



# WORLD

Technology News and Commentary for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People



## 24th Biennial Conference

# Reset and Reconnect

July 26 - 29, 2021

Learn more at [TDIConf.com](https://TDIConf.com)



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## WHAT WE DO

**“TDI shapes the Nation’s public policies in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to advance the interests of the 48 million Americans who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deafblind, and deaf with mobility issues.”**

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# WORLD

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**Shaping An Accessible World**

## Board Views



**JAN WITHERS**

*TDI President and Board Member,  
Southwest Region*

**“After our world in the past two years was upended in ways that profoundly tested our ability to connect with one another, the 2021 TDI Biennial Conference gives us a golden opportunity to ‘reset and reconnect.’”**

# Reset and Reconnect

**D**uring the 2019 TDI Biennial Conference, no one had any inkling the next two years would bring unprecedented, even cataclysmic, changes – the COVID-19 pandemic, George Floyd’s death and the Black Lives Matter movement, and the U.S. presidential election, to name a few major examples.

In the past fifteen months, to slow down the spread of the pandemic, people all over the world were compelled to wear masks, practice social distancing, and conduct work and personal business remotely. These changes highlighted and exacerbated the communication barriers Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind people already face daily.

We have learned just how much we rely on technology for our communication and to access information. We have had to be resourceful (which is nothing new to us but this time at a much more accelerated pace) to find ways to communicate and obtain information during this “new normal.” Speech-to-text apps, video conference and

telehealth platforms, and clear masks (admittedly low-tech but useful for many nonetheless) are some of the more common examples.

We also have become more mindful of the importance of being intentional, consistent, persistent, and meaningful in incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion into the world of Information and Communications Technology. There clearly is a lack of diversity among those who have access to broadband and technological resources, resulting in widespread inequity and exclusion. This is also true for many Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind people of color, who are unemployed or underemployed, live in rural areas, and/or were not afforded the education to become proficient in the use of technology. And certain segments of the hearing loss population such as those who are fully Deaf and Blind or who have mobility or cognitive challenges have yet to experience the level of access the

**BOARD VIEWS** Continued from page 2

rest of us have.

The new U.S. presidential administration, with its heightened support for people with disabilities, presents an opportunity for TDI to reset its priorities and to build new relationships for policy advocacy purposes.

With all the changes noted above, we realized the perfect theme for TDI's 2021 Biennial Conference is "Reset and Reconnect." To reset and reconnect is what we all sorely need. Yes, we will have our conference this summer, but it will be wholly virtual. I am excited to inform you that our conference will retain several traditional features familiar to many of you: plenaries, breakout sessions, panel discussions, and the awards

ceremony. Our keynote speaker will be the Federal Communications Commission's Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel.

The conference will also feature the best of what is possible virtually, including interactive experiences. In addition to the latest updates on the technological features and services that are familiar to us, we will for the first time include video conferencing platforms and telehealth services as topics. And Eric Kaika, TDI CEO, will have a fireside chat with consumer advocacy leaders.

Finally, in addition to directly addressing the topic of diversity, equity and inclusion in a panel discussion, efforts are being taken to ensure that the slate of presenters and panelists is more diverse than in years past.

Admittedly, this is not an easy task given the well-documented paucity of diverse populations within the Information and Communications Technology industry, but TDI recognizes this is a years-long effort and is committed to setting an example through all aspects of its operations and activities.

I truly believe TDI's 2021 Biennial Conference will provide you an auspicious and rewarding way to reset yourself as a stakeholder in communication equity and to reconnect with like-minded movers and shakers, primed for a new era of increased productivity and success in the world of accessible Information and Communications Technology! See you in July!



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## Our Quest for Access



BY ERIC KAIKA  
*Managing Editor*

**“We are striving to meet the same standard of engagement between presenters and the audience even if the event is being held virtually.”**

## Connecting Us All to the First Ever TDI Virtual Conference

**H**ello and Welcome! I am thrilled to share with you news of our first ever virtual conference. This will also be my first conference as the new CEO of TDI and I am excited to be able to present such an inspiring event despite having to face brand new telecommunication hurdles in the midst of a pandemic.

Discussions between staff and board members led us to tweak the format while staying true to our annual tradition of celebrating and spotlighting the industry leaders of our tomorrow. We have an exciting lineup of live and pre-recorded videos that participants will be able to view. We are striving to meet the same standard of engagement between presenters and the audience even if the event is being held virtually.

We are especially excited to have Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel as the keynote speaker. Bobbi Cordano, Barbara Kelley, and Howard Rosenblum will join us as the first guests of the new Fireside Chat program that I will be hosting. We are also very fortunate to have Dr. Leah Cox and Dr. Kimberly Knackstedt join the conference as plenary speakers.

This year we will present virtual panels that include a wide range of topics like next generation relay, automated captioning, access to tele-platforms, gaming accessibility, diversity and inclusion, and broadband. Our live panels will have moderators that will field questions from the audience.

of each day's programs, presenters, panelists, and other TDI conference-related functions such as the President's Reception, TDI Awards, and Closing Ceremonies.

An unexpected bonus of having a virtual event grants us the ability to archive all videos and make it available to all members on our website. This important resource will be available to be viewed in posterity and will become a part of our digital history.

We will be wrapping up this event with a survey in order to help us chart a path for the years to come. We acknowledge that in the past our geographical location may have prevented some participants from attending our conference. Your feedback will be invaluable as we craft a hybrid conference that will be successful at serving a larger number of consumers.

It is with profound gratitude that I must recognize our sponsors. These wonderful companies are what supports, drives and inspires our mission. We are able to host this conference biennially due to these sponsors. Learn who our sponsors are on page 6.

TDI would also not be able to present this conference without the dozens of volunteers, speakers, moderators and staff that work together to pull this off. I am honored to be a part of this wonderful circle of people that make this incredible event happen.

In this issue, we provide an overview





# 24th Biennial Conference

## Reset and Reconnect

### July 26 - 29, 2021

Learn more at [TDIConf.com](https://TDIConf.com)



**O**n July 26th, 2021 at 1pm EDT, TDI Conference will open with Jan Withers, TDI Board President welcoming everyone to TDI's first ever fully virtual conference while recognizing the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. At the conclusion of her remarks, she'll introduce the conference's main keynoter, newly installed acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel.

While this will be the second consecutive time Ms. Rosenworcel has been our keynote speaker at the conference, it'll be her first time in her new capacity as the leading chairperson of the Federal Communication Commission. Given the remarkable progress in the Commissioner's first 100 days, all eyes will be on her speech as she sets the tone for the conference.

We are ecstatic to have Ms. Rosenworcel with us, and commend the work her and her fellow three FCC Commissioners (Brendan Carr, Geoffrey Starks, and Nathan Simington) have done thus far. They've unanimously taken action on Promoting Telehealth for Low-Income Consumers, the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, improving the Emergency Alert System and Wireless Emergency Alerts, allowing Text-to-988, reducing Interstate Rates and Charges for Incarcerated People, strengthening support for Video Relay Service, and starting progress on quality metrics for caption telephone services. Their progress is nothing short of remarkable, and we look forward to seeing what Ms. Rosenworcel will share with us.

Following Chairwoman Rosenworcel's address, there will be a town hall discussion hosted by Mark Seeger, TDI Board of Directors Central Region Representative, with representatives from the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Bureau and the Disability Rights Office, Diane Burstein, Suzy Rosen Singleton, Eliot Greenwald, and Will Schell.

The Town Hall will be a one-hour discussion and deaf and hard of hearing consumers are invited and encouraged to attend, learn about what the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau and Disability Rights Office is doing for us. Conference attendees are invited to ask questions to better understand and we can help strengthen telecommunication, media, and information ecology policies benefiting people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

A new program added to the conference is the Fireside Chat,

featuring Eric Kaika, CEO of TDI engaging in a hearty dialogue with three guests: Roberta 'Bobbi' Cordano, President of Gallaudet University; Barbara Kelley, Executive Director of Hearing Loss Association of America; and Howard Rosenblum, Chief Executive Officer of National Association of the Deaf.

The Fireside Chat will have these four organizational leaders talking about how the community adapted during COVID-19. They will discuss the communication accessibility barriers that arose for everyone as we shifted to a quarantine state, and share perspectives on the hurdles that remain when working remotely, and the accessibility issues that need to be addressed to ensure everyone is equitable at work, school, medical settings, and within the community.

We'll begin wrapping up the first day with the President's Reception with Jan Withers. President Withers will be hosting her first TDI Presidential Reception, giving us all an insight into seeing what TDI has done for the past two years. The Reception also acts as the TDI Biennial Meeting, providing members with an update on TDI's operations, finances, and its new two-year strategic plan. Be sure to tune in and see what TDI has planned for its future!

We will conclude the first day by recognizing and commending those who have made significant impact in communication and information technology access for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. The TDI Board of Directors review nominations made by the general membership and select at least six individuals or companies to be awarded one of the six TDI Awards.

Hosted by Jim House, TDI Board of Directors West Region representative. Join us in celebrating these soon announced recipients for their accomplishments!

- The H. Latham Breunig Award for Humanitarian Efforts
- The Robert H. Weitbrecht Award for Telecommunications Access
- The Andrew Saks Award for Engineering
- The James C. Marsters Award for Promotion
- The Karen Peltz Strauss Award for Public Policy
- The I. Lee Brody Lifetime Achievement Award

Mark your calendars – the TDI Biennial Conference will happen online from July 26 – 29, 2021, the same week as the 31st anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

For the first time, the TDI Conference will be fully virtual allowing everyone to tune in from anywhere in the world. Registration is free for all TDI Members. If you aren't a member yet, sign up today for only \$25 and you'll receive everything you need to join the Conference. If you are a member of BIPOC-Deaf organization affiliated with TDI, contact your organization leader for information on steeply discounted TDI Conference registration. All conference arrangements will be clarified through emails after your registration is received. Keep reading to see why you should register as soon as possible!

Due to the online nature of the Conference, we've modified our traditional schedule to Monday through Thursday 1-5pm EDT. You can review the schedule, presenters and panelists, and register all online at [TDIConf.com](http://TDIConf.com).

This year's conference theme "Reset and Reconnect," reflects the seismic change many of us had to make, embracing new ways of doing traditional business or providing education to a fully virtual classroom. This change has created a wake-up call for us in regards to ensuring full "tele-world" access for employees, patients, students, and families.

To kick off the event, Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel from the Federal Communications Commission will be the keynote speaker. We're also adding a new program called "Fireside Chat", a discussion between TDI's CEO and special guests. We are featuring 7 panels that will spotlight a variety of industry leaders and questions from the audience will be invited. The topics of those panels will feature:

- Town Hall with the Federal Communication Commission's Disability Rights Office,
- Next Generation Relay,
- Automated Captioning,
- Tele-platform access (tele-conferencing, tele-health, and tele-edu),
- Gaming & Game Systems,
- Diversity and Inclusion within Information and Communication Technologies, and
- Broadband Access.

Registration for this exclusive event is free and easy. If you are not a member of TDI, then sign up today and win a chance at gifts and prizes. We will have a variety of Apple products to give away!

Be sure to subscribe to TDI eNotes, follow our social media accounts, or visit our website to keep up with the latest Conference information. You don't want to miss this because we'll be discussing the future of accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing people for decades to come!

Conference Website, Schedule, Presenters, and more...

Want to get straight to the conference details? Visit the dedicated website at [TDIConf.com](http://TDIConf.com) where you can register, see the line-up of presenters and panelists (click their image/name to connect with them on LinkedIn), the full schedule, and the recipients of the biennial TDI Awards!

Go to the website now - [TDIConf.com](http://TDIConf.com)





**Zainab Alkebsi****Spencer Montan****Lance Pickett****Michael Scott****Nathan Gomme****Elliot Greenwald****Lise Hamlin****Dixie Ziegler**

The second day of conference programming will center around three major plenary discussions:

- Preparing Telecommunications Relay Services for the next generation,
- Achieving 100% captioning on *all* video content as well as use of high quality automatic captioning, and
- Ensuring all tele-platforms are fully accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deafblind, and deaf with mobility issues.

Next Generation Relay will have David Bahar of Telecommunications Access of Maryland sharing the possibilities of what NGRelay could do. Larry Goldberg will speak about the latest captioning technologies, the use of Automatic Speech Recognition, why there are sometimes failures and what can be done about upholding quality standards. The final keynote of the day will be Carrie Lou Garberoglio sharing what the National Deaf Center has learned regarding use of virtual conferencing platforms in education, the workforce, and healthcare.

Each plenary speech will be followed by three simultaneous live breakout sessions. NGRelay will have breakout panelists on Video Relay Services, Captioning Telephone Service, and DeafBlind Relay Access. Automated captioning will have panelists serving for Broadcast Captioning, Web Captioning, and Captioning Telephone Services. The last plenary of the day, Tele-Access, will have panelists on teleconferencing, tele-education, and tele-health.

Conference attendees can choose any breakout session that interests them and pass on questions to the hosts. All breakout sessions will be moderated by a TDI Board member.

The Next Generation Relay topic will have panelists for each of three three breakout sessions. Discussing the possibilities of Video Relay Service will be:

**Zainab Alkebsi**, Policy Counsel at National Association of the Deaf

**Spencer Montan**, Project Manager at RIT/NTID Center on Access Technology

**Lance Pickett**, Vice President of Corporate Marketing at Sorenson Communications

**Michael Scott**, Attorney Advisor with Disability Rights Office at the FCC

The panel will be moderated by Jim House, TDI Board member and west region representative.

On the Captioning Telephone Service side, we will see:

**Nathan Gomme**, Executive Director at New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Elliot Greenwald**, Deputy Chief of Disability Rights Office at the FCC

**Lise Hamlin**, Director of Public Policy at Hearing Loss Association of America

**Dixie Ziegler**, Vice President of Relay at Hamilton Telecommunications

This session will be moderated by Tina Childress, TDI Board member at large.

**Gabrielle Joseph****René Pellerin****Keith Clark****Bill Wallace****Karen  
Peltz Strauss****Christian Vogler****Larry Walke****Joshua Pila****Rikki Poynter****Heather York****Sean Forbes**

The DeafBlind panel will be lead by:

**Gabrielle Joseph**, Chief Operating Officer at GlobalVRS

**René Pellerin**, DeafBlind Advocate

**Keith Clark**, Associate Accessibility Relationship Manager at T-Mobile

**Bill Wallace**, Attorney Advisor with Disability Rights Office at the FCC

Moderating will be John Kinstler, TDI Board Vice President and midwest region representative.

The 3pm breakout session *No More Captions* will cover three areas where captioning is heavily used: broadcast television, web-based content, and captioning telephone.

For television captioning, we'll see:

**Karen Peltz Strauss**, Disability Access Consultant

**Christian Vogler**, Director of Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University

**Larry Walke**, Associate General Counsel at National Association of Broadcasters

Opeoluwa Sotonwa, TDI Board at large will be the moderator.

On the internet side, we'll have:

**Joshua Pila**, General Counsel at Meredith Corporation

**Rikki Poynter**, Content Creator and Public Speaker

**Heather York**, Vice President of Marketing and Governmental Affairs at VITAC

**Sean Forbes**, Co-Founder of DPAN.tv

Moderator will be CM Boryslawskyj, northeast regional representative and TDI Board Treasurer.

**Cristina Duarte****Cre Engelke****Linda  
Kozma Spytek****Erik Strand****Roberto Cabrera****Christian Vogler****Sam Sepah****Sheryl  
Burgsthaler****Raja  
Kushalnager****Chris Sano****Mei Kwong****Suzy  
Rosen Singleton****Mike McKee**

And wrapping up with Captioning Telephone are:

**Cristina Duarte**, Director of Regulatory Affairs at InnoCaption

**Cre Engelke**, Director of Linguistic Research at Ultratec

**Linda Kozma Spytek**, Senior Research Audiologist at Gallaudet University's Technology Access Program

**Erik Strand**, CEO & Founder of MachineGenius

We'll have Matt Myrick, TDI Board member at large, as the moderator.

The last breakout session of the day is about *Shaping an Accessible Tele-World* focusing on the three areas where virtual conferencing has made a huge impact.

To talk about Video Conferencing, we'll have:

**Roberto Cabrera**, Outreach Consultant – DeafBlind Speciality with Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind

**Christian Vogler**, Director of Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University

**Sam Sepah**, Artificial Intelligence Research Product Manager at Google

The moderator will be Tina Childress, TDI Board member at large.

For Tele-education, we'll be learning from

**Sheryl Burgsthaler**, Director of Accessible Technology Services at University of Washington

**Raja Kushalnager**, Director of Information Technology Program at Gallaudet University

**Chris Sano**, Software Engineer at Microsoft

Moderating this panel will be Mei Kennedy, TDI Board member at large.

Checking on the health side of things, we'll hear from:

**Mei Kwong**, Executive Director of Center for Connected Health Policy

**Suzy Rosen Singleton**, Chief of Disability Rights Office at the Federal Communications Commission

**Mike McKee**, Physician and Researcher with University of Michigan Medical School

Moderated by Matt Myrick, TDI Board Member at large



**Sarah Herrlinger**



**Jenny Lay Flurrie**



**Sam Sepah**



**Peter Korn**



**Gary Behm**



**Monica Desai**



**Chris Soukup**



**Leah Cox**

On the third day of conference programming, we will meet various industry members who will detail what their companies are doing for people who are deaf and hard of hearing in terms of accessibility in their products and services. We have a very exciting and powerful line-up featuring:

**Sarah Herrlinger**, Senior Director of Global Accessibility Policy at Apple

**Jenny Lay Flurrie**, Chief Accessibility Officer at Microsoft

**Sam Sepah**, Artificial Intelligence Research Product Manager at Google

**Peter Korn**, Accessibility Director at Amazon

**Gary Behm**, Director of RIT/NTID Center on Access Technology

**Monica Desai**, Global Head of Connectivity and Access Policy at Facebook

**Chris Soukup**, Chief Executive Officer at Communication Service for the Deaf

**Leah Cox**, Vice Provost for Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer, University of North Carolina

There are three individuals from this line-up who aren't technically from the industry, yet we had to invite them here today to share some very interesting information and ideas-

Gary Behm is from RIT/NTD's Center on Access Technology. His team has been pushing many innovative accessibility solutions for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Gary has more than 30 years of professional engineering experience and we're greatly looking forward to his presentation.

We are especially excited to have Dr. Leah Cox with us to help us create innovative programs and initiatives in developing and promoting diverse, equitable, and inclusive policies and actions.

Dr. Cox recently joined the University of North Carolina as their Vice Provost for Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer. Prior to UNC, she was at Towson University and Mary Washington in Virginia. She also spent many years working at Gallaudet University, leading the university's first minority student affairs office.





Wendy Dannels



Mari Kyle

Chris "Phoenix"  
Robinson

Johnny Reininger, Jr

Rogelio  
Fernández Mota

Isidore Niyongabo



Zachary Bastain



Shellie Blakeney



Sarah Leggin



Corian Zacher



Ian Sanborn



Christine Sun Kim

The final day of the conference will be all community forums addressing major issues that we've identified as needing significant attention in today's rapidly changing information and communication technological landscape.

We'll start off with *Gaming for Access* with **Brandon "Zero" Chan**, co-founder of DeafGamersTV, **Wendy Dannels**, the Director of the XR Accessibility Solutions Lab at RIT, **Mari Kyle** of Oculus VR, and **Chris "Phoenix" Robinson**, co-founder of DeafGamersTV. Moderator Mei Kennedy will be asking them a range of accessibility questions about advanced gaming communication technology.

Next we'll have all eyes on the *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Technology* forum. Helping us confront issues with the lack of diversity in ICT policy making are **Johnny Reininger, Jr**, co-founder of Turtle Island Hand Talk, **Rogelio Fernández Mota**, founder of Manos Communications, and **Isidore Niyongabo**, President of National Black Deaf Advocates.

The final forum of the day will be *Connecting DHH Americans to Broadband*. With us will be **Zachary Bastain**, Manager of Strategic Alliances at Verizon, **Shellie Blakeney**, Policy Counsel for Technology and Engineering at T-Mobile, **Sarah Leggin**, Director of Regulatory Affairs with CTIA, and **Corian Zacher**, Policy Counsel at Next Century Cities. They'll be sharing what is being done to ensure everyone in America has access to the internet, and how we can get everyone connected.

Wrapping up the Conference, there will be entertainment provided by **Ian Sanborn**, **Christine Sun Kim**.

Ian Sanborn, the artist who wishes to bring the dawn and dusk to the sky inside your mind, is an eight-year veteran of the National Theatre of the Deaf. He's a passionate Deaf storyteller, artist, poet and teacher.

Christine Sun Kim will be re-airing her "Closer Captions" video, showing us how captions can be far more encompassing than just lines of text. Check out her piece in The New York Times about performing at the Super Bowl (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/12/t-magazine/sign-language-friends.html>).



## 24th Biennial Conference

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

# Reset and Reconnect

Virtual,  
Watch/Register  
at  
[TDIConf.com](https://TDIConf.com)

2021  
**July**  
26 - 29



For details, contact:  
[PubRel@TDIForAccess.org](mailto:PubRel@TDIForAccess.org)



# TDI In Action

January 1 – March 31, 2021

*AADB = American Association of the Deaf Blind*

*ALDA = Association of Late Deafened Adults, Inc.*

*ASDC = American Society of Deaf Children*

*CC – closed captioning*

*CCASDHH = California Coalition of Agencies Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.*

*CGB = Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau*

*CPADO = Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization*

*CTS – Captioned Telephone Service*

*DHHCAN = Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network*

*DRO = Disability Rights Office*

*E-911 – Enhanced 911*

*FCC = Federal Communications Commission*

*FNPRM – Final Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*

*HLAA = Hearing Loss Association of America*

*IP – Internet Protocol*

*NAD = National Association of the Deaf*

*NBDA = National Black Deaf Advocates*

*NG-911 – Next Generation 911*

*RERC-TA = Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Telecommunication Access*

*SCAT/SCABT = Speech Communications Assistance By Telephone, Inc.*

*SoA = Speed of Answer*

*TAP = Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University*

*TDM = Time Division Multiplexing, a method of handling electronic communications*

*TIA = Telecommunications Industry Association*

*TLPC = Samuelson-Glushko Technology Law & Policy Clinic*

*TRS – Telecommunications Relay Service*

*VRS – Video Relay Service*

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE

### Telecommunication Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities -- CG 03-123

#### And sixteen other dockets...

■ (Feb 10) TDI filed an Ex Parte with the Federal Communications Commission, about the Consumer Group's Proposed Accessibility Priorities for the New FCC Administration.

ACB, AFB, GU-TAP, HLAA, and NAD joined our ex parte meeting.

Accessibility advocates met with several FCC officials to talk about the Group's proposed accessibility priorities for the new FCC leadership.

We stressed the need to improve accessibility features in video conferencing services and relay interconnectivity, the transition to Real-Time Text (RTT), wireless handset

accessibility, and video programming accessibility.

The pandemic has shifted to video conferencing as the main way of doing business and keeping in touch with families and friends and doctor appointments. There needs to be long-term modifications to improve video conferencing accessibility, including relay interconnectivity, captioning, and user interface settings.

We also urged the Commission to ensure all wireless vendors and carriers can support RTT functionality. There also needs to be wireline RTT; wireline technology is vital to older d/hh Americans and those in carceral facilities. It is important that wireless and wireline RTT are interoperable. We must be able to connect to 911, 711, 988 and other n11 codes using RTT.

We asked the Commission to monitor the accessibility of wireless handset devices. Phones are becoming increasingly difficult to use for people who use hearing aids. We



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reinforced the need for C63.19 standard (compatibility between hearing aids and wireless communications devices) and the need to address RF interference. People want to hold the handset up to their hearing device for telephone communication.

We reminded the Commission that significant problems still persist in video captioning. Closed captioning quality remains poor, especially in live programming. Automated speech recognition (ASR) is far more problematic as evident in the presidential inauguration and the Super Bowl. The FCC's complaint process for captioning is difficult to navigate. To make matters worse, there are different rules for captioning on traditional television and streaming services, making it even more confusing for consumers. We also asked for more audio description, and ensured it remains with the program across all platforms.

Link to video summary

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-accessibility-priorities-for-new-administration>

Link to actual filing in FCC EFCs

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/102110972708698/2020-02-10%20Ex%20Parte%20Letter%20Re-%20Accessibility%20Priorities%20for%20New%20Administration.pdf>

**Telecommunication Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities -- CG 03-123;**

**Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program -- CG 10-51;**

**Misuse of Internet Protocol (IP) Captioned Telephone Service -- CG 13-24**

■ (Mar 3) Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), with the assistance of TDI's legal representation, filed comments to the Federal Communications Commission's Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on adopting measurable standards and metrics for IP-Captioning Telephone Services.

ADARA, ALDA, CCASDHH, CPADO, CueSign, DSA, HLAA, NAD, NBDA, NCSA, DHH-RERC, and IT-RERC signed on supporting our comments.

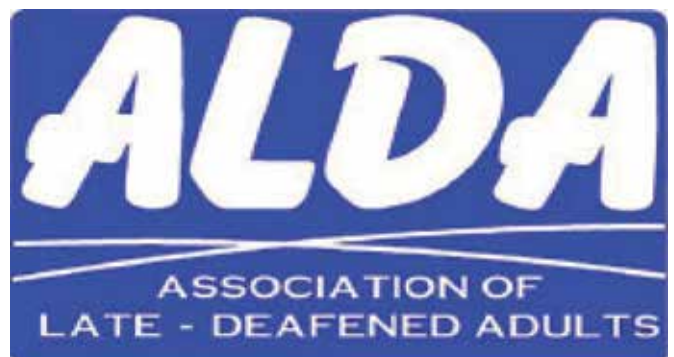
We welcomed and applauded the Commission's commitment to properly fund and regulate IP Captioning Telephone Services, and we agree with the Commission that all Captioning Telephone Services, whether provided by automated speech recognition (ASR) or Communication Assistants (CAs), must have quantifiable measurement of the quality of service.

We urge the Commission to use an independent American National Standard Institute (ANSI) accredited body to determine the metrics, measurement methodology, and performance criteria for IP CTS services. Representation from all stakeholders, including consumers and providers should contribute to the development of these metrics. Once implemented, ongoing testing should be done by an independent entity to ensure impartiality, accuracy, and transparency.

We recognize and appreciate the providers' time and efforts in developing a measurement methodology for performance standards. While commendable, we are concerned other stakeholders were not involved in the process. An open process ANSI standards will ensure all stakeholders are involved, their concerns fairly addressed, and prevent metrics from being skewed by a single party's influence.

We suggest the Commission adopt additional metrics regarding speed of answer, dropped/disconnected calls, and service outages. Additionally we implore the Commission to strengthen its speed-of-answer standards. The current rule is 85% of all calls being answered within 10 seconds. Although the Commission has relaxed this rule in response

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to COVID-19's impact on operational efficiency, we now have d/hh captioned phone users waiting more than a minute to connect to a provider. This is unacceptable and life-threatening when callers are trying to reach emergency support. We ask the Commission to revise the ruling, requiring response time to the maximum speed allowable with available call support and routing technology.

Further in our filing, we asked to restrict dropped or disconnected calls, testing methodology using reasonable sample size, use of service, natural phone conversational scripts, varying audio levels and conditions, and finally that testing should not be identifiable testing calls. The final adopted metric methodology and testing should be required for all IP-CTS providers, regardless if they use Communication Assistants or automated speech recognition. An independent body should conduct all the tests to ensure fair and unbiased results. Results should be publicly posted on the Commission's site.

Link to video summary

<https://tdiforaccess.org/consumer-groups-and-accessibility-researchers-respond-to-fccs-proposed-rulemaking-on-ip-cts-metrics>

Link to actual filing in FCC EFCS

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/1030387451500/2021.03.03%20Consumer%20Groups%20and%20Accessibility%20Researchers%20IP%20CTS%20Metrics%20FNPRM%20Comments%20Final.pdf>

## OTHER

### Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services -- WC 12-375

■ (Jan 15) HEARD, with the assistance of TDI's legal representation, filed reply comments to the Federal Communications Commission, about the accessibility of the phone system for incarcerated people who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, speech disabled, or who have other disabilities.

ADARA, ALDA, CCASDHH, CPADO, CueSign, DSA, HLAA, NAD, NBDA, NCSA, NDRN, DHH-RERC,, and IT-RERC signed on supporting our reply comments.

Our reply comments noted there were many filings from media, religious groups, disability rights advocates, and civil rights organizations all encouraging the Commission to update the rules requiring Inmate Calling Services (ICS) providers to install modern and accessible telecommunications equipment and services in carceral facilities.

It is clearly shown that ICS providers and carceral officials refuse to provide updated communication services for incarcerated people with disabilities. We urge the Commission to use its clear authority under Section 225 of the Communications Act – to make the telephone network accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing or who have speech impairments.

ICS providers must be held responsible for their part in providing accessible equipment and services to carceral facilities. Providers cannot blame carceral officials and third providers for accessibility issues. ICS providers cannot continue to offer TTYs as an excuse to not provide other accessible equipment.

We urge the Commission to require ICS providers to provide reports on their progress of installing functional and accessible equipment in carceral facilities. Record-keeping is the only way to make sure that incarcerated people with communication disabilities receive access to equipment and service to make calls.

Link to video summary

<https://tdiforaccess.org/tdi-filing-rates-for-interstate-inmate-calling-services>

Link to actual filing in FCC EFCS

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10116150044158/2021.01.15%20Accessibility%20Coalition%20Carceral%20Communications%20Reply%20Comments%20final.pdf>

### COVID-19 Telehealth Program Application Evaluation Metrics -- WC 20-89

■ (Jan 19) TDI filed Comments to the Federal Communications Commission, about: Telehealth Program Application Evaluation Metrics.

ALDA, CPADO, Clear2Connect Coalition, CueSign, DSA,



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HLAA, CCASDHH, NASADHH, NAD, NBDA, NCSA, RID, DHH-RERC, and IT-RERC signed on supporting our comments.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) posted a Public Notice requesting comments on the metrics used to evaluate applications for Round 2 Program funding of its Telehealth program.

We encouraged the FCC to require funding applicants to provide information on how their Telehealth services are accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or deaf with mobility issues. We also asked the FCC to prioritize Round 2 program funding for applicants that provide accessible telehealth platforms and directly help the deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, and deaf with mobility issues community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created communication barriers for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, especially those who are DeafBlind, and with mobility issues. This community often does not have access to timely and accurate information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many telehealth platforms are not accessible to deaf and hard of hearing individuals. We require access to captions, American Sign Language interpretation, and other services to participate in video conferences for telehealth and telework. Therefore the Commission should prioritize funding platforms that are accessible to the d/hh community.

Link to video summary

<https://tdiforaccess.org/tdi-filing-telehealth-program-application-evaluation-metrics>

Link to actual filing in FCC EFCS

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10120033570683/TDI%20et%20al%20Comments%20on%20COVID-19%20Funding%20Metrics.pdf>

## Emergency Broadband Benefit Program -- WC 20-445

■ (Jan 25) TDI filed Comments to the Federal Communications Commission, about the Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund Assistance.

ALDA, CPADO, Clear2Connect Coalition, HLAA, NAD,

NSCA, and RID signed on supporting our comments.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) posted a Public Notice requesting comments on its Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund Assistance.

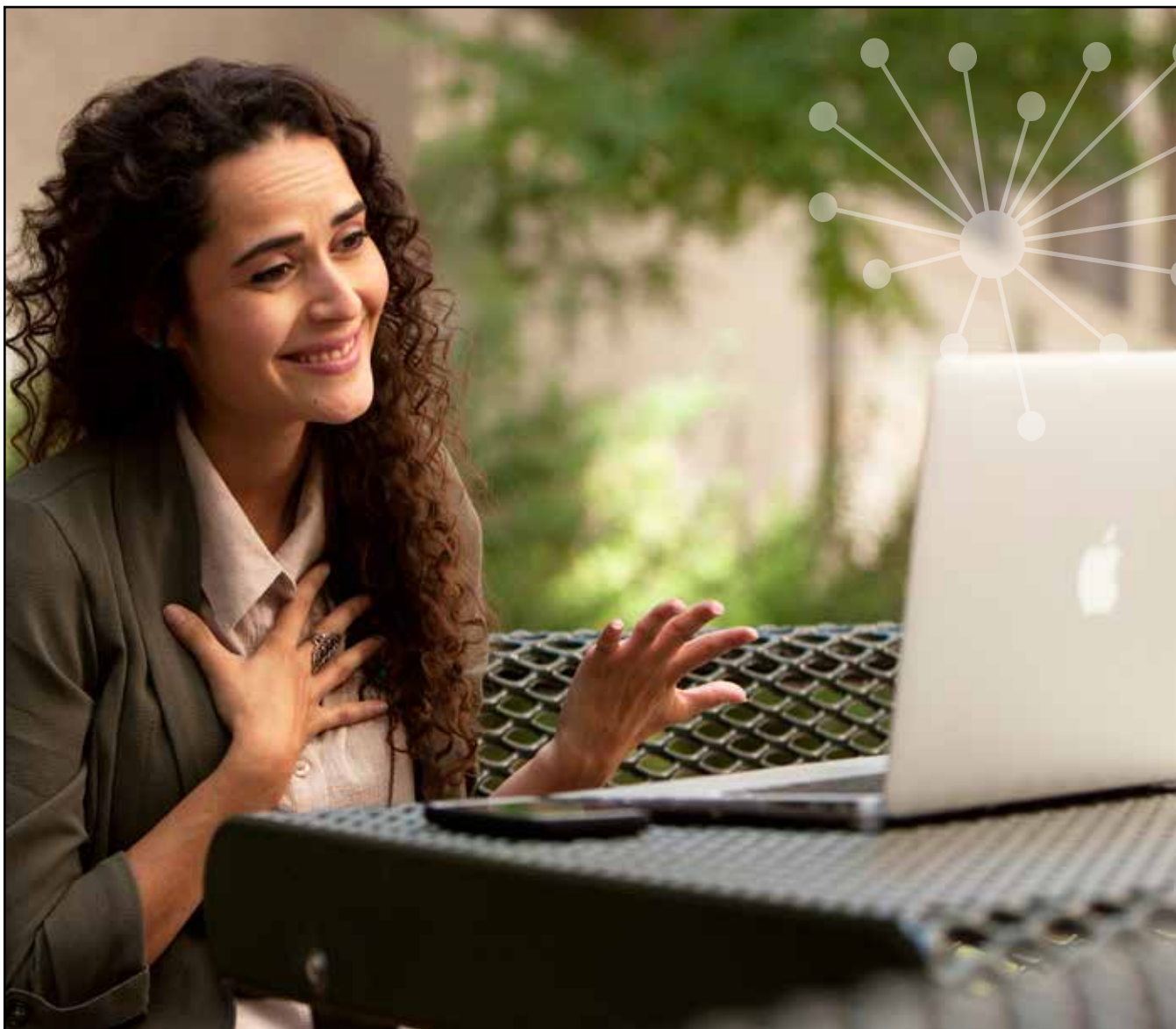
We reminded the FCC to make sure the EBB program includes people who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or deaf with mobility issues. We urged the Commission to make sure internet services that are eligible for reimbursement are not capped with limited data. We also asked that any devices that enable relay services are eligible for reimbursement. Lastly, we asked the FCC to consider allowing households that have a d/hh person to have an additional device eligible for reimbursement, and their monthly discount at the highest level allowable.

Link to video summary

<https://tdiforaccess.org/fcc-filing-emergency-broadband-connectivity-fund-assistance>

Link to actual filing in FCC EFCS

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/1012653462036/Emergency%20Broadband%20Comments%20-%202001.25.21.pdf>



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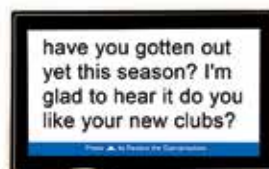
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