

COMMUNICATION ACCESS REALTIME TRANSLATION

Are members of your community with hearing loss receiving effective communication access?

Did you know that one out of nine Texans is deaf or hard of hearing? The majority of persons with hearing loss do not know sign language and communicate in a variety of ways, often utilizing Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART). Many people with hearing loss find CART and remote CART to be the most effective method of communication in classrooms, courtrooms, workplaces, theaters, sporting arenas and many other venues. The Americans with Disabilities Act lists assistive technology, which includes CART, in its definition of auxiliary aids for persons with hearing loss.

What is CART and how does it work?

CART is the acronym for Communication Access Realtime Translation. CART is performed by a Certified CART provider using a realtime translation system (a stenotype machine, notebook computer, and realtime translation software). This is the same machine shorthand technology used by Texas Certified Shorthand Reporters in the courtroom and deposition settings.

The certified CART provider is able to simultaneously translate the spoken word at 170-210 words per minute, with a minimum of 96 percent accuracy. CART provides a full screen of text on a notebook computer for viewing by one or two people, as distinguished from closed captioning, which displays two or three lines of text with a video picture. With additional equipment, the full screen of text can be displayed onto a television or projected onto a screen for viewing by a large audience.

Who benefits from CART?

Persons with hearing loss
Persons who are oral deaf and late-deafened
Persons who are unable to take notes because physical disabilities
Persons who are learning English as a second language

What are the training and certification requirements for a CART provider?

The Texas Court Reporters Association administers a CART certification exam annually. To sit for the CART exam, one must be a CSR, Certified Shorthand Reporter (tested by the Texas Court Reporters Certification Board under the auspices of the Supreme Court of Texas), or an RPR, Registered Professional Reporter (tested by the national Court Reporters Association).

The Texas CART certification exam has the following skill levels:

Basic: Level I and Level II
Advanced: Level III and Level IV
Master: Level V

What is the role of the CART provider?

Much like a sign or foreign language interpreter, the CART provider is present to provide communication access for persons with hearing loss. In addition to displaying the spoken word, the CART Provider will also include environmental sounds and nuances of speech, i.e., [LAUGHTER], [BELL RINGING], enabling the consumer to experience everything that is happening just as a hearing individual would. If a question is asked of the CART consumer, whether in the classroom, courtroom or other meeting, the CART consumer can read the question on the screen and then reply in his/her own voice, allowing for full participation.

Why can't an official court reporter performing realtime also act as the CART provider?

It is a common misperception that the official court reporter and the CART provider are performing the same duties. This is not the case. The official reporter is there to make the official verbatim record, mark exhibits, write bench and in-chamber conferences, provide readback and transcript references and produce an official transcript of the proceedings for cases on appeal.

The CART provider in the courtroom setting is present to provide communication access for the person with hearing loss. For instance, if the consumer is a party and representing themselves in the courtroom, the CART provider will only write what the judge and other parties say and will not write what the consumer says as he speaks for himself. Therefore, it is not a complete record of the proceedings. No transcript is provided to anyone and must be ordered from the official reporter. If the consumer is a party to the proceeding and has an attorney, or if the consumer is a juror, the CART provider acts just as a sign or foreign language interpreter and provides communication access during attorney-client communications or jury deliberations. The official reporter is not allowed to participate in such communications or deliberations.

Why does a student with hearing loss need CART in the classroom?

It is difficult to take notes in class and follow a lecture if you are a person with hearing loss. While looking down to make a note, the student may miss what the instructor and/or other students say. With CART, the student can follow the class discussion in realtime by reading the text as it scrolls down the computer screen and is able to participate in the discussion. With permission from the educational institution, the student can save the text from the CART session and use it for later review.

Besides the courtroom and classroom, where else is CART used?

- Business, government and educational functions
- Classrooms
- Courtrooms
- Religious services
- Senior citizen meetings
- Conventions and conferences
- Doctor appointments
- Banking and investment transactions
- Weddings, funerals and other personal events
- Civic events, such as town council meetings
- Cultural presentations, such as Broadway shows
- Recreation or entertainment events
- Anywhere communication access is needed

What if there is no CART provider in my area?

CART can also be provided from a remote access point through the internet when the CART provider is not located in the same area as the consumer or presenter. Remote CART works exactly like on-site CART, except the CART provider listens to the speaker by telephone or over the internet and writes the realtime text to a website for viewing by the consumer. While the consumer and speaker are typically in the same location, they do not have to be, as remote CART can be used just as well with the speaker, CART provider and consumer in three different locations (as is often the case with business conference calls). The three locations could be as close as the same building or city, or as far apart as across the country. The consumer must have a computer connected to the internet and send the voice to the remote CART provider via voice over internet or telephone line.

For more information on CART or a listing of cart providers in your area, visit www.tcra-online.com, www.ncraonline.org