

# Accessible Remote Work Meetings for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees

\*developed with a consensus by deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind consumer advocacy organizations and subject matter experts

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See also the [Web version on the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology RERC site](#).

During the COVID-19 crisis, you may have switched from working in an office to working from home. As you work from home, you probably are meeting with your coworkers through a video conference system. By law, your boss must still accommodate you even if you work from home. For example, your boss must make sure that you can understand and participate in virtual meetings. Before any remote meeting, you and your boss should talk about what access you need to be part of the meeting. Your boss must pay for any accommodations that you need to join the meetings. Your boss must provide an interpreter and/or captioning for the remote meetings if you need them.

Employers must also accommodate you during the hiring process. Video interviews must be accessible and designed to give you a fair chance of getting the job.

If you need to join a webinar for work, you should ask the host of the webinar about captioning and/or interpreters. You can share Gallaudet University's [guide on running accessible webinars](#) with the webinar host. Before the webinar, you should test the webinar platform to figure out if you can see the interpreters and/or captioning.

## **What You Can Do Before a Remote Meeting:**

### **1. Talk with Your Boss or the Host**

If you are not able to understand during your remote work meetings, talk to your boss or the host of the meeting about what you need. Tell them what you need to be able to share your thoughts and to understand: captioning, an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, and/or a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). If you have other or different access needs, you should share what you need to join the remote meeting.

If you are deaf and have a mobility disability, share that you need a CDI and an ASL interpreter during the remote meeting. If you are DeafBlind, share what you need, such as captioning with screen-reading equipment or a Communication Facilitator (CF) to provide tactile interpreting. Note: your boss should make sure the CF has personal protective equipment (PPE) to use while at your home.

### **2. Pick the Best Video Platform to Use**

There are many video platforms for remote work meetings. Some platforms provide better access than others for deaf and hard of hearing people. You should compare which video platforms will work better for you by looking at [this grid](#). The grid shows what each platform has or does not have for accessibility features. Share this grid with your boss or the meeting host. The best way to do any video meeting is explained in these recommendations for employers <http://www.deafhhtech.org/lerc/remote-workplace-communications-access/>.

### **3. Set Up Your Access**

There are different ways to get access and it is important to make sure that the type of access your boss provides is the right one for you. You need to ask your boss or the meeting host for the accessibility option that best fits you.

#### **A. Interpreters**

If you need ASL, the ASL interpreters should be on the video platform with everyone. Your boss can hire ASL interpreters to join the video meeting. Your boss should share the video meeting link with the ASL interpreters. You should ask your boss to hire ASL interpreters who are familiar with what you will discuss in your work meeting. You can suggest your preferred interpreters or interpreting agency to your boss. If your preferred interpreters are not available, ask your boss to provide a list of commonly-used terms and acronyms to the interpreter agency to prepare the interpreter in advance. Before the meeting starts, explain any specific signs for terms used and any name signs to the interpreters.

Video Relay Services (VRS) should not be used for video meetings. Using VRS would mean the interpreter will not be in the video meeting but will be on a separate screen. This means VRS interpreters will not see what is happening but can only listen by phone. That means VRS interpreters will not be able to see what is shown during the video meeting. Also, VRS interpreters are randomly assigned and may not be qualified for the meeting topic. Another issue is that the VRS interpreter may not be able to stay on for the entire meeting and may switch to another VRS interpreter, which may interrupt your ability to understand the meeting.

#### **B. Captioning**

If you need captioning, a professional captioner should be providing captions on the video platform with everyone. This is called Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning services. Your boss should hire a professional CART company or captioner to join the video meeting. Your boss should share the meeting link with the professional captioner. You should ask your boss to hire a captioner who is familiar with what you will discuss in your work meeting. You can suggest your preferred captioners or captioning company to your boss. If your preferred captioners are not available, ask your boss to provide a list of commonly-used words and acronyms to the captioning agency to prepare the captioner in advance.

If you work for the Federal Government, you may be able to get captioning for video meetings through Relay Conference Captioning (RCC). Only some federal agencies provide this service. Check with your boss to see if your agency provides RCC.

If you work for a private company and need captioning for your video meeting, you can also use RCC in these states: AZ, CO, CT, FL, HI, MD, ME, MT, MO, NJ, NC, RI, SD, VT, VA, WV and WY. More information on RCC is in the [recommendations for employers](#).

Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Services (IP-CTS) should not be used for video meetings. Using IP-CTS means the captioner will not be in the video meeting but will be on a separate screen. This means IP-CTS captioners will not see what is happening but can only listen by phone.

### **C. Resources**

A list of some CART, VRS and IP-CTS providers is in [Appendix A](#). We do not endorse these providers but are sharing as a resource to help you find what you need. You can share Appendix A with your boss.

#### **4. Use the Right Equipment**

To have access during remote video meetings, you need the right equipment at home. You must be able to see the interpreters and/or captioning clearly during the video meeting. You need high-speed Internet access. You can use WiFi but it is better if your computer connects by Ethernet cable directly into your router. You should test the equipment before a video meeting to make sure everything works well.

You may want to get a second monitor for your video meetings. Ask your boss to provide you with a second monitor to make it easier for you to participate. The second monitor allows you to see the interpreters and/or captions clearly, while everything else is on the first monitor. You need to make sure your computer can support two monitors.

If your boss cannot give you a second monitor, you can try to use your TV as a second screen for video meetings. You may need a long HDMI cable to connect the TV to your computer.

Ask your employer to give you the items you need.

#### **5. Set Rules for Video Meetings**

Video meetings can be difficult. Ask the meeting host to set rules that everyone follows. An example of rules can be found in these [recommendations for employers](#). You can share these recommended rules with the meeting host and ask the meeting host to share the rules with everyone before the meeting. The meeting host should repeat the rules again at the start of the meeting.

Ask the meeting host if any video will be shown during the meeting. If yes, then check with the meeting host to find out if the video is captioned. If you are DeafBlind and need a transcript of the meeting, ask for one before the meeting, so that it can be prepared quickly after the meeting ends. The transcript should include all audio background information and audio descriptions of the video environment.

## 6. Feedback During and After the Meeting

You should let your boss or meeting host know during and after the video meeting if you have any problems with access. Ask for any changes you need to be able to access the next video meeting.

## Related Resources

- Catharine McNally's [Accessibility Strategies for Deaf / Hard of Hearing People in Remote Meetings](#)
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology RERC's [Accessibility Tips for a Better Zoom/Virtual Meeting Experience](#)
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing Technology RERC's [case studies on running accessible webinars](#)
- Jo Wootten's [Tips for Working Remotely When You are Deaf with BSL Videos](#)
- Tina Childress's [Captioning options for Videoconferencing and Learning Management Systems](#)

## Glossary

For definitions of some words used throughout this document, please see the [recommendations for employers](#).

## Assistance

If your boss does not give you what you need to access virtual meetings, please contact: [workplace@dhhcan.org](mailto:workplace@dhhcan.org)

## Contributors

This guide was developed by deaf and hard of hearing consumer advocacy organizations and subject matter experts:

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- [Association of Late-Deafened Adults \(ALDA\)\\*](#)
- [Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization \(CPADO\)\\*](#)
- [Deaf in Government \(DIG\)](#)
- [Gallaudet University](#)
- [Gallaudet University Technology Access Program/Deaf Hard of Hearing Technology RERC](#)
- [Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\)\\*](#)

- [National Association of the Deaf \(NAD\)\\*](#)
- [National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(NASADHH\)](#)
- [National Technical Institute for the Deaf \(NTID\) Center on Employment](#)
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(\*consumer advocacy groups that advocate for the rights of deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind people)

# Appendix A: Accessibility Service Providers

## Remote captioning providers

<https://streamtext.net/>

<https://1capapp.com>

<https://portal.ncra.org/Sourcebook>

<https://dcmp.org/learn/10-captioning-service-vendors>

<https://www.federalrelay.us/>

<https://www.sprintrelay.com/services/stc> (Sprint RCC)

<https://hamiltonrelay.com/state-services.html> (Hamilton RCC)

## Relay Service Providers

Five VRS providers include [Convo](#), [Global](#), [Purple](#), [Sorenson](#), and [ZVRS](#).

Five IP-CTS providers include [CaptionCall](#) (iOS), [ClearCaptions](#) (iOS), [Hamilton](#) CapTel, [InnoCaption](#) (iOS, Android), and [Sprint Web CapTel](#) (universal [web page](#)).

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