](#)

[Department of Homeland Security Language Access Materials](#)



## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

[Emergency Responders Language Access and Effective Communications Checklist](#)

[Access and Functional Needs Resource Guide](#)

[Standards and Guidelines for Access and Functional Needs](#)

[National Center for Health Statistics](#)





THANK YOU!

