



Disability Rights Connecticut

"Connecticut's protection and advocacy system"

846 Wethersfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114

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Thank you for the information and leadership you are providing to Connecticut residents concerning COVID-19. Understandably, this crisis presents numerous challenges and not all efforts will be executed without complications.

However, Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT) would like to address an issue that was brought to our attention. Representatives from the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind community contacted DRCT to complain that several televised emergency messages from the Governor's office were broadcast (over the past weekend) without sign language interpreters.

As you know, entities responsible for emergency management and response are required to ensure their response, recovery, and preparedness communications are fully accessible to people with disabilities. This includes live and recorded announcements on all emergency broadcasts regardless of the medium (television or the Internet) made by local governments including Mayors and Governors' offices.

Here are some recommended best practices which should be implemented in all video emergency broadcasts and public service announcements:

- Use certified interpreters and captioning service providers trained for emergency situations and familiar with emergency management terminology;
- Have the Public Information Officer monitor all broadcasts to make sure the sign language interpreter is visible at all times and is positioned next to the emergency official;
- Whenever possible use images and maps to illustrate what people should be doing or where people should be going during emergencies;
- Provide links to the transcript to allow braille readers access to text descriptions;
- Provide high quality captioning and ensure it does not conflict or cover the interpreter or other text such as a scrolling marquee, crawl, or lower-third (or vice versa)
- Work together with advocates from the deaf and hard of hearing community to ensure the diverse needs of all deaf and hard of hearing individuals are met during emergency broadcasts.

For more information, please see the following link which is useful resource published by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD): <https://www.nad.org/about-us/position-statements/position-statement-on-accessible-emergency-management-for-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-people/>.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me or DRCT Legal Director Catherine Cushman if you have questions or concerns.

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Interim Executive Director

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Legal Director

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