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**PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT**

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## **Technology Mediated Accessibility – the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) Brings Accessibility to New Levels**

*Deaf and hard of hearing now have access to webinars in American Sign Language and through remote captioning.*

**SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (June 1, 2012)** — One of the most important aspects of expanding accessibility by using broadband for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's BTOP projects is keeping up with technological advances and the various applications of broadband for the disability community.

To that end, on May 16, 2012, representatives from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) Office of Disability Rights, and two broadband stimulus fund recipients — the Center for Assistive Technology and Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc. (CSD) — held a webinar on “Technology-Mediated Accessibility.” What made this webinar groundbreaking was not the fact that the representatives met virtually — with the participants scattered from the nation’s capitol, across the country in California and also to the prairies of South Dakota — but that the webinar was real-time captioned (CART), featured video remote interpreting (VRI) and on-site interpreting simultaneously.

Broadband technologies today can provide tools for accessibility to encourage participation and inclusiveness in programs and events. For example, the video remote interpreting or VRI in the image below, enables businesses/organizations to communicate — in real time — with deaf/hearing sign language users who are in the same room or location (a conference, a meeting, doctor’s appointment, etc.), all by accessing a video interpreter working from a distant location.

That’s the origin of VRI, but in this case, it was utilized to ensure that whenever someone from the NTIA, DOC or Center for Assistive Technology spoke, the deaf representative from CSD (Kevin Barber, vice president Emerging Programs) could “see” the conversations in real time. For many of the participants, this was their first exposure to this level of accessibility for a webinar, and it was eye-opening. The participants included NTIA Program Officers Francine Jefferson and Gwenn Weaver; DOC Office of Civil Rights Senior Disability Policy Analyst Laura Tronge; Center for Assistive Technology’s Jon Mires; and from CSD/Project Endeavor Kevin Barber and Mark Zangara.

PowerPoint Slide Show - [Tech Mediated Accessibility\_Final\_05-15-12] - Microsoft PowerPoint

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## Objectives

Presenters will discuss how recipients can not only make their services accessible, but encourage the full participation of individuals with disabilities.

This webinar will provide:

- Federal regulations that apply to grant recipients regarding making services accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Strategies for making websites more accessible to individuals with different types of disabilities
- Resources available to make services more accessible to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

THE SITE THAT YOU SEE THERE ON THE SCREEN.  
SO THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING AND WE HOPE TO HAVE YOUR FULL PARTICIPATION WITH US TODAY, AND IN COMING SESSIONS.  
I'D LIKE AT THIS TIME TO TURN THE WEBINAR OVER TO KEVIN BARBER FROM CSD. THAT IS SHORT FOR COMMUNICATION SERVICE FOR THE

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“The real-time captioning and sign language interpretation during the webinar provided a perfect solution to equal access to communication. I felt I fully participated in the webinar just like everyone else,” said Kevin Barber.

“I have been in several other webinars — specifically webinars discussing disability issues/concerns — and none have been as accessible as this one,” said Laura Tronge. “I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and the inclusion of being a trailblazer with their organization.”

While the PowerPoint played and the respective parties gave their presentations, a text box on the lower left part of the screen displayed CART, with near-perfect accuracy and the ability to keep up with the conversational flow. In the lower right portion of the screen was the remote interpreter, signing everything that was voiced during the presentation. So whether the webinar participant was blind, or deaf and a sign language user, hard of hearing and not a sign language user (therefore depending on CART), no one was excluded. And that’s the exact reason for the webinar, aptly titled “Technology-Mediated Accessibility.”

"We take part in a lot of webinars, both as presenters and participants. Many of these are disability focused, yet this was the first time I had ever seen both real-time captioning and real-time sign language interpretation," said Jon Mires. "This increased not only accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing participants, but also disability awareness for all participants."

Overall, the purpose of the webinar was not only how the respective organizations make their services accessible, but also how to encourage the full participation of individuals with disabilities.

"This is a communication breakthrough," said Francine Jefferson. "As we continue to communicate in depth with grantees, we are coming to learn more and more. Overall, this is helping us become more responsible."

For more information about Project Endeavor, go to [www.projectendeavor.com](http://www.projectendeavor.com), and for more information on CSD, go to [www.c-s-d.org](http://www.c-s-d.org).

*Made possible by the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, also referred to as BTOP.*

**About CSD** — *CSD (a.k.a. Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc.) was established in 1975, primarily to provide sign language interpreting services to deaf and hard of hearing adults in South Dakota. Today, CSD offers employment opportunities to nearly 2,000 individuals in 27 offices and locations all across the nation and internationally, providing a broad continuum of social and human services programs, as well as telecommunications relay and contact center services. CSD is a private nonprofit agency dedicated to providing quality services; ensuring public accessibility; and increasing awareness of issues affecting the deaf, hard of hearing and individuals with speech disabilities. For more information, please visit [www.c-s-d.org](http://www.c-s-d.org).*

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