



**Disability
Belongs™**



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DisabilityBelongs.org

Event Accessibility Considerations Live Captioning and Sign Language

Live Captioning or CART

Captions are beneficial for people who are Deaf, deaf, or Hard of Hearing, those with learning disabilities, and people whose first language is not English. The gold standard for captioning is Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), also called live captioning or open captioning, where a transcriber uses specialized stenography equipment to type spoken words in real time.

Many organizations opt for closed captioning powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), which relies on Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology to convert speech into text. Platforms like Zoom, Facebook Live, and YouTube offer automatic captioning, but this method often produces more errors than live captioning. For higher accuracy and accessibility, Disability Belongs™ recommends budgeting for CART services at your event.

ASL Interpreters

American Sign Language (ASL) is not simply a visual depiction of English. It is a distinct language that uses a different grammar system. ASL is a native language for many and may be preferred above captioning, particularly for interactive discussions or events involving complex subject matter, technical terms, and industry-specific terminology, where captioning may be less effective.

Disability Belongs™ recommends hiring a sign language interpreter at least two weeks before your event. Ensure they are certified and experienced, and confirm whether the event will be publicly shared. Because interpreting a live event can be labor-intensive, the industry standard is to hire a minimum of two interpreters for any event lasting longer than one hour.

Provide your interpreter with speaker names and any PowerPoint presentations ahead of time so they can familiarize themselves with the materials.

For Zoom events, interpreters will require log-in information and a link or invitation to join the event. Set the event to gallery view, and when screen sharing, ensure the video remains in side-by-side gallery view. This ensures that participants will see both the screen and the ASL interpreter. You can also pin the interpreter's video by hovering over their video thumbnail in the participant list, clicking the "more" option (usually three dots), and selecting "pin video."

For in-person events, reserve front-row seats for your ASL interpreter and attendees requiring the translation. Make sure the interpreter is well-lit and visible.

Promote Accessibility

If you are providing CART or ASL interpretation, let your community know! Share this information widely, including on your website and social media. Partner with others in your local community to share accessibility information.