

For more information on the ADA and its implications, please contact:

Office on the Americans with Disabilities Act  
Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
P.O. Box 661198, Washington, DC 20035-6118  
(800) 514-0301 V  
514-0383 TTY

The National Center for Law and Deafness  
Gallaudet University  
800 Florida Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 651-5051 V/TTY

## The Television Decoder Circuitry Act

The Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 states that since July 1, 1993, all television sets with screens 13 inches or larger manufactured for sale in the U.S. must contain built-in closed-caption decoders. In addition to serving as a lifeline for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, captioning benefits people learning English as a second language and children and adults learning to read. The Caption Center is extremely proud to have played a prominent role in its passage- drafting language for the bill, testifying in its behalf before both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and assisting in the development of standards for decoder features.

All decoder-equipped TV sets must now meet the standards issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Television manufacturers may also incorporate optional features, such as Text Mode and changeable character colors (see below).

### **Display Standards for Decoder-Equipped Televisions**

- **Placement**

New decoder designs permit captions to appear anywhere on the screen, resulting in more precise positioning of text. (Previously, captions could appear only in the upper- and lower-third of the picture.) This will more clearly indicate who is speaking, and important parts of the picture will be covered less often.

- **Italics**

Caption-capable televisions must display italicized characters using either a true italics or slanted letters. (Caption agencies often use italics to indicate vital information like sound effects, narrators, and off-screen voices.) Manufacturers may offer other options to denote italics, such as color reversal.

- **Background**

The FCC requires the use of a black background (as used in some set-top decoders) to guarantee the legibility of caption characters. Manufacturers may offer other background colors as long as black is available at the user's option.

- **Upper- and lower-case letters**

Beginning January, 1996, new caption-capable TV sets will be required to display both lower- and upper-case letters. Until 1996, certain televisions are only required to display upper-case

letters. However, it is anticipated that most televisions will utilize the upper- and lower-case feature.

- **Labelling**

Manufacturers must specifically label packing boxes and owner's manuals to inform consumers if the set does not support the options of Text Mode (see below), color characters, or lower-case characters.

### **Optional Features for Decoder-Equipped Televisions**

- **Text Mode**

Text Mode is used to provide information services. Currently, C-SPAN uses Text Mode to publish program listings and information for teachers. ABC-TV also uses it to list their captioned programs. In a few agricultural states, Text Mode delivers information to farmers.

- **Changeable character colors**

The FCC strongly encourages, but does not require, manufacturers to include the ability to display color characters. Because color capability will cost practically nothing in newer TV designs, it is anticipated that most televisions will incorporate this feature.

### **Display Capabilities of Current Set-Top Decoders**

- Pacific Lotus: FCC compliant, incorporates all new FCC-mandated caption display features.
- Teknova: FCC compliant, incorporates all new FCC-mandated caption display features.
- NCI TeleCaption II, TeleCaption 3000, Telecaption 4000, VR-100: Will continue to work correctly until about 2002, then may malfunction with some captioned programs.

Telecaption adaptors began experiencing minor problems (extra characters, slash marks) in the summer of 1994. This year (1995), the original Telecaption adapter will begin to miss some captions.

For more information on captioning and the Television Decoder Circuitry Act, contact:

The Caption Center at WGBH  
125 Western Avenue  
Boston, MA 02134  
(617) 492-9225 V/TTY

*Caption Center / WGBH Educational Foundation / [www.wgbh.org](http://www.wgbh.org)*

  
[http://www.wybh.com/Pages/Caption.Center/CC\\_Solving.html](http://www.wybh.com/Pages/Caption.Center/CC_Solving.html)

# Solving Caption Problems

You sit down to watch a favorite television program, and the captions are so garbled that you can't understand them. You invite a group over to watch the last episode of a five-part miniseries, and no captions appear at all! You rent a movie that is supposed to be captioned and... no captions!

There are several reasons why these problems might occur. Not all of them are within your control, but the more you know about how and why caption problems happen, the more you can help improve the quality of the captions you watch. Some problems can be easily fixed.

## Poor Reception

**Captions are better on some channels than on others.**

It is normal for reception quality to vary on different channels. Depending on where you live, some stations will appear more clearly than others. Even slightly poor reception can result in problems with your captions. If you are using an antenna to receive TV (whether an indoor "rabbit ears" or loop, or rooftop antenna), consider, if available, subscribing to cable TV. This will almost always result in improved reception.

**You are viewing very garbled captions or there are white boxes within the captions.**

Captions can be garbled if the television signal is being affected by poor reception. Adjust your antenna to reduce "ghosting" (multiple images) in the picture. The better the picture looks, the better the captions will work. If you subscribe to cable TV, switch over to another channel to see if the captions are working properly. Oftentimes, this problem occurs within the local TV station or cable company, where the signal may be passing through faulty equipment which can distort or erase the caption data. When this occurs, notify the director of engineering at your local TV station or cable company.

## Equipment

**Check that all connecting cables are securely hooked up to your equipment.** Make sure all cables are securely plugged in to each piece of equipment- television set, VCR, cable converter box, set-top decoder or caption-capable TV set. Make sure to check the wall outlet as well. Next, turn everything on and make sure you are receiving a picture on all channels. Remember, captions on channels with poor reception may be garbled

**If you have a TeleCaption II, you may be experiencing problems related to this decoder.**

TeleCaption II decoders manufactured in 1985, 1986 or early 1987 were not compatible with some forms of copyright protection used on rented videotapes. If you have one of these decoders, you may have trouble seeing captions when you rent videos. TeleCaption II decoders manufactured

during this time may also be incompatible with cable scrambling systems. You will need to have your decoder modified to avoid these problems. Check the date on the back of your decoder to determine if it needs to be modified. You can bring it to your retailer or send it to the manufacturer, the National Captioning Institute.

## Program Source

You are watching a television program that you know is regularly captioned, and the show is listed in the newspaper as a captioned program, but this particular episode has no captions.

The program probably is captioned but captions are being blocked or accidentally stripped by the program source (local television station, network, local or national cable company). The TV station or cable company may be using certain settings on equipment which destroy captions. This can easily be corrected by television stations, networks, and cable companies. The Caption Center has technical information which we can send to you or to television stations and cable companies explaining how to avoid blocking or stripping captions. Other captioning agencies can provide assistance to you or to the program source as well.

The home video has a "CC" symbol on the box, but there are no captions appearing on the screen. When this happens, the home video distributor may have mistakenly used an uncaptioned master tape to make copies for home video distribution. Or the home video distributor may be using equipment which is stripping the captions during the duplication process. You should ask for your money back when you rent a home video marked "CC" which turns out to be uncaptioned. Also, let the home video distributor (see list) know you rented a supposedly closed-captioned video which, indeed, had no captions at all.

## Captioning Agency

**The captions have frequent errors or strange misspellings.**

### **Live captioning**

If you are watching a live program which is being stenocaptioned, a few errors are unavoidable. Live captions are usually displayed in three lines rolling up from the bottom and are produced by "stenocaptioners" who listen to the show as it airs, typing the words in code on a shorthand keyboard.

Stenocaptioners prepare for live programs ahead of time by updating their "dictionaries" with phonetic symbols or "briefs" for anticipated names and places. The symbols are converted into English words by translation software, formatted into caption data, and sent over phone lines to be mixed with the video signal. The closed-captioned video signal is then sent to your home via satellite, airwaves, or cable. Your decoder changes the data into captions displayed on your screen. All this happens one to three seconds after a speaker's words are spoken. This allows no time to make any corrections. One wrong keystroke can produce a strange combination of letters or syllables. A poorly prepared dictionary can also produce errors.

You can recognize stenocaptioning because there are pauses as the words and phrases paint onto the screen. Some news programs are captioned with a combination of stenocaptioning and "prescribed" captions. The prescribed captions paint on smoothly one row at a time. Since these

captions were typed ahead of time, there should be no errors. When you see pauses within rows, you know that a stenocaptioner has taken over. Stenocaption errors usually result when the computer combines phonetic information to create a wrong (but similar-sounding) word or phrase; for example: "okay you pant" instead of "occupant."

Most responsible captioning agencies require a 99% accuracy rate for real-time captioning, but at 250 words per minute, even the best and most experienced stenocaptioner can produce up to two errors every minute. Watch the network evening news to recognize experienced stenocaptioning. If you are watching garbled real-time captions and you are sure that poor reception is not creating the problem, the captioning agency may have put an inexperienced person on the air.

### **Electronic Newsroom Captioning**

Some local newscasts are closed captioned using an electronic newsroom system. Such systems provide automatic captioning based on material typed ahead of time into the teleprompter. Late-breaking news, ad libs, and live segments- field reports or weather forecasts- usually go uncaptioned. These systems occasionally put the wrong captions on a story or roll the captioning too fast. Let the station know how important high-quality, comprehensive captioning is to you.

### **Off-line Captioning**

If you are watching a prerecorded program and you see errors or misspellings, you should complain! You should expect virtually error-free captioning when a program is taped and captions can be prepared "off-line." Captions should be thoroughly checked and reviewed before broadcast or duplication. It is the captioning agency's responsibility to review its work and ensure high-quality captioning. It is the responsibility of the producers and networks to monitor the work of their captioning agencies.

Please note that a common symptom of poor reception (or technical problems at the TV station) is pairs of missing letters; for example "Good night" might appear as "Good nht". While this may look like a misspelling, it's not a problem of sloppy captioning. Rather, poor reception or a technical glitch at the TV station could be the problem.

**The program is listed in the newspaper as a captioned program but it is partially captioned or has no captions at all.** This is probably a problem with the program source, but there is a slim chance that the program may have been delivered to the captioning agency too close to broadcast time.

Producers should be able to deliver programs with enough time to caption. Captioning agencies should be able to handle the tight turnaround demanded by network television.

## **Consumer Feedback!!!**

Consumer feedback is important to help educate people in the television and video industry about caption technology. The more they hear from you, the caption-viewing audience, the more they will become educated and made aware of what captioning is all about. You also will need to work with retailers to help them become familiar with the new TV sets and captioning features. This communication process will result in more and better-quality captioning. Also, having patience with everyone involved in the process will pay off in the long run!

If your caption problems are with the program source- your local TV station, the network, the cable channel, or your local cable company- let them know! Explain the problem with as much detail as

possible: the time of the problem, the channel, and the name of the program you were watching.

If the problem is with a home video, write to the distributor. Encourage the home video distributor to monitor the duplication process more closely and to install quality-control procedures to check captions. Look on the videotape box to find the name of the distributor. Ask your home video store owner to complain as well.

If you see quality problems with captions, let the captioning agency know. To find out which agency captioned the program, look for the caption credits at the end of the show. The Caption Center at WGBH cares about the work we do and we want to hear from you!

## Television Networks

ABC  
30 West 67th Street  
New York, NY 10023  
(212) 887-2425

Fox Broadcasting Company  
10201 West Pico Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90035  
(213) 203-3266

NBC  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, NY 10112  
(212) 664-4444

CBS  
51 West 52nd Street  
New York, NY 10019  
(212) 975-4321

PBS  
1320 Braddock Place  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(703) 739-5000

## National Organizations Serving Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing People

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf  
3417 Volta Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 337-5220 voice/TTY

Association of Late-Deafened Adults  
P.O. Box 641763  
Chicago, IL 60664-1763  
(815) 459-5741 TTY

National Association of the Deaf  
814 Thayer Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 587-1788 voice/TTY

National Fraternal Society of the Deaf  
1300 W. Northwest Highway  
Mt. Prospect, IL 60056  
(708) 392-9282 voice/TTY

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People  
7910 Woodmont Avenue, suite 1200  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 657-2248 voice  
(301) 657-2249 TTY

## Captioning Agencies

**The Caption Center at WGBH  
Consumer Affairs Department  
125 Western Avenue  
Boston, MA 02134  
(617) 492-9225 voice/TTY**

**The Caption Center  
610 N. Hollywood Way, Suite 350  
Burbank, CA 91505**

**The Caption Center  
475 Park Avenue South  
10th Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 545-0854 voice  
(212) 545-8546 TTY**

Real-time Captions, Inc.  
7101 Sepulveda Blvd.  
Room 301  
Van Nuys, CA 91405  
(818) 376-0406 voice

National Captioning Institute  
1900 Gallows Road  
Vienna, VA 22182

Vitac/CaptionAmerica  
312 Boulevard of the Allies  
Suite 200  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
(412) 261-1458 voice/TTY

Captions, Inc.  
2619 Hyperion, Suite A  
Los Angeles, CA 90027  
(213) 665-4860 voice/TTY

## Home Video Distributors

Buena Vista Home Video  
500 S. Buena Vista Street  
Burbank, CA 91521  
(800) 723-4763

CBS/Fox Video  
1211 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 819-3200

Columbia TriStar Home Video  
3400 Riverside Drive  
Burbank, CA 91505-4627  
(818) 972-8686

MCA/Universal Home Video  
70 Universal City Plaza  
Universal City, CA 91608  
(818) 777-4300

MGM/UA Home Video, Inc.  
10000 Washington Boulevard  
Culver City, CA 90232-2728  
(310) 280-6000

Paramount Home Video  
Paramount Communications, Inc.  
5555 Melrose Avenue  
Hollywood, CA 90038-3197  
(213) 956-5000

Touchstone Home Video  
500 S. Buena Vista Street  
Burbank, CA 91521  
(800) 723-4763

Warner Home Video, Inc.

4000 Warner Boulevard  
Burbank, CA 91522  
(818) 954-6000

## Cable Networks

A&E Network  
235 E. 45th Street  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 661-4500

American Movie Classics  
150 Crossways Park West  
Woodbury, NY 11797  
(516) 364-2222

Black Entertainment Television (BET)  
1232 31st Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 337-5260

Bravo  
150 Crossways Park West  
Woodbury, NY 11797  
(516) 364-2222

CNBC, Consumer News  
and Business Channel  
2200 Fletcher Avenue  
Fort Lee, NJ 07024  
(201) 585-CNBC

CNN  
One CNN Center  
Box 105366  
Atlanta, GA 30348-5366  
(404) 827-1500

The Cartoon Network  
Box 105264  
1050 Techwood Drive, NW  
Atlanta, GA 30318  
(404) 827-1717

Country Music Television (CMT)  
2806 Opryland Drive  
Nashville, TN 37213  
(615) 871-5830

Comedy Central

1775 Broadway  
New York, NY 10019  
(212) 767-8600

Courtroom Television Network  
600 Third Avenue, 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 973-2800

The Discovery Channel  
7700 Wisconsin Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
(301) 986-0444

The Disney Channel  
3800 W. Alameda Avenue  
Burbank, CA 91505  
(818) 569-7500

E! Entertainment Television  
5670 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90036-3709  
(213) 954-2400

ESPN  
935 Middle Street, ESPN Plaza  
Bristol, CT 06010  
(203) 585-2000

Family Channel  
1000 Centerville Turnpike  
Virginia Beach, VA 23463  
(804) 523-7301

fX  
10201 W. Pico Blvd., Suite 761  
Los Angeles, CA 90035  
(310) 203-3874

Headline News  
One CNN Center, Box 105366  
Atlanta, GA 30348  
(404) 827-1500

Home Box Office (HBO)/Cinemax  
1100 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 512-1000

The Learning Channel  
7700 Wisconsin Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814

(301) 986-0444

Lifetime Television  
309 W. 49th Street  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 424-7000

MTV  
1515 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 258-8000

Mind Extension University  
Jones International Ltd.  
9697 E. Mineral Avenue  
Englewood, CO 80155-3309  
(303) 792-3111

The Nashville Network  
2806 Opryland Drive  
Nashville, TN 37214  
(625) 889-6840

Nickelodeon  
1515 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 258-8000

Nostalgia Television  
3575 Cahuenga Blvd. West, Suite 495  
Los Angeles, CA 90068  
(213) 850-3000

Sci-Fi Channel  
1230 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020  
(212) 408-9100

Showtime/TMC  
1633 Broadway, 37th Floor  
New York, NY 10019  
(212) 708-1600

TNN: The Nashville Network  
(Group W Satellite Communications)  
Box 10210, 250 Harbor Plaza Drive  
Stamford, CT 06904-2210  
(203) 965-6000

Television Food Network  
1177 Avenue of the Americas, 31st Fl.  
New York, NY 10036

(212) 398-8836

The Travel Channel  
2690 Cumberland Parkway, Suite 500  
Atlanta, GA 30339  
(404) 801-2400

Turner Entertainment Networks  
1050 Techwood Drive, NW  
Atlanta, GA 30348-5264  
(404) 827-1717

USA Networks  
1230 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020  
(212) 408-9100

VH-1  
1515 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036  
(212) 258-8000

The Weather Channel  
2600 Cumberland Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30339  
(404) 434-6800

*Caption Center / WGBH Educational Foundation / [www.wgbh.org](http://www.wgbh.org)*

# Closed-Captioned Local News: Getting Started in Your Town

Captioning of local news broadcasts and the passage of the Television Decoder Circuitry Act are the most exciting events for deaf and hard-of-hearing television viewers in many years. This landmark legislation, now in effect, requires all television sets with screens 13 inches or larger manufactured for sale in the United States to have built-in decoder circuitry.

More than 225 stations around the country have captioned newscasts and the number continues to grow rapidly. (In some cities, caption viewers even have their choice of stations!) In many cases, the deaf and hard-of-hearing community played a key role in bringing captioned news to town. Local television stations, by captioning their local newscasts, can establish a unique identity in their markets by reaching out to a new and deeply appreciative audience of deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers.

It will take a lot of time, hard work, and persistence to start local news captioning in your city. The following suggestions are based on The Caption Center's experience and the experience of groups of deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens who have been involved with captioned news. If you have further questions after reading this paper, call us. The Caption Center would be glad to help.

## **1 Form a committee**

Call together a small, well-organized group which is committed to the project. Working with a local association of the deaf, a local SHHH chapter (Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.), or other organization will lend your efforts added clout and authority. Contact successful organizations in other cities to learn from their experiences.

## **2 Research the audience**

The best person to contact at a TV station is either the general manager, news director, or community affairs manager. When you contact the TV station, they will want to know if more viewers will watch their news if it's captioned. Find out how many deaf and hard-of-hearing people live in your area. This number is available from the state commission for the deaf or similar state government office.

The TV station will also want to know how many homes have access to captions. It is difficult to determine how many people own decoders or decoder-equipped televisions, but you may be able to get some idea from local hearing aid or assistive device dealers. These numbers may be low, but be aware that there are an average of 4 to 5 people making use of either device. Keep in mind that the first versions of caption-capable TV sets have come on the market relatively recently.

## **3 Learn about different captioning technologies and their costs**

The station will want to know how captioning works and what it will cost. While you don't have

to be a technology expert, it will help to know the basics.

There are two methods for captioning a live newscast: stenographic and electronic newsroom. Each method has its own advantages, disadvantages, and costs.

- **Stenographic Captioning**

A "stenocaptioner" listens to the program and types every word as it is spoken by the anchorperson, reporter, or interview subject. The stenocaptioner uses a special shorthand keyboard and computer to type as many as 225 words per minute, working much like a court reporter. Within less than five seconds, caption viewers see the words on their TV sets at home.

Stenographic captioning is also the method used for the nightly network newscasts, *The Today Show*, *The Miss America Pageant*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, sporting events, and many other live programs.

Stations in Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Diego, Phoenix, and other cities caption their newscasts using the stenographic method.

**Costs of stenographic captioning**

There are two kinds of costs- equipment and personnel. Equipment can run from a few thousand dollars to tens of thousands. Either the station or the stenocaptioner will need steno equipment and a computerized dictionary for converting steno into English. The station will also need to buy caption encoding equipment which converts English words into data ready for broadcast.

Stenocaptioners are well paid professionals with years of training in steno. Few people have such highly specialized skills. Once a stenocaptioner is hired, that person trains several more months, and then spends several hours daily preparing for each broadcast.

- **Electronic Newsroom Captioning**

Some TV stations have electronic (or automated) newsrooms. These are computer networks into which reporters type their news stories before each newscast. Anchors and reporters read these scripts from monitors during the newscast. These scripts can also be broadcast as captions if the electronic newsroom is equipped with special equipment and software for captioning.

A drawback to this system is that any stories that are not typed into the computer before airtime will not be captioned, such as live reports, interviews, and weather reports. Reporters must be encouraged to transcribe every word of their stories into the newsroom computers so that captions are available for everything but live reports. The advantage of the system is that it doesn't require specially trained personnel.

Stations in many cities, including San Francisco, Chicago, Denver, and Madison, Wisconsin, caption their newscasts with the electronic newsroom captioning method.

**Costs of electronic newsroom captioning**

First, the station must already own an electronic newsroom, which costs anywhere from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Many stations do own such systems or are in the process of acquiring one. The station then needs to buy the hardware and software captioning options for its electronic newsroom, plus caption encoding equipment. Together these can cost upwards of \$7000. Once the system is set up, there are virtually no

additional costs.

- **Combination Stenographic and Electronic Newsroom**

The stenographic method is the best way to caption every word of a newscast, but it can be very expensive. The electronic newsroom method costs less to operate, but some of the news can't be captioned.

There is a way to have the best of both worlds. With a combination system, an electronic newsroom captioning option allows the news to be captioned automatically. The station then chooses to have certain reports captioned live by a stenocaptioner. At least one station uses this method, allowing it to caption all its newscasts in the most complete and most economical way.

#### **4 Funding the captioning**

It will be helpful for you to know how other TV stations have paid for captioning. Many stations have funding from local corporations. These corporations are often acknowledged at the beginning of the broadcast with a credit such as a picture of their logo and the words, "Closed captioning of NewsCenter 5 paid for by the XYZ Corporation." Some TV stations pay the captioning costs themselves while other stations have received grants from local foundations.

#### **5 Collect letters of support**

Before you approach a TV station, be prepared to show how important captioned local news would be to your community. Collect as much written support as you can. Ask people to send letters to your organization so that you can deliver them in one impressive package to the station. Try to get letters from individuals, organizations, mayors, legislators, community leaders and prominent business people.

You may also want to collect lists of people who want local captioned news. A petition with several pages of names can be very effective in showing the need for captioned news.

Be sure to hold onto copies of letters and petitions- they may be needed later when fundraising begins.

#### **6 Prepare for a meeting**

Prepare for your presentation to the station. Be ready to talk about:

- Why local news captioning is so important and how people in your city will benefit. Give examples of how captioning would have been helpful during a recent election, weather emergency, or important local event where people depended on local TV news for timely information.
- How captioning benefits not only deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences but also people learning English as a second language and people who are learning to read.
- How many deaf and hard-of-hearing people can receive the TV station's signal.
- How captioning will benefit the TV station. As a powerful community service, the project will generate much goodwill for the station. The station can make the most of its involvement with captioning by taking part in related activities, such as promoting or donating decoders or televisions with built-in decoders and making viewers aware that these are now on the market.

You may also want to bring:

- Letters of support and petitions.
- A list of the members of your group.

- A videotape of the national news with visible (open) captions, which you can record with a home VCR. Show an example of the network news that the station broadcasts-- for example, ABC, CBS, or NBC.

The Caption Center can send you the following materials, which you may also want to present:

- Detailed information about the different ways to caption and their costs.
- A comprehensive list of TV stations that caption and what method and equipment they use.
- Names and addresses to give to the station, including equipment suppliers, news directors at other stations, etc.

## **7 Approach the station**

Send a short letter asking for a meeting. Send copies to both the news director and the general manager. Follow up within a few days with a phone call.

Consider how your group is going to present itself. It is probably best if only one or two people do the presentation as representatives of the entire group.

Be patient. TV stations can't change overnight. Remember that captioning is expensive; the station will have to evaluate its budget, its newsroom capabilities, and other resources before making a decision. It may take several meetings or phone calls and several months or even years before the station agrees to caption.

You may want to approach all of the TV stations in your town which air nightly news programs. You will then be able to concentrate your efforts on those stations that are most cooperative. In some cities, more than one station in town captions its news.

## **8 "Thank you"**

If you succeed in convincing a local station to caption its news, congratulations! But it's not too early to think about future years. The funders and TV station need to keep hearing that the audience appreciates the captioned news. If they're reminded about the benefits of captioning, they'll be more likely to maintain their role in it. Many communities have been creative about publicly recognizing those responsible for the news.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Your state association of the deaf can present awards to the TV station and funders.
- You can encourage dozens of viewers to write thank-you letters, which can be bound together and presented to the station and the funders.
- You can celebrate the anniversary of the captioned news every year, with an award ceremony, luncheon, article in the community paper, etc.
- Write appreciation letters praising the TV station and copy them to local publications. Also write letters of thanks to local sponsors of captioning.

## **9 Promotion**

As the TV station gets ready to start captioning the news, it will be important to let people know the service is coming. The station can air announcements about news captioning and at the same time promote decoders and other programs that are captioned on the station. Viewers-deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing alike- will begin to associate that station with an important public service.

Such announcements are also educational, reaching people who don't yet know about captioning. Millions of people have trouble understanding television due to a hearing loss, but don't know that a simple box attached to their TV set or a television equipped with a built-in

decoder can make a world of difference.

The start of a local news project is a good time to educate consumers about the wonderful service of captioning. There are many ways stations have publicized their involvement in captioning. Here are some examples from around the country:

- One TV station distributes decoders to nursing homes, hospitals, and schools.
- Another station broadcasts public service announcements about captioning.
- The first night of one captioned newscast, the television station airing the news showed open captions so people who didn't have decoders at home could see what captions looked like.
- Some cable companies run the news with open captions on a separate cable channel so people without decoders can enjoy the captions. One city's cable company offers free decoders to new subscribers.
- Most stations indicate that their news is captioned through a closed-caption symbol



at the start of the news, in all print ads, in the local newspaper listings, and in TV Guide magazine.

There are as many possible promotion ideas as there are people involved in your project. Anything is possible; explore them all!

The Caption Center can provide you with helpful materials. If the people at the TV station require further technical information, feel free to have them call us. We'd be glad to help!

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*Caption Center / WGBH Educational Foundation / [www.wgbh.org](http://www.wgbh.org)*