

Communication Matters

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CapTel Users Comment

" I just set up and started using the CapTel phone - and the phone and service are wonderful! My wife lost almost all of her hearing! CapTel has been so necessary for us! It is great! My wife finally feels connected!"

- Spouse of New CapTel User

"I had a wonderful experience with CapTel phone! My computer printer has been on the fritz for sometime... It refuses to print in color. I finally called the company via CapTel. Wonderful! In fact, it was fun, even for the Service Rep. All of the details were carefully explained and I was able to complete the transaction MYSELF! A new printer, including copier and scanner will be delivered to me in 5 to 7 days. Yay!"

- New CapTel User

Captioned Telephone Service Now Available in Michigan

Do you know someone who is unable to hear well on the telephone?

Is that person able to speak clearly, but feels hampered by the slowness of a TTY and/or VCO?

Is fluid conversation difficult, even with an amplified phone?

According to a recent press release, The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) announced that AT&T, the state's approved Telecommunication Relay Provider, is now offering Captioned Telephone (CapTel) Service for hard of hearing individuals in Michigan. CapTel service is available to all telephone customers in Michigan. For a limited time, the CapTel telephone needed for this service is available for a reduced price of \$99 (normally \$495).



CapTel makes using the telephone as easy as using a standard telephone. It allows the user to listen to and read word-for-word captions of their conversation. It is especially useful for individuals who have good speech but do not hear well over the phone.

"The CapTel service is vital to individuals who have difficulty hearing what the other party says," noted MPSC Chairman J. Peter Lark. "My fellow Commissioners and I are pleased that the CapTel phone is now available to Michigan customers." The MPSC is an agency within the Department of Labor & Economic Growth.

Those Michigan residents interested in the CapTel service or products can call toll-free 1-800-233-9130 (V/TTY) or visit the Web site: <http://www.weitbrecht.com/statecaptel/MI.phtml>

Bill Introduced in Michigan to Require Use of Qualified Interpreters

Rep. John Gleason has introduced a long-promised bill that would require the courts, police, schools, colleges, hospitals, doctor's offices, banks, credit unions, employers and lawyers to provide accommodations to employ qualified sign language interpreters under rules promulgated by the Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The Michigan House bill number, HB 6087, introduced on May 18, 2006, may be the most important bill DODHH has been pushing for years. It will have a very positive impact on the interpreters providing effective communication resulting in equal access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind adults and children who use interpreter services as well as the general public.

What does the bill do?

1. It amends the existing Deaf Person's Interpreter Act of 1982 that covers the courts and administrative hearings only.
2. It expands coverage to educational institutions, medical providers, financial institutions, legal arenas, employers and state and local governments.
3. It defines "qualified sign language and oral interpreter."
4. It adds "Deafblind person" to definitions.
5. It authorizes DODHH to promulgate administrative rules covering requirements for certification, testing, application fees, and application and grievance procedures.
6. An interpreter who engages in interpreting

without qualifications will be punished by imprisonment for not more than 93 days or a fine not more than \$10,000 and not less than \$1,000, or both.

7. An appointing authority who appoints an unqualified interpreter shall be punished by a fine not more than \$10,000 and not less than \$1,000.

For a copy of the bill, go to www.michiganlegislature.org and enter 6087 in the bill search number box. To see a Power Point about the bill visit the DODHH web site at: <http://www.mcdc-dodhh.org/>

Why this bill?

Michigan Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind adults and children have experienced negative consequences from using non-qualified interpreters provided to them over the years. The state/local governments and public accommodations who provide interpreters as required by state and federal laws must hire qualified interpreters under this proposed law. The legislation will hopefully increase recognition of interpreters as professional service providers when this bill becomes law. Michigan will join with the growing number of states with interpreter licensure/standards legislation. For list of states, see www.rid.org/lic.html.

Like all bills in the Michigan House and Senate, the bill will die on December 31, 2006 if there is no action on it. It is important that you express your thoughts to your local representative and senator soon. To find a representative, look up in www.house.mi.gov and www.senate.mi.gov by entering your zip code.

DODHH Rights Handbook

DODHH is pleased to present the Handbook, a guide for creating a barrier free communication environment for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind persons, businesses, educational institutions, employers, government agencies and service providers. The Handbook is 165 pages. The pdf edition has bookmarks that will lead readers to specific chapters. The Handbook is available on CD. Please contact dodhh@michigan.gov for a free copy or click: <http://www.mcdc-dodhh.org/>

Teach Me English with American Sign Language

This interactive video course was designed for deaf and hard of hearing individuals who constantly struggle with understanding English and want to learn English quickly and correctly. It is also suitable for anyone with a limited education and is good for everyone to use at home, the office, or as a supplement to a school program or a training program.

Read more at www.deaftutor.com



