

Types of Accommodations

This is a non-exclusive list of some of the types of accommodations courts may need to offer, or which may be requested.

BLINDNESS AND LOW VISION

Optical Magnifiers. While the court is not obligated to provide personal devices, including optical magnifiers, it might be helpful to have one handy at clerk's counters to aid individuals who may have difficulty reading small print. Consider permitting individuals to use devices like these they bring on their own.

Electronic Note Taker. Some blind or low vision individuals use a handheld electronic device to take notes.

Large-print Materials. Individuals may request large print versions of court documents. Be knowledgeable about how to generate large print materials. Consider making large print versions of brochures and forms available.

Readers and Visual Interpreters. Blind attorneys, parties or jurors may need a "reader" or "visual interpreter" to describe what is happening, to describe visual evidence or read documents. This service should be provided by someone other than that person's counsel.

DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING

Assisted Listening Device (ALD). This is an amplifier that transmits courtroom sounds directly to the ear of a person who is hard-of-hearing. This can aid people with limited hearing by eliminating background noise and enhancing the "speech to noise" ratio. All Maryland courthouses have ALDs that are permanently installed or that are portable and can be brought into the courtroom. The devices currently used by Maryland courts transmit an infrared signal which is picked up by the receiver worn by the hard-of-hearing individual.

American Sign Language (ASL). American Sign Language is a complete, natural language that shares characteristics with spoken languages, including grammar that differs from English. ASL is the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. ASL is expressed by the movements of the hands and face. Many court locations have access to a laptop and application that can be used to obtain an ASL interpreter on demand via videoconference, when a deaf or hard-of-hearing individual needs immediate assistance for example, at a clerk's office counter or court office. In-person ASL services is recommended for all courtroom proceedings.

CART. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is a speech-to-text system that provides real-time captioning. This may be appropriate for hard-of-hearing or deaf persons who are able to voice for him or herself, or who use English as a first language. A

CART transcriber uses a stenography machine, a computer and software to display everything that is said, word for word. The text is displayed on a computer or other device visible to the deaf or hard-of-hearing person.

Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). A CDI interpreter is trained in the use of gesture, mime and other techniques to enhance communication. CDI interpreters are deaf or hard-of-hearing themselves and have a knowledge of deafness and deaf culture. CDI interpreters can be assigned for individuals who do not know ASL, or to supplement understanding for ASL users. CDI interpreters are paired with an ASL interpreter and the two work as a team.

Other Sign Languages. There is no universal sign language. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals from different countries may use a sign language other than ASL.

TTY (Teletype Telephone). Deaf and hard-of-hearing or speech limited individuals may use TTY to contact court offices.

OTHER NEEDS

Computer Display Size or Audio Adjustments. Individuals with sensory impairments may need assistance adjusting the size of a computer display to enhance readability, or may need headphones and audio adjustments to ensure they can hear audio content displayed online on public access computers.

Courtroom Visits. For some, it may be helpful to permit a court user to see the courtroom before they attend a proceeding, so they can familiarize themselves with the setting.

Service Animals. This is an animal which is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for persons with disabilities. Note that animals whose sole purpose is for comfort, emotional support or therapy do not qualify as service animals under the ADA because they have not been trained to support a specific job or task. Public users do not need to make an accommodation request to bring a service animal to a courthouse. Service animals are welcome in all public areas of courthouse facilities.

Time. Sometimes persons with disabilities may require additional time to process information. Persons with disabilities also often depend on public transportation and may need the court's deference if they are delayed because specialized transportation services were delayed.

Video Appearances. Some individuals may be able to participate in court events by permitting them to appear via videoconference.