

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUANCE SYSTEM

Mayor's Memorandum 2008-2

September 26, 2008

TO: All Department and Agency Heads

ORIGINATOR: Eve Hill, Director of the Office of Disability Rights



SUBJECT: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA POLICY FOR PROVISION OF AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The District of Columbia is committed to making District programs, services, and activities available to everyone, regardless of disability. People with disabilities are entitled to fair and equal access to service. In addition, the District is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

District government agencies will provide auxiliary aids and services when necessary to ensure that communication with individuals with vision, hearing, and speech disabilities is as effective as communication with nondisabled individuals. No surcharge or fee will be assessed for the provision of auxiliary aids and services. In determining which auxiliary aid to provide, District agencies will give primary consideration to the request of the individual with a disability.

Auxiliary aids and services include:

Access for people with vision impairments to written/visual materials:

- Large print text (Arial font, 18 point or larger)
- Audio description
- Provision of qualified staff or a reader to read written material aloud
- Provision of a qualified staff person or notetaker to write material for the person with a disability
- Audiotaped text
- Braille text
- Screen-readable (e.g., Word) electronic formats
- Other methods of making visually delivered materials accessible to individuals with vision impairments

Access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to aural materials:

- Handwritten or typed notes if the communication is short and simple

- Qualified sign language interpreters if the communication is not short and simple (either in person or video interpretation) and for large meetings or events
- Real-time captioning for large meetings or events
- Open or closed captioning of video materials
- Assistive listening devices
- Written transcripts
- Other methods of making aurally delivered materials accessible to people with hearing impairments

Requests for Auxiliary Aids or Services

Requests for auxiliary aids or services should be made to the agency in advance of the meeting, hearing, or other activity provided by the District. However, when advance notice is not provided, District agencies will make efforts to provide auxiliary aids or services. District agencies must inform the public about how to request auxiliary aids or services (whom to call, how far in advance). District agencies will not set unreasonable requirements for advance notice needed for auxiliary aids or services.

District Agency Response to Requests for Auxiliary Aids or Services

When an auxiliary aid is requested, the District agency will give primary consideration to the choice of the individual with a disability. It is important to consult with the individual to assess what auxiliary aid(s) will be effective.

The District will honor the individual's choice unless:

- Another equally effective means of communication is available, or
- Provision of the auxiliary aid would fundamentally alter the service, program, or activity, or
- Provision of the auxiliary aid would result in undue financial or administrative burdens to the District.

Agencies should consult with the Office of Disability Rights (202-724-5055) when considering provision or denial of auxiliary aids or services. Agencies should respond to requests for auxiliary aids within a reasonable time by notifying the individual of the proposed auxiliary aid to be provided.

Grievance Procedure

If an individual with a disability is dissatisfied with a District agency's proposed or provided auxiliary aid or service, he or she may contact the DC Office of Disability Rights (202-724-5055) or the agency's ADA Coordinator.

Captioning of Videos

Videos for distribution, display or internet posting should be closed or open captioned or otherwise made accessible to people with hearing disabilities.

Sign Language Interpreters

There are several common types of sign language, including American Sign Language (ASL) and Signed English. In addition, each spoken language generally has its own sign language. It is important to consult with the person with a disability to find the kind of interpreter they need.

Sign language interpreters must be qualified – able to sign what is being said by the hearing person and able to voice what is being signed by the person who is deaf. This communication must be conveyed accurately, objectively, and impartially, through the proper use of any necessary specialized vocabulary.

Friends and relatives, including minor children, generally should not be used as interpreters unless the person with a disability specifically requests it, having been informed that an outside interpreter can be provided, and

- The friend or relative is able to interpret effectively and accurately,
- The friend or relative has no apparent or potential conflict of interest, and
- The friend or relative is of sufficient age and maturity

While sign language interpreters are not required to be certified, there are several certifying bodies, including the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and the National Association of the Deaf.

In situations where an interpreter is not available, video relay interpreting may be used. Video relay interpreting requires a high-speed internet connection, a computer, a USB video camera, and videoconferencing software. In order to be effective, video relay interpreting requires strict adherence to technical standards for equipment and connection. Video relay interpreting may not be effective in all situations or for all individuals who are deaf.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This Memorandum shall be effective September 2, 2008.