

# Best Practices for Equal Access to Library Online Events

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## Background

It is written in law\* that people with disabilities, including hearing impairment, should have equal access. Accommodations for the hearing impaired include closed captioning, American Sign Language translation and transcription services.

\* (29 U.S.C. § 794 (Section 504), 47 U.S.C. § 225, P.L. 110-325, FL 413.08, FL110.171)

## Introduction

During the planning process for a virtual event open to the public, an accommodation request brought attention to the need for an understanding of captioning best practices and a **defined process** for providing live captioning services.

To ensure that accommodation requests are legally met and that all attendees have an opportunity to participate in live events, a six-person task force was charged with developing guidelines for the use of live captioning in December 2020.

## Process

- 1: **Gathered Information** on
  - (1) accessibility requirements, (2) captioning best practices, (3) workflow, (4) budget, and (5) role responsibility through (1) discussions with campus partners, (2) internet research, and (3) our own testing. Discussion partners included the Assistant Director for Assistive Technology Services of the Disability Resource Center, UF Libraries Administrators, and Head of Fiscal Services.
- 2: **Drafted guidelines**
- 3: **Reviewed guidelines with campus partners**
- 4: **Dissemination of guidelines**
  - a: Posting on multiple UF Libraries webpages
  - b: Training on how to turn on auto-transcriptions and presentation of guidelines

## Auto-Transcription VS. Live Captioning

**Auto-transcription:** The process by which words spoken over a virtual conferencing platform are automatically translated into captions on the screen using AI (artificial intelligence).

**Live Captioning:** The process by which humans and an AI team prepare captions in real-time and post them over a virtual conference platform to all participants during a meeting.

- While auto-transcription is free, it fails to capture all speech with 100% accuracy. Although it may be helpful for some participants, it is not an approved accommodation for Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing users.
- Lack of accuracy is particularly difficult for listeners unfamiliar with discipline-specific jargon or who rely on transcriptions for understanding.
- Speakers in noisy environments or with unfamiliar speech patterns or accents may be misinterpreted even more frequently than other speakers.

## Current legal accessibility requirements for captioning/transcriptions

In a blogpost whose wording implies posting sometime during the COVID-19 pandemic, Job Accommodations Network’s Sensory Team Lead Consultant Teresa Goddard indicates that no specific rulings have been promulgated pertaining to teleconferencing, captioning and American Sign Language interpreting. Job Accommodation Network does, however, provide a “Practical Guide” for general accommodation of multiple disabilities.

## Acknowledgements

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## References

Colorado State University Student Disability Center’s Disability Legislation History: A Brief History of Legislation. Accessed 9/20/21 from <https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/disability-awareness/disability-history/>

The Florida Legislature. The 2021 Florida Statutes. Chapter 413 Employment and Related Services for Persons with Disabilities, Title XXX, Social Welfare, Section 413.08 Rights and Responsibilities of an Individual with a Disability, use of a service animal; prohibited discrimination in public employment, publication accommodations, and housing accommodations; penalties. Subsection (7). Accessed 9/20/21 from [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=413.08&URL=0400-0499/0413/Sections/0413.08.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=413.08&URL=0400-0499/0413/Sections/0413.08.html)

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