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**NEW YORK BECOMES THE FIRST CITY IN THE NATION TO OFFER ASL DIRECT
TO DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING NEW YORKERS**

Information Specialists Fluent in ASL Available for New Yorkers Through Online Platform

NEW YORK—Today, the de Blasio administration announced that New Yorkers who primarily communicate via American Sign Language can now obtain City services faster and more efficiently through the use of ASL Direct, becoming the first city in the nation to offer the service. The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities has worked with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications to implement video technology that allows Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals to connect via webcam to an information specialist fluent in American Sign Language from any Android, Mac, iOS, or Windows device via a link on the [MOPD website](#), or by downloading a free mobile application called the Personal Universal Communicator.

“Becoming the fairest big city in America means ensuring equitable access to City services for all New Yorkers, including our Deaf and Hard of Hearing neighbors,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Deaf and Hard of Hearing New Yorkers now have a one-stop shop for information, whether it’s how to find affordable housing, enroll in Pre-K, or where to get a flu shot.”

“We have worked with the community to understand their needs and have taken the lead in providing information directly in ASL, continuing to make NYC the most accessible city in the world,” said **MOPD Commissioner Victor Calise**.

“The launch of ASL Direct is a terrific example of how technology can be a powerful tool of public good,” said **DoITT Commissioner Samir Saini**. “I encourage all ASL users to engage with City government through the new service, and take advantage of everything the City has to offer.”

“Ensuring equitable access to city services for all New Yorkers is a civil rights issue,” said **Council Member Diana Ayala, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction**. “I applaud the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities for the launch of their ASL Direct program that connects Deaf New Yorkers to city services with the help of live interpretation in American Sign Language. Like everyone else, the Deaf community deserves to

access city services using the language of their choice. I look forward to collaborating with MOPD to ensure that the program is expanded to other city agencies.”

“If the true metric of success in the race for technological advancement is whether or not it makes our lives easier, than it is incumbent upon all of us that we base our achievements on ensuring it benefits the nearly one million people who self-identify as living with one or more disabilities in New York City,” said **Council Member Peter Koo, Chair of the Committee on Technology**. “ASL-Direct is great common sense technology that offers a direct link to government services for those who need them most. Thank you to Commissioner Calise and Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities for prioritizing this important effort.”

“ASL Direct is a critical part of the ongoing work to make City government and resources fully accessible to people of all abilities,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**. “I am excited about this all-inclusive system and its role in connecting New Yorkers who primarily communicate in American Sign Language with the services they need. Innovations like these are gamechangers, and I look forward to further advancements in accessibility. I commend the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities and their allies in their work to make New York City truly accessible for all.”

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing community comprises approximately 208,000 people in New York City, the majority of whom communicate primarily through ASL. ASL Direct, which was originally developed by the Federal Communications Commission, is recognized as an effective digital communications tool for individuals who sign. A symposium on accessing ASL Direct and the services provided at MOPD will be held on March 3rd from 10:00 AM until 1:00PM at the American Sign Language and English Secondary School, 223 East 23 Street, Manhattan. [RSVP Information for the Symposium](#)

ASL Direct services are available 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

To find out more about MOPD or ASL Direct visit www.nyc.gov/mopd or www.nyc.gov/asl.

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