

## The Scope of EPCAP

The Emergency and Public Communication Access Program (EPCAP), in accordance with the Rhode Island General Laws, § 39-1-42 and §23-1.8-4, is newly an additional program to the RI Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

More than 90,000 people living in Rhode Island plus a hundred thousands of people who come to Rhode Island for tourism, businesses, employments, family affairs, etc. are largely underserved by the current emergency system conducted by the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, Rhode Island Department of Health, Municipal Polices, and other emergency personnel. In this program, it also covers public communication access for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on all state/public properties such as Rhode Island Convention Center, Dunkin Donuts Arena, Providence Airport, and many more that have limited, or worse, lack of accessible resources provided for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. The program will be called, the **Emergency and Public Communication Access Program** and it shall be known as EPCAP.

The program has two parts, Emergency and Public Communication Access:

**Emergency Communication Access** is the area where the RICDHH ensures that all individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and who utilize English and/or American Sign Language as their language have a full access to emergency information through visual, technology, signals, person-to-person, TV, smartphone, and many more.

**Public Communication Access** is the area where the RICDHH ensures that public sites especially state-owned properties have appropriate tele-communication or general communication access equipment/devices that will be used by anyone including individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing utilizing either or both English and American Sign Language.

## PURPOSE

To improve the communication system and the efficient way the emergency and non-emergency personnel handles situations involving Deaf and Hard of Hearing population;

To ensure that the state properties where the services, programs, and events are held and/or provided are accessible to anyone including Deaf and Hard of Hearing population;

To recognize and respect a special population that uses either or both in English and American Sign Language as their native language;

To provide knowledge, expertise, and funding to support and help achieving the goals and projects established by the RICDHH through collaboration and partnership toward the higher standards of emergency and non-emergency communication, readiness, and response;

To develop skills and awareness among 1<sup>st</sup> emergency responders and government employees in order to work effectively with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

To provide consulting and support to the Rhode Island Government, RI Department of Public Safety and other state and public entities to ensure that they are in compliance with the federal and state laws, and;

To maintain high quality, standard, and practices in responding to emergencies and non-emergencies in the best interest of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

Emergency Communication – the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population that utilize English and/or American Sign Language would receive direct emergency messages instantly and would be empowered to make decisions what to do next during emergencies with this quality of information delivered. They could save lives of others and themselves as quick as possible.

Public Communication – communication and functional equivalents are recognized and provided on any public accommodation facilities where all regardless their hearing status are able to use public communication access devices and equipment.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To create or assist a latest and accessible statewide emergency communication system for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing to obtain and/or alert instant communication information for their own safety and their educated decision-making in emergency situation through both English and American Sign Language.

To work with the Department of Safety and service providers dedicated to emergency to improve awareness of their obligations to serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population in the event of emergency

To recognize and meet Deaf and Hard of Hearing population's communication access needs, and to help the State in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing communication access to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population whenever they are on any state properties.

To gain access to public communication devices/avenues that are compatible with current trend of technology such as ip-based relay, video relay service, CapTel, visual paging service, etc.