



FACT SHEET

Visual Communication Services (VCS)

DESCRIPTION OF VCS

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) awarded ten Contractors to provide Visual Communication Services for individuals who are **deaf or hard of hearing**. These services provide an on-demand, easy to use, cost-effective source of **sign language interpreters** and **computer assisted real-time transcription (CART)**.

VCS CATEGORIES

The categories of Visual Communication Services for the deaf and hard of hearing are:

(Category I)	On-Site Interpretation (sign language in-person)	Real-time, in-person visual language interpretation, such as American Sign Language, Pidgin Signed English, Signed Exact English (I and II), Oral, Tactile and/or Cued Speech.
(Category II)	On-Site Computer Assisted Real-Time Transcription (CART)	The instant verbatim translation of the spoken word into English text performed on-site by a CART provider using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real-time software.
(Category III)	Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) (sign language by video)	Requires the interpreter to use video conferencing equipment to provide visual language interpreting services from an off-site location to the individual requiring the visual language interpretation service.
(Category IV)	Remote Computer Assisted Real-Time Transcription (CART)	The instant verbatim translation of the spoken word into English text by a remote CART provider using a computer and real-time software through an Internet or telephone connection from an off-site location.

ARRANGING VCS SERVICES

In order to arrange Visual Communication Services, the type of service needed and region must be determined.

Per the ADAAA, Title II, Subpart E(b)(1)

THE CONSTITUENT'S PREFERRED REQUEST SHOULD BE GIVEN PRIMARY CONSIDERATION.

- STEP 1:** Visit the DBM Visual Communication Services website and select the service category at:
<http://dbm.maryland.gov/proc-contracts/Pages/statewide-contracts/VCSContractHome.aspx>
- STEP 2:** Identify the Region where services will be rendered.
NOTE: This region is identified by the location of the meeting, not the billing address.
- STEP 3:** Contact the **#1 ranked Contractor** to set-up an account.
When naming your office, state "*Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*" before providing the office information. **The Contractor will provide a UserID and Password that will allow access to their website to request services.**
- STEP 4:** Receive confirmation for your request.
NOTE: ONLY If the #1 ranked Contractor has documented that they cannot provide the service **or** if the Contractor fails to confirm the assignment within the confirmation time frame, is the #2 ranked Contractor afforded the assignment.

Follow steps 1 and 2, then proceed to the next ranked vendor by selecting "NO" to the confirmation of services question listed at the bottom of the webpage.

Please refer to the Visual Communication Services "**WEBPAGE GUIDANCE**" sheet for screen shots of the steps.



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CONFIRMATION TIMEFRAMES

Contractors must confirm within:

- 1 day for requests made 3-5 days in advance, or
- 2 days for requests made 6-29 days in advance, or
- 5 days for requests made 30 days or more in advance

EMERGENCY & EXPEDITED REQUESTS

Due to the nature of emergencies that may arise, expedited and emergency requests may follow a different ordering process than Standard/Routine assignments.

For both emergency and expedited requests, the agency must **verbally contact** each Contractor **in order of highest-ranked to lowest-ranked** until a confirmation of assignment is completed.

RATES FOR SERVICES

Rates for services are billed as Standard/Routine, Non-Standard/Routine, Expedited, Emergency, or Holiday. Non-Standard/Routine, Expedited, Emergency, and Holiday requests incur additional charges.

There is a minimum of two (2) hours for Visual Communication Services under **Categories I and II** (on-site sign-language and on-site CART). Sign-language interpretation services lasting more than 90 minutes require a minimum of two interpreters. If more than one sign-language interpreter is required, each interpreter is paid the hourly rate. There is a minimum of ten (10) minutes for Visual Communication Services under both **Category III and Category IV** (video remote interpretation and remote CART).

Cancellation fees vary by service category and when notice was given. Before paying for services rendered, agencies should verify that the hours and rates charged on the invoice are accurate.

Please refer to the Visual Communication Services “**RATE SHEET**” for Contractor rates.

****The rates listed represent one interpreter****

NOTE: The rate sheet for Visual Communication Services is an internal confidential document.
It is not to be shared with offices or agencies outside of DHMH.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The [Visual Communication Services contract](#) went live on January 1, 2014 and extends through December 31, 2016, with two one-year renewal options. Interpretation services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The interpreters under the Visual Communication Services contract are all licensed or certified. For a more detailed description of available sign-language or computer assisted real-time transcription (CART) services, visit the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’s website: <http://odhh.maryland.gov/resources/>

If you have questions or concerns about the Visual Communication Services contract or selected contractors, please contact the DBM Visual Communication Services Administrator, [Joy Epstein](#), at (410) 260-7570 or send an email to Joy.Epstein@maryland.gov.

You may also contact the DHMH [Office of Equal Opportunity Programs](#), Equal Access Compliance Unit, at (410) 767-6597 or email Tina.Smith1@maryland.gov with questions or concerns related to billing or DHMH accounts with the Contractors.

Please note that each DHMH office must contact the Visual Communication Services Contractors to set-up their own account and arrange services.

Services are not arranged for the offices by DBM or the DHMH Office of Equal Opportunity Programs