

# GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION ACCESS

The New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) is the principal state agency established by New Jersey Law (PL 1977, C. 166) on behalf of people of all ages who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind. The Division provides education, advocacy, and direct services to eliminate barriers and promote increased accessibility to programs, services, and information routinely available to the state's general population.

DDHH's Guide to Communication Access is a resource for entities to learn more about communication access services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind individuals. This guidance provides a range of communication access service options available to meet each individual's unique communication needs.

## Sign Language Interpreting Services

Interpreter services are used to facilitate communication between parties who use sign language and spoken language.

As part of the Division's mandate to promote increased accessibility, DDHH manages **Sign Language Interpreters, Caption Services Directories** containing contact information for certified interpreters. Interpreters can be procured in a variety of settings whether in-person or virtually.<sup>1</sup> It is critical that interpreters

are nationally certified through the **Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.** and qualified to interpret in the requested setting.

DDHH disseminates the directories as a service for state agencies, providers, and community members to locate and hire certified sign language interpreters. Interpreters have different areas of expertise including but not limited to:

- Medical
- Legal
- Mental Health
- Deafblind



For after-hours, weekends, or emergencies, interpreters can be contacted directly from DDHH's **Sign Language Interpreters, Caption Services Directories**. Entities are encouraged to develop and maintain a local and/or regional list of interpreters. There are also interpreting agencies that have 24-hour emergency/on-call services. When contacting an agency for after-hour services, it is important to request an RID Certified Interpreter and specify the specialty needed.

<sup>1</sup> Sign language interpreting is a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind to ensure effective communication. This means that any entity covered by the ADA – offices and services of local and state government, public and private schools, places of public accommodations such as doctors' offices, hospitals, movie theaters and more – are obligated to provide communication access when requested at no expense to deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind individuals.

## Certified Deaf Interpreter

Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDI) are specialists who provide sign language interpreting, translation, and transliteration services and other visual communication forms. CDIs may be required in situations where deaf individuals use atypical, or disfluent sign language. CDIs most often work in tandem with hearing interpreters and are a valuable addition to communication teams, as they specialize in visual language and have training that enables them to communicate effectively with individuals who have unique language needs. The deaf-hearing interpreter team ensures that the spoken language message reaches the deaf consumer in a language or communication form that the individual can understand, and that the individual's message is conveyed successfully in the spoken language. CDIs would be most beneficial or required for:

- Children still acquiring American Sign Language
- Deaf individuals living with mental health, physical or cognitive disability
- Persons using foreign or international sign language
- Deafblind individuals

## DDHH Certified Deaf Interpreter Directory:

- [Certified Deaf Interpreter List Jan 2024.pdf \(nj.gov\)](#)



## New Jersey Court System Interpreters

The New Jersey Judiciary Court System provides court-interpreting services. It is important to notify the court immediately to request such services. If the case is in Municipal Court, call the phone number found on the traffic ticket or court notice. If the case is in Superior Court, visit the county website where the case will be held:

- [Request an Interpreter for a Court Event \(njcourts.gov\)](https://njcourts.gov)
- [Language Services \(njcourts.gov\)](https://njcourts.gov)
- [Registry of Interpreting Resources \(njcourts.gov\)](https://njcourts.gov)

## Law Enforcement

In the course of their duties, law enforcement officers may interact with deaf and hard of hearing individuals. To ensure that deaf and hard of hearing individuals can effectively communicate with law enforcement and access their services, the Division has updated **Standard Operating Procedures for Law Enforcement** agencies to use.

Check out DDHH's law enforcement communication cards available for download: **Wallet Size/Pamphlet Size**. Individuals can obtain hard copies by contacting DDHH at **(609) 588-2648** or [ddhh.communications2@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:ddhh.communications2@dhs.nj.gov).

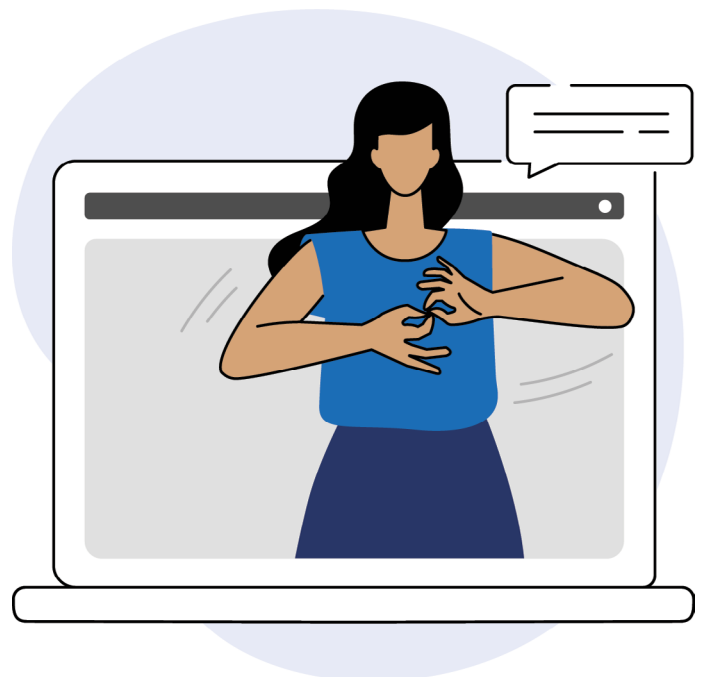


## Video Remote Interpreting

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is an interpreting services that utilizes safe and secure platforms to facilitate communication. It is used for simple, non-complex interactions, on devices with video access, such as videophones or web cameras. VRI services are currently used in a variety of settings including provider's offices, financial institutions, workplaces, etc. VRI does not replace the need for in-person interpreting services.

VRI services are contracted, on a fee-for-service basis by interpreting agencies, and can be provided by appointment or "on demand" 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Costs may vary.

Additional guidance can be found within the **National Association of the Deaf – Minimum Standards for Video Remote Interpreting Services in Medical Settings**.



## Support Service Provider

**Support Service Provider - New Jersey (SSP-NJ)** is a collaborative effort between the **New Jersey Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI)** and **The College of New Jersey**. SSP-NJ approves services within the guidelines of CBVI, and in alignment with the goals set forth by the individual. By promoting and supporting employment for adults who are deafblind, SSP-NJ encourages community integration through the development and implementation of a statewide network of Support Service Providers.

### Key responsibilities of an SSP are to:

- Relay visual and environmental information in the individual's preferred method of communication.
- Serve as a human guide while walking and on public transportation, paratransit, or taxi or other hired service.
- Facilitate communication in the individual's preferred method of communication.

## Captioning Services

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is a service similar to court reporting in which a transcriber converts speech to text and projects real time translation onto a screen or device, during meetings or events. CART services can be provided on-site or remote. This service can be used to accommodate individuals that do not use sign language or are hard of hearing. DDHH maintains a **directory of CART professionals**.

**Relay Conference Captioning (RCC)** is a service that enables a person to actively participate in conference calls, video meetings and webinars. Live captions are available via web browser, and can be accessed by computer, laptop, tablet, or mobile device. RCC is designed for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and those with a speech disability. Users can engage with attendees using speech or text. There is no cost for individuals who live or work in New Jersey.

## Assistive Listening Technology Devices

Assistance listening devices (ALDs) are amplifiers used to increase volume, for individuals with auditory access. They can be accessed using cochlear implant(s) or hearing aid(s). It is important that entities meet the unique needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as provide resources for equitable access.

## Cochlear Implants

**Cochlear implants** are surgically implanted medical devices that can assist individuals with severe hearing loss by electrically stimulating the inner ear, or cochlea. An implant does not restore complete hearing. While some individuals may benefit greatly from a cochlear implant, it is important to understand that an implant does not restore complete hearing.



## Hearing Aids

**Hearing aids** are small electronic devices that are worn externally, in or behind the ear. It may amplify sound so that individuals with hearing loss may listen, communicate, and further engage in daily activities. A hearing aid is effective in both quiet and noisy settings.

## Hearing Loop Systems

**Hearing loop systems** are a revolutionary tool that transform public spaces into more accessible environments, providing seamless and direct access to auditory information. In fostering an environment that supports individuals with hearing loss, the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has compiled a collection of tools and information curated to support comprehension and utilization of hearing loops.

There are a variety of ALDs available, including but not limited to amplified phones, FM systems, and hearing induction loops. They amplify sound and enhance an individual's ability to engage in communication and receive equitable access to effective communication in public settings. Many newer devices offer connectivity to a cochlear implant or hearing aid through Bluetooth.

DDHH offers demonstration of various assistive listening devices, such as doorbells, alarm clocks, video phones, amplified sound systems, and more. In person or virtual appointments are available upon request. For more information, visit: [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing | Assistive Communication Device Demonstration Centers](#).

**iCanConnect** is another resource that provides free equipment and training for individuals with both significant hearing and vision loss who meet the program's disability and income eligibility guidelines. iCanConnect is a national program with local contacts that helps individuals stay connected to friends, family and the world.

## Learning ASL

Learning basic sign language can be helpful for entities working with deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind individuals. While basic signs are helpful for making initial connections, it is best to use professional interpreters for more complex interactions. DDHH has [resources for learning American Sign Language](#).

