

# Hiring Qualified Speech-to-Text Providers

**TS**  
Tip Sheet

## Overview

Speech-to-text is one method of providing effective communication access under the law. However, it is not enough to simply provide the technology; speech-to-text services are only as good as the skills of the service provider. When hiring a service provider, a number of factors must be considered. It is imperative that institutions evaluate the quality of service to ensure that effective, real-time communication access is occurring.

## Who is a qualified service provider?

Under the ADA, a qualified speech-to-text provider is defined as someone who effectively, accurately, and impartially conveys real-time communication access in text, either on-site or remotely.<sup>1</sup> A qualified provider will exhibit a high level of comprehension, ethical behavior, real-time speed, and accuracy.

The first step to assessing qualification is to determine the provider's relevant education, training, and experience in their specific speech-to-text system.

- A **CART provider** should hold either an associate's or bachelor's degree from a National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) certified school. The NCRA also grants qualified candidates a Certified Realtime Captioner (CRC) certification.
- A **C-Print® provider** should hold a certificate of completion of the online training program from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a college of the Rochester Institute of Technology.
- A **TypeWell provider** should hold a certificate verifying successful completion of the online training program from TypeWell.

## What is the real-time standard for a provider and is it measurable?

The standard for a CART provider using a steno-keyboard is a minimum of 180 words per minute (wpm) with 96% accuracy, as measured by the word error rate. In that calculation, errors are identified as a "substitution" of a word, "deletion" of a word, and "insertion" of a word that was not spoken. The word error rate = (the number of substitutions + deletions + insertions) ÷ the total number of words spoken.

The standard for C-Print® and TypeWell using a standard keyboard is a minimum of 60 wpm with 96% accuracy, which is not easily calculated due to the nature of "meaning-for-meaning" captioning. An analysis of the content is needed to determine completeness and equivalence. Accuracy can be assessed in real-time by observing the captioning produced by a service provider during an assignment. Alternatively, it is possible to review a transcript after the fact and comment on the completeness and equivalence of the content.



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## What role do references and referrals play in the hiring process?

Interviews with the service provider's current and former colleagues, consumers, and supervisors are always a good source of information about the provider's qualifications. Seek references that, in addition to skill level and experience, also provide insight into the provider's ethics and professionalism, which are equally important factors when assessing a provider's qualifications.

## What work experience is important to consider?

As in most professions, education and training establishes the foundation of functional skills. Competency and real-time skills develop further in an internship or with structured mentoring, and these types of professional development activities lead to a higher quality of service.

Work experience in a particular setting makes a provider more qualified to work in that same setting, though real-time skills are transferable to other settings in most circumstances. For example, a provider working in K–12 schools may transition easily from elementary to high school, but require more mentoring when transitioning to a postsecondary environment.

## Professionalism and Ethics

Each system of speech-to-text services has a code of ethics that describes the high professional standards expected of providers.

- NCRA Code of Professional Ethics: [www.tinyurl.com/NCRAcode](http://www.tinyurl.com/NCRAcode)
- C-Print Captionist Code of Ethics: [www.tinyurl.com/Cprintcode](http://www.tinyurl.com/Cprintcode)
- TypeWell Transcriber Duties and Code of Ethics: [www.typewell.com/ethics](http://www.typewell.com/ethics)
- Association of Transcribers & Speech-to-text Providers (ATSP) Professional Code of Conduct: <https://atspnetwork.org/code>

## Finding a Provider

Professional organizations and job boards associated with each system may help in identifying service providers. Agencies that provide media captioning may also provide real-time captioning.

- NCRA CART Community Provider Directory: [www.ncrasourcebook.com](http://www.ncrasourcebook.com)
- C-Print® Community Job Board: [www.rit.edu/ntid/cprint/community/job-board](http://www.rit.edu/ntid/cprint/community/job-board)
- ATSP Directories: <https://atspnetwork.org/directory>

## Related Resource

Postsecondary Interpreting and Speech-to-Text Survey Summary (Pepnet, 2009):  
[www.nationaldeafcenter.org/2009survey](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/2009survey)

Additional resources on this subject may be available at [www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resources](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resources).

## Reference

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. (2014). *Effective communication*. Retrieved from [www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm](http://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm)



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Additional resources can be found at [www.nationaldeafcenter.org](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org)