

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Accessible Media for Educational Use to be Provided by the National Association of the Deaf

The National Association of the Deaf Enters Into New Cooperative Agreement With the U. S. Department of Education

First Guidelines for Creating Educational Video Description to be Provided

SILVER SPRING, MD—10/02/2006— The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) announced today it has entered into a new five-year \$7.5 million cooperative agreement with the U. S. Department of Education (ED) beginning this month for management of the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). The DCMP will provide free-loan accessible educational media to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and also to those who are blind or visually impaired. Most educational media does not contain necessary accommodations for students with a sensory loss.

Funded by agreements with the ED that has been in effect since 1991, the NAD has selected, captioned and distributed open-captioned educational media in video and DVD format through a nationwide library system and through Internet streaming. This program of over 4,000 free-loan educational media items has reached an annual audience of over 3 million educators, families, and other registered users. “The agreement will now be expanded,” said Nancy Bloch, CEO of the NAD. “The DCMP will not only caption educational media for deaf students, but will also video describe it for blind and visually impaired students.”

Video description refers to an additional narration track for blind and visually impaired viewers of visual media, including television programs and movies. The description narrator talks through the presentation, describing what is happening on the screen during the natural pauses in the audio (and sometimes during dialogue if deemed necessary). The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) will partner with the NAD, leading an activity to develop and validate guidelines for creating educational video description. While general guidelines for entertainment video description exist, there has been little effort to validate these guidelines for use with school populations or to apply them to a wide range of digital media now available in today’s classrooms.

Similar guidelines have been created by the NAD for captioning educational media. These guidelines, titled *Captioning Key*, have been distributed internationally and receive over a thousand visits monthly on the DCMP Web site. “Both captioning and video description are essential for children with special needs,” added Ms. Bloch. “As educators across the nation hone their instruction ever more finely to produce the desired end-of-year outcomes, every in-class minute counts.”

While most television networks and many cable channels provide closed captioning and some video description, very little educational media is described or captioned. “Only 15% of educational videos, 5% of educational CD-ROMs, and 1% of Internet content is captioned,” said Bill Stark, director of the DCMP. “Even fewer educational media contain video description,” he added.

In addition, the DCMP will provide a database of accessible media available for purchase by schools from educational media producers. A further service will include the provision of a clearinghouse of information and materials on the subject of accessible media for consumers, agencies, corporations, businesses, and schools. The Web-accessible clearinghouse will also allow users to search informational offerings on the Web sites of major educational and consumer organizations serving blind and deaf individuals.

For more information call toll-free (800) 237-6213 (V) or (800) 237-6819 (TTY). You can also visit the DCMP Web site at www.dcmp.org, or e-mail the DCMP at info@dcmp.org.

About the NAD—The NAD (<http://www.nad.org>) is the nation’s oldest and largest nonprofit organization safeguarding the accessibility and civil rights of 28 million deaf and hard of hearing Americans and the administrator of the new DCMP federally funded project. The NAD is a dynamic federation of 51 state association affiliates (including the District of Columbia), organizational affiliates, and national members. Primary areas of focus include grassroots advocacy and empowerment, policy development and research, legal assistance, captioned media, information and publications, and youth leadership.

About the DCMP—The DCMP (<http://www.dcmp.org>) is funded by the U. S. Department of Education. Educators, students, families, and others who work with individuals who are blind or deaf are the target audience for the DCMP free-loan media program. Schools, consumers, media producers/distributors, captioning agencies, businesses, government agencies, and others are the target groups for DCMP information, training, and evaluation activities related to educational media access.