

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SUMMARY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law. This law obligates State and local governments to provide effective communications for individuals with disabilities. It is each County department's responsibility to comply with ADA requirements regarding effective communications. Examples of effective communication might include providing a sign language interpreter for someone who is deaf, an assistive listening device for someone who is hard of hearing, or materials in alternate format for someone who is blind, has low vision, or has a learning disability. County departments must ensure that people who have needs for effective communication know how to make a request for auxiliary aids and services.

PROCEDURE

Communicate with the person who is making the request to better understand what service is required for effective communication. Only 5-10 percent of people who are blind can read and write in Braille. Instead, most rely on screen reading and voice recognition software. If there is more than one way to provide communication, state and local governments may choose the most convenient and/or cost effective method, provided it is equally effective. Sometimes, effective communication might involve reading a form to a person with a visual impairment. For simple, brief communication, writing notes to a person who is deaf may be sufficient.

A. Obtaining a Sign Language Interpreter

1. Persons who are deaf from birth or become deaf before learning language frequently cannot communicate well via conventional written language. They typically need to communicate via American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is not English, but rather it's a unique language with its own syntax and rules of grammar. The County has awarded a sign language services contract to the vendor, Interpreters Unlimited (IU). Assignments of less than two hours will be covered by a single interpreter except in unusual circumstances when other arrangements are approved by the requesting County department.

IU is the County's sole vendor of ASL interpreter services and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI).

- To schedule an ASL interpreter during regular hours (8:30 am-5:30 pm Monday - Friday), contact:
Frances Trahan, Scheduling Coordinator
Email: request@acdasl.com
Phone: 954-578-3081, Ext. 2
- To obtain an ASL interpreter after hours, contact:
Frances Trahan 954-347-5749
Ariel Paredes 954-578-3081
- To inquire about VRI services, contact:
Shamus Sayed, VP Sales & Marketing
Email: shamus.sayed@iugroup.com
Phone: 858-866-1130

- For billing or invoicing matters, call Martha Vasquez 954-578-3081 or email: invoice@acdasl.com
 - When making a request for services, please include the following information:
 - Date and time when services are needed;
 - Location of services;
 - Parking instructions and cost, if any;
 - Name of deaf, hearing-impaired or speech-impaired client;
 - Name and phone number of contact person on site; and
 - Reason for services: i.e. a meeting, training, press conference, etc.
 - For Communication access real-time translation (**CART**) or C-Print services, check the vendor list for names and contact information.
2. The vendor will provide confirmation that an interpreter(s) has been scheduled within 48 hours of request. The vendor will work with the requesting department to secure a sign language interpreter with a level of training and experience appropriate to the assignment and County contract. The department will be charged for services according to the interpreter's level of qualification.
 3. Emergency Services: Emergency requests are those for which services are needed within 24 hours of the request for service.
 4. Minimum Billable Time
 - a. Sign language interpreter vendors cannot bill for travel time within the County. If travel to an assignment is required outside of the County, the County reserves the right to determine fairness of mileage rate. Under normal circumstances, an interpreter will be assumed to be available for the two-hour minimum time even on assignments expected to run less than two hours. However, if an interpreter states that he or she can only accept an assignment if it is for an amount of time less than two hours, and if the requesting department agrees, the vendor will provide the interpreter with a form specifying the maximum agreed upon time availability for the interpreter to take to the assignment. A copy of this form must be included as part of the invoice – also known as the confirmation sheet – when the invoice is submitted for payment.
 5. Cancellations: Occasionally, the County may need to cancel a pre-scheduled interpreter. The fee guidelines are as follows:
 - a. Cancellations made with more than 48 hours' notice: no penalty.
 - b. Cancellations within 24 – 48 hours of the appointment: the County will pay 50 percent of the fee for the scheduled hours.
 - c. Cancellations within 24 hours: the County will pay 100 percent of the fee for the scheduled hours.

B. Obtaining Materials in Alternate Format

1. Always discuss the request for materials in alternate format with the requester to ensure the materials to be provided meet the requester's needs. Do not assume you know what the person wants. Not all people who are blind read Braille. Many people who are blind or visually impaired may prefer to receive materials via email instead of in Braille. However, if you need written materials converted into Braille format, contact the Internal Services

Department ADA Office and allow sufficient lead time to have documents produced in Braille.

2. Some people with visual impairments can be accommodated by documents printed in large print. Large print materials can be created by different methods. If you have the original materials in electronic form (such as in MS Word), select the text and change the font size to at least 18 point. Use a simple sans serif font such as Arial, Verdana or Tahoma. If you only have the materials in print form, copy the document on a photocopier using the enlargement function and larger paper to maintaining formatting and page numbers. Black ink on white paper or other strongly contrasting color combination should be used. The large print document should retain the original page numbering so that both visually impaired and sighted users can easily review and discuss a document together.

C. Telecommunications with People Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Speech-Impaired

People who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired have traditionally used TTY machines (telecommunications devices for the deaf) to communicate via telephone. A TTY user can have a conversation with someone who does not have a TTY by using the Florida Relay Service as an intermediary. For more information about the Florida Relay Service, visit: <http://www.ftri.org/FloridaRelay>

1. Personal data devices, email, text messaging, and voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) services such as Skype and FaceTime have largely replaced the use of TTYs. So that the County may appropriately accommodate people with communication impairments, each department must have at least one email address that is widely available via website and publications so that people with disabilities may contact departments to request accommodations or information. The email address can be a generic address for general communications to the department or can be an email address belonging to a particular individual. If a department currently has a functioning TTY device and has staff trained and available to answer it, the department may continue to use it, but this should not be considered a substitute for email communications.
2. **Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)** is a video-telecommunication service that uses electronic devices with web cameras such as laptops, tablets, or videophones to provide sign language or spoken language interpreting services. VRI is a fast, effective way to provide a deaf person with an ASL interpreter when he or she comes to a County facility without advance notice. VRI uses a remote or offsite interpreter who hears the voices of the hearing people through the microphone or telephone, and renders the message into sign language, via a video camera, which the deaf person views on his or her video display. In turn, when the deaf participants sign to the camera, the interpreter views it from their screen, and speaks the aural interpretation into a microphone or telephone for the hearing people.
3. **A Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) is sometimes needed to communicate with a deaf person. CDI services are available under the County's ASL services contract.** A CDI is, typically, a deaf person who is certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, has excellent general communication skills, general interpreter training, and specialized training or experience in the use of gesture, mime, props, drawings, and other tools to enhance communication. He/she is attuned to the finer nuances of ASL and non-verbal communication. **A CDI is helpful when the deaf customer's communication mode is so unique that using only a regular ASL interpreter is ineffective. Such situations may involve individuals who:**

- a. Use "home signs", which are non-standard signs or gestures that are unique to a family;
 - b. Use a foreign sign language;
 - c. Have minimal or limited communication skills;
 - d. Are deaf-blind or deaf with limited vision;
 - e. Use signs particular to a given region, ethnic, or age group; and/or
 - f. Have characteristics reflective of deaf culture not familiar to regular ASL interpreters.
4. **Another resource is Florida Relay, a service provided to residents in the State of Florida who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind, or Speech Disabled that connects an individual to standard (voice) telephone users.** Through the use of highly trained Operators, calls can be made 24/7, 365 days a year allowing our Florida residents who are in need of Relay services to connect and communicate with anyone at any time. All calls remain confidential, and no records of conversations are ever maintained.

D. Access Statement for Notices of Public Meetings and Departmental Publications

1. People with disabilities need a mechanism by which they can request accessible communications or other types of accommodations as well as materials in alternate format in advance of a public meeting or event. In order to provide this mechanism, all notices of public meetings and events shall contain the following statement:

To request materials in accessible format, sign language interpreters, and/or any accommodation to participate in any County-sponsored program or meeting, please contact (_____) five days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service.)

[THE ABOVE BLANK IS TO BE FILLED IN WITH THE NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS, OF THE RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENTAL STAFF MEMBER. IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS A TTY AND WISHES TO CONTINUE USING IT, THE TTY NUMBER MAY BE PROVIDED, BUT IT MUST BE IN ADDITION TO THE EMAIL ADDRESS, AND NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR IT.]

2. When meeting or event notices do not contain the above statement or are not sent out sufficiently in advance of the meeting or event for addressing accommodations requests, sign language interpreters and materials in accessible format must be provided by the department unless the department knows that no persons needing such accommodations will be attending.
3. When the County disseminates materials to the general public (such as brochures, pamphlets, etc.), people with disabilities need a mechanism by which they can request such materials in alternate format. In order to provide this mechanism, all publications to be disseminated to the general public shall contain the following statement:

To obtain this information in accessible format, please call (_____).

[THE ABOVE BLANK IS TO BE FILLED IN WITH A DEPARTMENTAL PHONE NUMBER THAT IS MANNED BY A STAFF MEMBER WHO CAN APPROPRIATELY RESPOND TO SUCH REQUESTS. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT AN EMAIL ADDRESS BE INCLUDED ALONG WITH THE PHONE NUMBER]

E. Ensuring That All Departmental Broadcasts and Video Productions Are Accessible to People With Disabilities.

1. Each department shall be responsible for responding to individual requests for captioning of programs that it disseminates to the public. In conjunction with the Communications Department (COM), each department that produces videos shall ensure that the videos contain real-time or postproduction captioning, as appropriate.
2. In the case of emergency-related broadcasts and videos, COM, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue or other responsible department shall caption emergency announcements and programs, including, but not limited to, those regarding hurricane preparedness, special needs registry, sheltering, evacuation, and the use of transportation during emergencies. With all emergency-related public service announcements, requests shall be made of the television stations to broadcast the announcements with captioning. If it is not possible to provide real-time captioning, scrolled messages with essential emergency information and sign language interpreters shall be provided.
3. When televised live statements by the Mayor or other senior official(s) are made, especially concerning emergency management matters, an ASL interpreter and a CDI shall be scheduled. The CDI shall be shown signing in the frame adjacent to the Mayor. The ASL interpreter shall be off-camera, signing to the CDI. Utilizing both an ASL interpreter and CDI ensures that the information is effectively communicated to the greatest majority of the deaf community.

CONTACT(S):

Department/Division

Mayor's Office

Internal Services Department/ADA Office

Communications Department