

WHAT IS VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING?

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is an auxiliary aid that uses video conferencing technology to access off-site, real-time sign language interpreters for conversations between hearing people and deaf or hard of hearing people located in the same room. Most businesses/state or local government entities have laptops or tablets that connect to a VRI server. VRI can be a useful tool especially in rural areas, where access to on-site interpreters may be limited, and in emergency rooms, where immediate access to interpreters may be needed. While VRI can be a useful tool, there are stringent federal guidelines for VRI usage. Additionally, VRI is not effective in all circumstances.

FEDERAL OPERATING GUIDELINES

If used, a VRI must provide **all** of the following:

- **Real-time, full-motion** video and audio over a **dedicated high-speed, wide bandwidth** video connection that delivers **high-quality** video images that do not produce lags, choppy, blurry, or grainy images, or irregular pauses in communication
- A **sharply delineated image** large enough to display the interpreter's face, arms, hands, and fingers, and the face, arms, hands, and fingers of the person using sign language, regardless of his or her body position
- A **clear, audible** transmission of voices.

VRI may not be effective. An on-site interpreter may need to be called when:

- VRI does not meet the above federal standards
- VRI experiences technical difficulties, such as lags, audio problems, or connectivity issues
- Staff are not trained on how to use it
- A person who is deaf/hard of hearing is also blind or has low vision
- A person has difficulty seeing the screen due to pain or body positioning
- There are multiple deaf or hard of hearing individuals in a room
- A deaf or hard of hearing person is undergoing a psychiatric crisis

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of when VRI may not be effective.

A business, state, or local government entity should always consult with a deaf or hard of hearing individual to see what auxiliary aid or service is needed to provide effective communication. State and local government entities and healthcare providers **must** give **primary consideration** to the choice of the deaf/hard of hearing individual when choosing an auxiliary aid or service to provide. The business, state, or local government entity has the ultimate say as to what auxiliary aid it provides, so long as the chosen auxiliary aid or service provides effective communication to the deaf/hard of hearing individual.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

A business, state, or local government entity that uses VRI should:

- Contract with an outside sign language interpreting vendor for provision of on-site interpreting services
- Perform regular maintenance checks on the computers or tablets that are used for VRI
- Install updates regularly in all computers and tablets that are used for VRI
- Keep a maintenance log of any computer/tablet repairs or updates
- Train all newly hired staff on how to operate VRI, including what to do if the VRI experiences technical issues, and how to contact an on-site interpreter
- Retrain existing staff on VRI use at least annually
- Train staff on when VRI use may not be effective and when an on-site interpreter may be needed for effective communication
- Place instructions on how to use the VRI on each VRI laptop/tablet

RESOURCES

Disability Rights Tennessee, Effective Communication Resources

<https://www.disabilityrightstn.org/resources/effective-communication>

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Requirements for Effective Communication

<https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>

National Deaf Center, “Telecommunications: VRS, VRI, and TRS”

[https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/sites/default/files/Telecommunications %20VRS,%20VRI,%20and%20TR S.pdf](https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/sites/default/files/Telecommunications%20VRS,%20VRI,%20and%20TRS.pdf)

MEMPHIS | NASHVILLE | KNOXVILLE

800.342.1660 | www.disabilityrightstn.org | gethelp@disabilityrightstn.org