Guidelines for **Accessible Recorded and Streamed Video and Audio Materials**

Captioning, Audio-Description and Transcription

September 22, 2020

Scope

This document applies to the accessibility of live-streamed and recorded audio/video materials and events. *There are other accessibility considerations which are outside the scope of these guidelines with regard to live events that have in-person attendees.*

Introduction

These guidelines are intended to answer the following questions for State of Maine government offices about effective communication for persons with disabilities for materials and events containing digital audio and/or video.

1. Why do government offices need to ensure effective communication for persons with disabilities to be able to participate in or use digital audio/video material, meetings and events?
2. When should government offices ensure effective communication of digital audio/video material and events to persons with disabilities?
3. What are captioning, audio description and transcription?
4. Are there common standards and practices for captioning, audio description and transcription of digital audio/video materials and events that government offices should follow?
5. How do government offices get assistance with following these guidelines?

1. Why do government offices need to ensure effective communication for persons with disabilities?

SOM agencies and organizations have a responsibility under the State of Maine Digital Accessibility Policy, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Maine Human Rights Act, and Executive Orders, to ensure the accessibility of services in an equitable manner to people with

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disabilities. These guidelines can help government offices avoid excluding (even inadvertently) persons with disabilities.

2. When do government offices need to ensure effective communication of digital audio/video materials and events to persons with disabilities?

Digital video/audio materials or events or information produced or distributed by a state agency should be accessible:

- When open to the public for viewing, listening, or attending; or
- When the agency has or should have a reasonable belief that an individual with a disability is offered, invited to, or may be in attendance at a live or live streamed event; or
- When requested as an accommodation by or for a person who has a disability.

3. What are captioning, audio description and transcripts?

Captioning

Captioning - The text display of spoken words and punctuation presented visually along with other video content that provides equal opportunity for those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Audio description

Audio description - Narration added to the audio component of recorded video materials to describe important visual details that cannot be understood from the audio script alone. Audio description is a means to inform individuals who are blind or who have low vision about visual content essential for comprehension. Audio description of video provides information about actions, characters, scene changes, on-screen text, and other visual content. Audio description is usually added during existing pauses in dialogue. Audio description is also called "video description" and "descriptive narration".

Transcripts

Transcript - A written version of the audio portion of a recording. Transcripts alone do not make a video accessible because they are not synchronized with the video. Transcripts are typically posted alongside audio recordings. Transcripts may be edited or verbatim.

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4. Are there common standards and practices for captioning, audio description and transcription of digital audio/video materials and events that government offices should follow?

Common Standards and Practices

- Audio and video materials should be made accessible for both live streamed and recorded events and products such as advertisements, announcements or training materials.
- Captioning for live audio or video live-streamed events or meetings should be provided by Computer Assisted Remote Transcription (CART) performed by a trained professional either on-site or remote. At this time, computer-generated captioning or transcription does not provide the quality and punctuation recommended for live audio or video.
- Audio and video recorded for asynchronous viewing (not live streamed) should always be captioned to the highest quality reasonable. Automated or computer-generated captions, in themselves, do not provide adequate accuracy or punctuation. Agencies may utilize automated captions and correct them to ensure they meet quality standards prior to posting.
- Audio-only recordings should have an accurate transcript provided along with the audio file wherever the audio is posted.
- Video recordings should have descriptions in the script or a separate audio track describing important visual content. Audio descriptions can be presented various ways, but usually are fit into pauses in the dialogue.

Common Caption Quality Standards

1. Accurate: Captions must identify who is speaking, match the spoken words in the dialogue, and convey background noises and other sounds to the fullest extent possible.
2. Readable: Captions must spell proper nouns and specialized terms correctly and include standard punctuation.
3. Synchronous: Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible. Captions must be displayed on the screen at a speed, and remain on the screen long enough, that can be read by viewers.
4. Complete: Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program to the fullest extent possible.
5. Properly placed: Captions should not block other important visual content on the screen, overlap one another or run off the edge of the video screen.

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5. How do government offices get assistance with following these guidelines?

Government agencies needing more information may contact the OIT Accessibility Team, State ADA Coordinator or, in cases related to employees, their Human Resources office.

List of Captioning and CART providers is available in the [Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened Resource Guide.](#)

For more information please see: "SOM Captioning and Transcription – References for More Information" at the end of this document.

Conclusion

Captioning, transcription, and audio description of video content are critical to ensuring the widest possible access to State events and services. It is the responsibility of the agency providing the training or event to ensure effective communication.

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SOM Captioning and Transcription

References for More Information

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A Companion Document to

Guidelines for Accessible Recorded and Streamed Video and Audio Materials: Captioning, Audio-Description and Transcription

Laws/ Policies

- [Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)](#)
- [ADA Title II](#)
- [Maine Human Rights Act](#)
- [State of Maine Digital Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Executive Order 2010](#)
- [Executive Proclamation 2020](#)

Captioning and other information and guidelines

- [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative Captions/ Subtitles](#)
- [Harvard Digital Access guidance on Captioning](#)
- [WebAIM Captions, Transcripts, and Audio Descriptions](#)
- [University of Maine System Digital Video and Audio Accessibility guidelines and FAQ](#)
- [DeafTEC Captioning Standards](#)
- [National Deaf Center Captioned Media Services FAQ](#)
- [DCMP (Described and Captioned Media Program)](#)
- Web Content Accessibility [Guidelines](#) 2.0 level AA
- [Audio Description of Visual Information](#) .

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