

## **Make COVID-19 Media Briefings Accessible for Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing receive information differently than hearing people. While some individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing may be able to read English, others may not. For example, they may communicate exclusively in American Sign Language (ASL). It is critical for public health and safety information to be disseminated in a manner deaf and hard of people can understand through the use of open or closed-captioning and qualified ASL interpreters.

As Tennessee continues to prepare for the COVID-19 outbreak, health departments, state and local agencies, and other entities are disseminating information via televised briefings about this evolving public-health situation. It is paramount that this information reach and be understood by as many people as possible, including individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. Furthermore, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that information disseminated by local and state government entities be accessible to people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

With this in mind, Disability Rights Tennessee recommends that **ALL** televised press conferences and media briefings have the following:

- Open or closed-captioning, and
- A qualified, on-site American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter close to the speaker and always in the camera shot so that he or she will be in the view of the public.

You can request a qualified sign language interpreter by contacting one of the agencies listed below or through the Registered Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) website. We recommend that you contact the agency to secure a qualified interpreter as soon as you begin planning for your televised briefing.

### STATEWIDE RESOURCES

#### **Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf**

<http://rid.org/about-interpreting/hiring-an-interpreter/>

#### **Tennessee Centers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/ds/councils-and-committees/tcddbhh.html>

**MEMPHIS | NASHVILLE | KNOXVILLE**

**800.342.1660 | [www.disabilityrightstn.org](http://www.disabilityrightstn.org) | [gethelp@disabilityrightstn.org](mailto:gethelp@disabilityrightstn.org)**

## REGIONAL RESOURCES

### East Tennessee

#### **Visual Communication Interpreting**

<https://www.vcinterpreting.com/>

#### **Knoxville Center for the Deaf**

<https://www.kcdtn.org/>

#### **Partnership for Families, Children, & Adults**

<https://www.partnershipfca.com/www>

### Middle Tennessee

#### **Bridges for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

<https://www.bridgesfordeafandhh.org/>

#### **Gate Communications**

<https://www.gatecommunications.org/>

### West Tennessee

#### **Bridges West**

<https://www.bridgesfordeafandhh.org/>

#### **Deaf Connect**

<https://deafconnectmidsouth.org/>

Thank you for helping make COVID-19 media briefings accessible for all Tennesseans.

## ASSISTANCE

Should you need any further information about making your programs or services accessible to people with disabilities, please contact Disability Rights Tennessee attorney Stacie L. Price at [staciep@disabilityrightstn.org](mailto:staciep@disabilityrightstn.org) or 615.732.6982.

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