

This unedited transcript of a continued webinar is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility for the viewer and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This transcript may contain errors. Copying or distributing this transcript without the express written consent of continued is strictly prohibited. For any questions, please contact customerservice@continued.com

Introduction to CaptionCall by Sorenson

Presenter: Stephen H. DeMari

- Welcome to today's course, Introduction to CaptionCall by Sorenson. Presented by Steve DeMari. It has been said that innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought. This month on Audiology Online, we're celebrating innovation in the hearing industry with our fourth industry innovation summit. Thank you for joining today, and we hope to see you in other summit events, which you will find in our course library. We would like to thank our title sponsor, CareCredit, and all of the companies who are participating in the 2024 summit. And, now, it's my pleasure to turn the microphone over to Steve.

- Thanks, Anna. Appreciate it. Thanks for the introduction. And thank you everyone for being here. I just wanted to first review some of the learner outcomes that you'll appreciate for today. So, after this course, participants will be able to explain the role of the FCC, as well as IPCTS and the IPCTS industry. And then, also, describe the functionality of the caption call service. As well as be able to understand the role of the audiologist and the hearing care professional in determining eligibility for IPCTS captioning service. And, also, how to submit referrals or help support your patients and how to obtain IPCTS service. A little bit about me. I'm Steve, I'm an audiologist. I've been around for a long time in the industry.

A lot of different segments of the industry. I've been with CaptionCall now for the last three years or so, and love working here. Love working with this group of people. I went to Syracuse University. Born and raised in Syracuse, New York. And then, worked out in the Long Beach VA for a long time, and then a few other places in California before relocating to Chicago and working in several capacities in the Chicagoland area. And this is where I've been ever since. So, I've been in Chicago now for about 30 years. So, this is introduction to CaptionCall and IPCTS. IPCTS, again, stands for internet protocol caption telephone service. And a little bit of history. So, the- So, the modern evolution of the TTY, and that's a, that's a pretty archaic one right there.

So, that's right from the beginning. It uses a relay service scrolling captions to help people with hearing loss use telephones just like everyone else. But this was invented by Robert Weitbrecht. He had a hearing loss. And he was able to create this device and help enable people with hearing loss to communicate with each other through the phone by using a teletype writer. The first use of captions on TV was in 1971 during the first national conference on television for the hearing impaired in Nashville, Tennessee. Captioning was first exhibited in the United States, and this proved that the concept worked. This was from the Gallaudet University Archives. And then, some of us of a certain age probably remember this TV show.

This is the success of some of these TV shows through WETA, in Washington DC. As well as WGBH in Boston. The FCC granted PBS the ability to include captions on all their broadcasts. So, specifically, this one, the French Chef with Julia Child, was one of the first TV shows to rebroadcast the television shows with captions. And then, it took until 1980 for captions to appear on national television. But, unfortunately, for people to see captions, people had to purchase and connect a tele-caption decoder. It was a device, I remember this, we went to Sears to purchase it. And you would connect it to your television, and then, any program that offered captions, that device would enable you to see captions on the television.

I have, I grew up with a deaf sister, so it was very useful for her. As well as the TTY was also very useful for her. Remember, the TTY, you needed one on each side. And then, it wasn't until 1990 that the Television Decoder Circuitry Act mandated that all new TVs sold would include the ability to display captions. A little bit about regulation. So, eligibility for IPCTS, internet protocol caption telephone service, enables people who speak, but who have difficulty hearing over the telephone to be able to talk directly to another person. And then, use IP enabled telephone to simultaneously listen to the other person and read the captions of what the person is saying. So, there's a slow rolling caption that they can read while they're listening.

So, again, IPCTS eligibility is for people who have a hearing loss that necessitates the use of captions to communicate effectively on the telephone. And then, you must register for IPCTS and attest to your hearing loss. Essentially, certifying that, yes, I have a hearing loss and I need captions to communicate on the phone effectively. And the ADA in conjunction with legislation was passed in, this was passed in 1990, and this led to the development of the relay and caption telephone services for the deaf and hard of hearing. So, more specifically, this was Title IX- Or, excuse me, Title IV of the ADA required assistive devices be made available to qualified end users at any state, any time, at no cost greater than what a person with normal hearing would pay for telephone services.

So, IPCTS, again, is caption telephone industry. It's regulated by the FCC. Captioning is provided by CaptionCall and paid through a TRS fund. That's a telephone relay service fund, and it's administered by the FCC. And telecommunication companies are required by the ADA to make their networks accessible to people who are hard of hearing or deaf. And then, funding for IPCTS comes from the public. We collect, they collect funds via these charges passed on by the telephone company. And then, CaptionCall is paid a permanent rate for captions that are delivered to customers accurately and efficiently. And we must meet strict accuracy standards set by the FCC for the delivery of this service. And so, being good stewards of the government, we allow for our customers to turn captions on or off.

So, essentially, anyone that has a phone, when they're using the phone, if captions are rolling, then we are being paid by the government, through the TRS fund, a per minute rate. If that person chooses to turn captions off, then there is no funds being collected and being paid to us. We'll talk a little bit more about that later. So, internet and landline requirements. This might be a topic that is typically discussed. So, we know that the internet can be a barrier for eligible patients to use our service. We offer

technical solutions for those without internet. And/or in cases if they don't have a landline. And we can still deliver captions to the phone. And, if so, if your patient has internet access, internet capability, that's great.

We will use that connectivity. They'll keep it, no reason to cancel it. And then, there's no reason to sign up for internet service either. So, if they don't have internet, we have a solution, technologically, upon installation that we'll be able to pull in a signal into our telephone to enable captions. So, essentially, think of it as, if they have internet, if they have a landline or if they have a smartphone, which we'll also talk about, they'll be able to access our service. So, this is a little graphic about, showing you, demonstrating, about what's happening during a call. So, let's say there's a phone call by the phone user. Let's say that's me right there. And I'm calling my mom, who is, she's a hundred years old, she has hearing aids, she has significant hearing loss, and she's a captioned phone user.

So, when I make- When I make the call or if she receives my call, then live captioning will automatically start if captions have been enabled on the phone, which they typically will default on. And then, the captioning begins. And that engages this captioning agent. So, they're hearing my voice only. So, they're hearing my content. And when they hear my voice, they're revoicing my content. My voice, my words. So, essentially, re-saying what I just said, and they're saying that into a headset. And then, their Dragon Software will interpret that, spit it out onto their screen, and then they can make corrections, add parentheticals, and make it a very human experience. And then, those captions are sent to the caption phone and they're scrolling along this screen.

And so, that person, my mom, would be hearing my voice as well as seeing my words scroll on the screen. So, that revoicing is very critical. And these captioning agents are trained to do that very well. And it's very secure. So, there's very strict privacy regulations. I know that's a question that also gets asked is, "Well, it's a human being."

"They're hearing this conversation." But, again, they're only hearing one side of it. And they're not taking notes. There's no recording of the conversation. They can't interrupt the conversation. So, there's very strict privacy regulations that we follow in order to create some confidence in what is happening on this during this process. Now, the other question is, do we use ASR or AI?

Yes, we're using automatic speech recognition as well. So, that just depends on volume of calls. If the volume of calls creates an impact on our captioning agents, then ASR will kick in. And that will be used for delivery of the voice message instead. Hopefully, that makes sense. If not, pop a question in the chat, we'd be happy to answer more about actually on this process. A little bit of data. So, this is a market track by Sergei Hodgkins. This is Market Track Eight. This was one of his last research studies. There's 14,000 individuals that were surveyed with varying degrees of hearing loss. And they were asked about the importance of these 19 listening situations over a period of eight years.

Per the study, communicating on the telephone and the importance of telephone use for those with hearing loss is second only to one-on-one communication. 57% of people with hearing loss indicate that communicating on the telephone was very important to them. And people who are hard of hearing are at a distinct disadvantage compared to normal hearing people when communicating on the phone. Necessary visual cues needed for effective communication are not available to the listener on an oral phone, obviously. Captioned phones are customizable to deliver a speech signal based on the unique needs of the hard of hearing while quickly displaying the speech in text format. And that would appear to offer a viable functional solution to those with hearing loss.

And, during the referral process, we can talk a little bit more about that, but you can also submit audiometric information and we will try to incorporate that into the phone,

as far as the configuration of the loss, and incorporate that into the phone to create a better response for the phone user. Hearing aid owners report that hearing aids provide overall about 55% benefit during phone conversation. So, that still leaves many with some ongoing difficulty. We know that hearing aids are certainly the gold standard. Bluetooth capabilities are fantastic connectivity options, but there's still a population out there that could use extra support when speaking on the phone. Less than 1% of the 48 million Americans, 48, 45 million, depends on the data where you find this, but the who states some of these numbers.

But, of those with hearing loss, are currently using IPCTS service. And we know 25% of non-hearing aid owners indicated poor utility on the phone was an obstacle to a hearing aid purchase. And this is another study. This is Frank Lynn of Johns Hopkins. He revealed some information about hearing loss. If left untreated, has a significant impact on a person's ability to stay connected. And this inability makes face-to-face interactions difficult and using the telephone extremely frustrating, which often leads to loneliness, isolation, and possible precursors for many serious health risks. CaptionCall has earned the trust of more than 12,000 hearing care professionals who've recommended CaptionCall to their eligible patients. And we're the most widely used captioning telephone service in the United States.

Excuse me. And so, while some of these approaches to better health are intuitive, exercise, diet, the importance of hearing and our ability to engage effectively with others and the auditory environment has rapidly emerged as a key factor that needs to be targeted to improve the lives of older adults around the world. Some of the hidden risks of hearing loss, especially as we age, he stated, Frank Lynn stated, the link between hearing loss and health reveals that hearing loss may contribute to other health related issues. And, specifically, to a faster rate of cognitive decline. Some other data. Nearly half of people over age of 75 have hearing loss, which means most also

have trouble using the phone. For some individuals, hearing aids, amplified phones may be enough when it comes to phone utility.

For others, hearing aids alone may not be enough. And, for these individuals who need captions to use the phone effectively, captioned telephone service can make up that difference. CaptionCall service allows users to activate captions when they need it, and understand the conversation, and to turn captions off if they don't need it. A little bit about that. You know, some folks might feel that sense of security again, as I mentioned, we're under strict guidelines. But, again, they can turn captions off during the phone call. And if they do, they'll carry on that conversation over the phone like they normally would. Captions would not be running. There'd be no captioning agent listening or on the line. And, if they chose to then reengage the captions, they can do that as well during the same phone call.

And that'll reengage with, another captioning agent will join the call and begin, again, by transcribing the person's content to the person with the CaptionCall phone. Again, some folks may be able to hear their son or daughter just fine, but perhaps not their grandchildren. Again, we all know there's different abilities to understand different voices. So, again, an individual's speech recognition is independent from their level of hearing loss. Individual's hearing loss may have a difficult time discerning what's being said based on factors, such as background noise, different voices, as we said, cognitive strain, listening effort. And, in addition to this, we know that most of you ask the question about phone use on case history forms. And so, there's a good measure there to find out if this person may need some extra help for their telephone.

Every individual who has difficulty using the phone effectively because of their hearing loss should be evaluated for an IPCTS service. A little bit about some of the features of the telephone. This is the CaptionCall 70AT. Our telephones use the highest standard of amplification available in the telephone technology. This is regulation TIA-4953. Or

should say Standard TIA-4953. The response of the phone is customizable to deliver a speech signal based on the configuration of hearing loss. So, if you look here, some of the more important features, newer features of the phone, is that handset. That handset is a little bit longer now. So, the ability to reach the top of the ear, or on the ear, depending on if there's induction coil in the hearing aid.

The handset is induction coil compatible. So, that ability to initiate the telecoil, and then have the speaker, the receiver by the mouth for that extended reach is better and sounds better. It's a larger screen. So, that screen is a touch screen. It's eight inches in in diameter. And in the- By width height it's eight inches. And the font sizing can be adjusted to small, medium, large. So, for folks with some vision issues, they can also adjust those text size fonts. If they so choose to use the built-in voice message button, the voice answering machine in the phone, they can do that. And this is something that will be set up upon installation as well. So, we'll get to that in a little bit.

But that, if that is used, they can save their calls via this system. And that's important, because there could be directions or instructions. Or, perhaps, a family member with important information and things of that nature, they can save, and then listen back to those messages later, and read them back later. Another one I like is the speakerphone button. That speakerphone button allows hands-free use. So, allows for a little bit easier hearing aid orientation if they're talking to their hearing healthcare provider, that frees up their hands to be able to listen, read the screen, and manipulate the hearing aids as necessary. Or people that you would want them to use both ears, whether they're wearing hearing aids or not.

This is something that kind of trained my mom to do. It's difficult for us to forget that we have to pick up the receiver. But, in her case, I tell her, "Leave the receiver there, just hit the speakerphone button to answer your call." Especially, she sees that it's coming from me. And then, she can answer the phone. And then, she's using both her

ears to listen to me speak. And then, she's also reading the texts on the screen, obviously. A little bit about Bluetooth connectivity. We'll talk more about that a little bit later. But, a lot of that information, if you want to get some in-depth information on Bluetooth connectivity, we can create a connection between you and your account manager, and we can talk a little bit more about that.

But, essentially, you can connect your hearing aids to this telephone. You're gonna need a streamer, except for, I believe, PhoneAc. And, because of the type of Bluetooth technology, they can connect directly, but others you'll need a streamer. But we can talk more about Bluetooth. That's kind of a separate presentation, 'cause there's a little bit of in depth information to discuss there. But, as you'll learn later here, a lot of this information is great for you to know, but a lot of it's also- It's a need-to-know, because we'll take the ball from you, and our installers will take the ball from you, and really take care of everything that your patient needs. So, you don't need to have an in-depth knowledge of really everything here, but working knowledge is certainly helpful.

Again, we talked about the ability to turn captions on and off. That's via the touch screen in the settings, and we'll show you that later. Again, there's a custom audio equalizer. Again, that's just a configuration for you to add or subtract some decibels to the frequency response. There's a more powerful processor for faster hearing aid connectivity. And then, as always, all of our captioning agents, we can offer English or Spanish. And we also have English and Spanish speakers out in the field. So, depending on where you are, we can coordinate English or Spanish based on your needs, based on the patient's needs. And, again, we wanna reiterate, if amplification and hearing aids are sufficient, they're able to navigate those connectivities with their hearing aids, then great, you have the option to turn off captions.

Just use the hearing aids if you'd like. But, for calls where amplification isn't sufficient, then captions can easily be turned back on during the conversation. Okay, a little bit

about mobile, CaptionCall Mobile. This is a, you may have seen our applications out there. There was one that started with an O. If we've changed- We've rebranded and we're back to our, what we know and love, and that's CaptionCall Mobile. This is a CaptionCall app. It uses ultra fast captions. And you can get this on the, in the app store for your iPhone. Or you can get it in the Google Play Store for your Android. You'll receive captions in less than one second. CC Mobile's been rated as the most accurate caption call provider by the unofficial FCC study.

It's a hundred percent private and secure. There's no current transcription or assistants listening to your conversation. So, this is predictive AI. Predictive automatic speech recognition for this technology. There's no captioning agents involved in this technology, but this is still IPCTS. This is still requiring the same eligibility. Having a hearing loss and the need for captions to use the phone effectively. So, same exact requirements. You can dial and answer calls, just like you do with an ordinary phone. Works on any smartphone with wifi or mobile data connection. All of your contacts can be married into the application. Your voicemail is transcribed by accurate speech recognition as well. You can see your transcripts. It's a two-way communication.

So, as you speak, you see your transcription appear on the phone. And, as you're, the person you're speaking to speaks, their transcription appears as well. So, it's a two-way street that you can see context. And then, you can also make real time 911 calls with captions in real time as necessary. So, again, it's a no cost program. Part of that same FCC, ADA, IPCTS system. Real-time mobile captioning can restore confidence and self dependence for those people that want to take captions on the go. Again, voicemail captioning. CaptionCall transcripts are available, English or Spanish. Customizable text. You can also see that you can use CaptionCall Mobile on your smart pad as well. So, again, IPCTS services via the in-home telephone via Wireline.

Again, we'll set that up, we'll talk about that. And then, or on the go, via the mobile app. So, just think of it as home use or mobile on the go use. CaptionCall availability. It's available in the United States. Remember, this is a federal government program. Available in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. And, again, we've said English and Spanish. We will go over that later, nevermind. I was gonna bring something up, but I'll talk about that in a second. So, our red carpet service. So, that's what kind of makes us special. Again, these are- This company is run by our employees. So, when we are engaging with your patients, it's our employees. They're background checked, they're vetted.

They're very well trained, friendly folks. And they're the ones that are going into the homes of your customers, of your patients. So, that way, we build trust. So, we're not contracting out with anyone else. We're all part of the same team. We offer fast, high caption accuracy. Again, we have to, because we're held under strict guidelines by the SEC. So, essentially, if we don't meet these accuracy standards, essentially, we won't receive our revenue for that day. So, it's very critical that our folks are very well trained. So, we have trainers. Installers throughout the entire country, and they're all essential employees. They're equipped with PPE still, as necessary. So, even for anyone that just doesn't feel comfortable with someone coming in their home, we can PPE those folks, so they feel a bit more secure.

Or they can do a remote install, and we can walk them through an installation. We'll ship them all of the necessary information. We'll ship them the phone. Again, the phone gets shipped to them at no cost. They don't pay for the phone. They don't pay for the service. Everything is no cost. After the walkthrough, if they feel confident, then that's great. If not, we can always come back later. If they want us to come live, we'd be happy to come live and just double check everything to make sure that they're in good shape. They can also do it yourself. We can just ship them the information. If they have

a friend, loved one, a significant other that feels like they can do the install themselves, again, we'll send instructions, and they'd be able to do the installation themselves.

But we're always available to help and support. Again, the positive impact of CaptionCall is that we're a part of a total hearing healthcare solution that helps eliminate social isolation. We have holidays coming up, where this becomes very important for people to connect. This is a solution for current hearing aid owners who struggle to use the phone only with amplification, whether they wear hearing aids or not. Or just use a phone with an amplification device. And then, they need captions to increase their long-term satisfaction, health, and wellbeing. They contribute to the population of Americans struggling with hearing loss who are underserved. A little bit about the customer support. So, again, we're available throughout the day, throughout the week.

So, if your folks need support for whatever reason, they can reach out to our US-based customer support, technical support teams. We want to have a strong relationship between them and their account managers. So, that's critical. So, their account managers are really their first, first place to go for any support needs. So, what'll happen is, if you refer a patient, or if they self-refer themselves, our training staff will take the ball. They will contact the patient. They will gain all the information necessary from that customer, that patient, to ensure that the entire process, installation process, is handled adequately and efficiently. So, questions such as, if they have a smartphone. If they have internet. Things of that nature.

If they're mobile. So, again, they'll pull in all the information necessary. And, typically, it takes about 72 hours by the time we receive a referral. We do the outreach. And then, during that outreach, we'll schedule a installation time that works best for them. For your clinics, demo phones are very important. It creates conversation. Again, this is where you would reach out to your account manager. So, some of the first questions

that we ask hearing care professionals such as yourselves is, do you know the name of your account manager? And I think that's probably the best place to start. So, again, and by you offering this ability to your patients, let's say it's in the waiting room and they ask questions about it.

You know, this can reduce the burden of, on the hard of hearing patient and their loved ones who want to connect via the phone. It builds trust with your patients. It reduces telephone related complaints. It can increase patient phone confidence and their happiness. And then, again, there's no cost to you or the patient. So, it creates confident communication. It helps patients connect. Also, our website. Another good place to go check for information under solutions providers. There's a lot of information, excuse me. Excuse me. And you're able to go there to find referral forms, and I'll show you that in a second. But, definitely use the website as necessary. There's some resources on there, blog information on there, and some other good resources there about Sorenson Communications, which is our parent company.

And I did a separate presentation on Sorenson's suite of services, and CaptionCall falls into that product line as one of those services that is under the Sorenson brand. Sound Off Project is a resource for veterans with hearing loss. And, if you are with a VA, we'll see you at JDVAC. If not, you can go here and find out some more information about veterans with hearing loss. Referrals. So, we want to stay closely connected to the hearing healthcare professional. We would like to see the support of you and your patient to getting the referral to us via any of these processes here. You can go online, and that's probably the most efficient, quickest way to do that.

So, if you go onto that website I just showed you, there's a section for referral. And then, this referral form comes up. You just complete that. You hit submit, and then we can receive the information, and then reach out to your patient to initiate the installation. If you like old school, you can still do pre-printed and addressed paper

envelopes, and send them to us via US Mail. You can still fax them if you'd like. You can scan and email them if you'd like. So, certainly, just depends on what works best for you. If there's something that works best for you right now, just keep, you know, keep doing it that way. There's no reason to change, but want you to be aware of those options.

Also, if you're using an OMS, an office management system, such as Noah. Some of the other ones are Cycle, and Tims, and Counseleer, and some of these other OMS systems allow you to provide referrals via those systems electronically to us. If worse comes to worse, you can pick up the phone, call us. You can call your account manager and just say, "Hey, I want to refer a patient." Maybe there's an issue of some sort. Feel free to call the account manager, and they'd be happy to take the ball to help you get that referral submitted and the installation process in play. And there is a way- So, if your patients do come across the form online, they can certainly go and submit this information themselves if they'd like to.

But, again, we wanna stay closely connected to the hearing care professional. And that's you. So, if you have any questions about that referral, just let me know. And I'm gonna go through a few of the top- This is a Q&A session, we'll read your Q&As, but also, I'm gonna go through some commonly asked questions right now. So, let's see. I'll start with, what is the eligibility requirements? So, this is probably gonna be on one of your questions. But again, necessitates captions to use the phone effectively. And they have to have a hearing loss. Again, federally funded, so there's no cost. Ever. So, there should never be any question of cost. Again, how do I know if I need CaptionCall?

So, again, if you have hearing loss that makes it difficult for you to use the phone, and you need captions to better understand the conversation, then IPCS service would be a requirement that would be helpful for you. What about the need for landline, internet,

cell phones? So, the requirement is, if you have any one of those things we'll be able to make the connection of our captioning technology. So, if they have internet, we'll use their internet. If they don't have internet, our telephone will come with technology that we're able to connect to a, quote-unquote, hotspot that creates the ability to pull in that signal so they can receive captions. This is also true if they don't have a landline.

Or, if they have a smartphone, we can also use technology that uses their smartphone signal, and then that would send the signal from the smartphone to the home phone. And so, they still have the ability to use captions that way. Let's see. The CaptionCall Mobile system. So, again, the requirements there are the same for that. So, they still have to attest to their hearing loss. That is a US-based system. So, again, captioning will work on CaptionCall Mobile via, within the United States. However, if someone were to call them from outside the United States, via CaptionCall Mobile, they would be able to accept that call and receive captions on an incoming basis from outside the United States.

So, perhaps, someone calls them from Canada, they can then answer the phone and receive captions that way. They just would not be able to call Canada. Let's see. Let me go to the- Another question about if CaptionCall Mobile, is can I keep the same phone number? So, yes, with CaptionCall, if it works for your current home phone, you can also keep your current provider and plan. There's a way to go into your app and adjust it, so it shows the, your standard phone number instead of using the new number that it may use to dial in. So, that way, it'll recognize your phone number, and it'll show up as your phone number. Some folks have asked about amplification.

Again, we can adjust amplification on the device in the home phone as necessary. There's an amplification setting, where you can go in and adjust the configuration that best matches the audiometric information, and we can do that for you upon installation. And let me go up to Q&A. One of the questions is, does the person calling

in use a special dedicated phone number, or do all incoming calls go directly to the, go directly to the ability to have captioned? I guess I'm- I guess what you're asking is, does the person calling in use- Whoever's calling in, they don't have to do anything special. So, when the incoming call comes to a home phone, it shows up as, so, for example, when I call, it shows up as my name and phone number, because I'm a contact in her phone.

If not, it'll just come in as the phone number of whomever is calling in. For CaptionCall Mobile, same thing. But, for CaptionCall Mobile, for that person to see that person's cell phone number, then there is a setting within the application that they would have to adjust, so it shows their phone number. Because there is a separate number that we may use for CaptionCall Mobile. And then, is this only available in English? No, this is, everything here is available in English and in Spanish.

- [Anna] Thanks, Steve. I just wanted to let everybody know that now is the time to please send in your questions for Steve. That we can go through them now. I did have a question that I know you've covered in other webinars. If someone is talking using the CaptionCall service and they wanted to have a private point- If they're feeling like it's such sensitive information, they wanna stop captioning, is that possible?

- Yeah, good question. So, it is. So, on the phone screen, there's a setting, so it's a touch screen. And there's just a quick little, on the left, there's a settings button, they hit settings, and one of the first choices is captions on or off. And then, they can disengage captions. They can just turn captions off. So, let's say we're talking right now and you feel that there's something sensitive, again, there's security, but we know that human nature, they may need to feel more comfortable by disengaging captions. And they can do that by just hitting that button and turning it off. Once they do that, it disengages the connectivity to CaptionCall and the captioning agent. And then, that

way, now they're just using the CaptionCall phone as a regular phone, and they can continue their conversation.

If they, then, want to turn captions back on, then they, same spot, they can just turn captions back on. And when they do that, it will pull in another captioning agent, and that new captioning agent will join the call, and again, start to transcribe the person that has called in or was called on the non-captioning phone. And so, that way it kind of creates some, a security for that person feeling like it's private. But, again, I wanna reiterate, we abide by very strict privacy standards, and those are set by the FCC. And, if we don't follow them, then we're risking our, any revenue that we would generate. And that's what keeps us in business. So, again, it's a no cost service, but we're paid by the government.

We're paid by all of you. Essentially, there's a surcharge on the bottom. If you look at the bottom of your landline telephone, for those who still have landlines, there is a surcharge. And that surcharge, those monies get collected into that TRS fund, and then that TRS fund is paid out to CaptionCall based on that permanent use. So, as soon as that person disengages the captioning agent, there's no more permanent use in that scenario. So, that would be paused until they reactivate captions during that call or for the next call.

- [Anna] Thanks, Steve. And I just wanted- Someone else wrote in, I think you did mention this, but let's just clarify for everybody. They wanted to know who regulates caption services.

- Right, so, it's regulated by the FCC. So, it's the Federal Communications Commission of the federal government. So, we are, on a regular basis, we receive audits. We have an FCC representative that we're in communication with on a consistent basis to ensure that we are abiding by all the regulations put into place by the FCC that we've

agreed to. And, again, a couple of those things are what we've talked about with regard to eligibility. So, only the eligible person with hearing loss that necessitates captions to use the phone effectively can use the phone and use a caption phone. Same goes for the CaptionCall Mobile app. It's the same service, IPCTS. And so, everything we do is no-cost.

It's reimbursed by the FCC via that TRS fund. So, again, we're under very strict guidelines. And, as I mentioned, those guidelines, those accuracy guidelines, privacy guidelines, there's very strict quotas. We have to hit those. If we don't hit those, that specific quality and accuracy standard, then we forfeit our revenue. So, it's- And it requires us to be very good at our jobs, and to train our people very well in order to keep our requirements, meeting our requirements. So, very critical technology.

- [Anna] Thanks, Steve. We did have another question about eligibility. Is there a certain degree of hearing loss that a person has to have in order to be eligible? Or is it up to the audiologist that the person, or hearing instrument dispenser that the person is seeing?

- Yeah, good question. No, there is not. The requirements states, and this is, this is very, yeah, very black and white. The requirement states that there needs to be hearing loss and the necessity to have captions to communicate on the phone effectively. So, there's never any stated degree, configuration, or anything of that nature. So, let's say the audiologist is performing a hearing test, and that patient sees the CaptionCall phone and asks questions about it. As long as either the professional, the audiologist, the hearing care professional, attests to that that patient has a hearing loss and that patient states that they have difficulty using the phone and that they need captions to speak on the phone without any trouble.

Again, this is all, as well as a hearing person, then necessitates their ability to use the phone at no cost as well as a hearing person can. So, long answer to a short question of, no, there's there's no degree of hearing loss stated. It just says hearing loss and needs captions. That's the requirement. And that's the requirement for the home phone. And it's the requirement for CaptionCall Mobile.

- [Anna] There is another question about languages. And are there gonna be any other languages that will be available in the future?

- Yeah, that comes up a lot. So, our parent company, Sorensen, we've been growing. We're a strong company. We're a company that provides telecommunications for the deaf and hard of hearing. So, we have telecommunications for deaf as well as for hard of hearing on the CaptionCall side. So, we understand the need to provide accessibility for all. Obviously, we have a large population of deaf people at work for us too, so ASL is very important to us, in our company. We have looked into transcription in other languages other than English and Spanish right now. Spanish is very prevalent within our company as well. The ability to offer Spanish captioning as well as Spanish employees installers to go into the homes for those folks.

So, yeah, but they're, to give you a timeline, I wouldn't know, but it comes up quite a bit. I know that this'll be happening at some point here soon. Obviously, with AI technologies now, we know that those technologies are making some of this a little bit more accessible than it would've been in the past. So, stay tuned to that. Obviously, if something like that changes pretty quickly, you're gonna hear about it pretty quickly as well via our communications. And stay in touch with your account managers as well. Again, we mentioned the account manager. That's your point of contact with us. They can help you with anything and everything you need, whether it's the information for your patients on what to expect for your caption call installation, the services available,

things that you may need for consultation, and then anything new happening within CaptionCall, they'll be bringing that to your attention.

So, stay in touch with your account managers.

- [Anna] I did have one other question, Steve. And I think you mentioned it a little bit, but I know, as technology has changed, and more and more hearing aids are able to sync right into the telephone. I think you had mentioned that maybe phone hearing aids, you don't need to pick up the handset. Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

- Yeah. So, again, we create our technology, this 70AT, and we want it to be compatible with amplification. With hearing aids. And we do the best we can, with regard to the latest technology, the latest cutting edge technology. Hearing aid companies have their own paths, with regard to the technologies that they want to use. I will provide, if anyone wants to reach out to me specifically, I think I gave my contact information, but reach out to, or reach out to your account manager. Right now, I believe the only brand that can pair and connect with the 70AT without a streamer is our PhoneAc hearing aids. I'm 95% sure of that, and I'll confirm all of that. Whereas, your other product, the other brands, you would need to have that streamer paired, and then streamer to the hearing aid.

And I'm sure you're all very versed on the ability of those hearing aids' connectivity, Bluetooth wise, and which ones need a streamer and which ones do not. I don't think that landscape has changed. I'm pretty sure you'll have to check with your brand representatives to find out a little bit more about what their plans are, as far as Bluetooth. I know there's a lot of Bluetooth, new Bluetooth formats coming. And, as those things change, we have a technology product team that stays on the cusp of that. And we are in the process of creating new phones, and those phones will also be

in line with whatever's changing within the Bluetooth landscape. So, again, as we've stated, hearing aids are the gold standard, in many of our opinions.

And we wanna make sure that we stay connected with that. That this phone is capable of connecting to hearing aids as needed. Because, again, that's the gold standard out there, and we wanna stay connected with you, the hearing care professional, with regard to your hearing aid fittings. So, again, long answer to a short question. That TIA-4953 regulation is also changing, as far as technology changes within the hearing aid landscape.

- [Anna] Great, and I did wanna remind the audience that you did a 30 minute CEU class on the other offerings that Sorensen has, in case anybody was interested in learning a little bit more about Sorensen along with CaptionCall. And, other than that, I'm not seeing any other questions, Steve, so, I think we can wrap it up for today. But, thank you very much. I loved this class. And, everyone who's logging in for the summit, thank you so much for coming to all of our summit events in February.

- Thanks, Anna. Thanks, everyone.

- [Anna] Have a great day.