



**Advocacy and Independent Living Services for Individuals  
With All Disabilities**

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To: New York State Insurance Department  
From: Dean DeRusso, Deaf Systems Advocate  
Re: Health Insurance Exchange

Date: May 19, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

Health insurance in New York State has reached the point where modern technologies and solutions affect how people receive care. While we are facing a large budget deficit, we still need affordable healthcare for all people.

If you do not know, Rochester has the largest per capita deaf population in the country. This means that the Rochester population that should be worked with to ensure that proper education and information are available to deaf and heard of hearing people throughout the state. I would encourage you to ensure that ALL informational materials are captioned and able to be viewed in ASL on the web site created for the Health Insurance Exchange. Also, all DVDs that are created must include materials in American Sign Language (ASL). At the same time, you must ensure that the captioned material is available as well.

We need a system that has both ASL and captioning due to the fact that our education system has did not effectively prepared our deaf and hard of hearing population for their long term needs of effective communication as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Again, it is critical to stress the importance of providing captioned materials as well as in ASL on the web, DVD's and all printed education materials given out to the community.

I would encourage the materials to be accessible as well. For example, there is a growing Deaf-Blind population in New York State. Therefore, written materials will need to be in large print and/or Braille. We need to find ways to ensure that deaf people with other disabilities, including speech impairments can communicate when calling toll free numbers provided by the State. I am finding more and more state workers hanging up on people in this situation due to needing a third party to communicate for them. There are many needs to ensure that they can communicate by email, phone, etc.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope that you will ensure that all information given to the public are captioned as well as in ASL, large print, Braille and other accessible formats to make sure that communication and accessibility needs are met.

Thank you,

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