

Accessibility standards for persons with hearing impairment

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Recently the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued Accessibility Standards for television programmes for persons with hearing impairment (whether broadcast through traditional hardware or through Internet platforms. **This is in accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.**

The key highlights of accessibility standards

Modes for access

- Service providers are required to provide any one or more of the following options to access specified television programmes: (a) sub-titles, (b) open or closed captioning, or (c) sign language.
- The sub-titles or open captioning or closed captioning is to be provided in the language of the channel or any other suitable language based on various factors including the target audience and the target region.
- If sign language interpretation is provided, service providers should ensure that the hands as well as facial expressions of the signer are visible
- **Foreign language television** programmes should have closed captions in English or any other Indian language.
- The service providers will have to ensure the availability of customer service for persons with hearing impairment. Further, the government as well as service providers will be required to take steps to

raise awareness about the accessibility of television programmes.

Exemptions

- TV channels, whose audience share across all households is less than 1% in a year, are exempted from these requirements.
- The Standards exempt certain formats of content from the accessibility requirements. These include:
 1. Live and deferred live content or events including sports broadcast
 2. Live news or events including award shows and live reality shows, and
 3. Advertisements or teleshopping content.

These Standards will be implemented in a phased manner. By 2025, the Standards aim to ensure that at least 50% of the content from a general entertainment channel, movie-based channel and news channels will provide access service. These Standards will be reviewed every two years.