



READINESS OF PUBLIC PERFORMANCE VENUES AND MOVIE THEATERS TO ACCOMMODATE PERSONS WITH HEARING LOSS

Natalie Emmons, BS; Cheyenne Anderson, BA; & Carole E. Johnson, PhD, AuD
 Hearing Evaluation, Rehabilitation, and Outcomes (HERO) Laboratory
 Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
 Oklahoma City, OK 73117

INTRODUCTION

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability by places of public accommodation including movie theaters and public performance venues. In late 2016, Attorney General Loretta Lynch signed a Final Rule revising Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which mandated that the ADA requires movie theaters to provide closed-captioning and audio transcription.

Movie theatres and public performance venues must:

1. Provide information to the public about the availability of accommodations
2. Ensure staff is available to assist patrons with the equipment before, during, and after events
3. Have HAT available at patrons' seats and/or devices that provide closed-captioning or audio transcription

PURPOSE

To survey movie theaters and public performance venues in Oklahoma City to determine whether they meet criteria for accessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing



Figure 1. People enjoying a movie

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Can patrons with hearing loss access information regarding accommodations (**Information**)?
2. Do the available staff have the knowledge and skills to facilitate patrons with hearing loss to obtain necessary accommodations (**Staff**)?
3. Is the HAT available and in good working order (**HAT**)?

DESIGN Cross-sectional survey

METHODS

The following rubrics were used to survey the sites:

Information

Public Venues

	Does Not Meet Requirements	Meets Partial Requirements	Meets Requirements
Box Office	No notification of performance days and times for ASL interpretation and/or HAT availability	Notification of ASL interpreters or HAT	Notification of ASL interpreters and HAT
Website	No notification of performance days and times for ASL interpretation and/or HAT availability	Notification of ASL interpreters or HAT	Notification of ASL interpreters and HAT
Phone	There is no automated message OR no one answers the call	N/A	Notification of ASL interpreters and/or HAT

Movie Theatres

	Does Not Meet Requirements	Meets Partial Requirements	Meets Requirements
Box Office	Does not say movie titles and times that are available with captioning	N/A	Says movie titles and times that are available with captioning
Website	Does not say movie titles and times that are available with captioning	N/A	Says movie titles and times that are available with captioning
Phone	There is no automated message OR no one answers the call	N/A	Says movie titles and times that are available with captioning

Staff

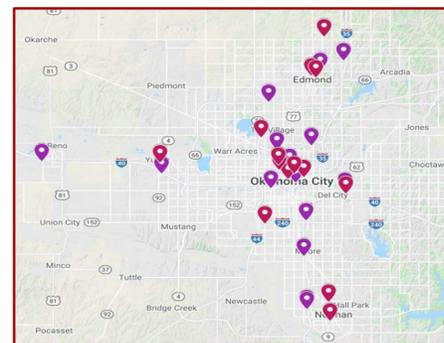
	Does Not Meet Requirements	Meets Partial Requirements	Meets Requirements
Training	No one is trained and available to assist patrons	A few are trained and available	All are trained and available to assist
Communication	No one can communicate with guests who do not use spoken language	A few can communicate with patrons through spoken language or visual language	All can communicate with patrons through spoken language or visual language
Timing	No one is readily available	Someone can be found to assist, but not readily available	Someone is available to assist guests (no longer than 5 minutes)

HAT

	Does Not Meet Requirements	Meets Partial Requirements	Meets Requirements
Number of Devices	No devices available	Some devices available	An adequate number of devices available
Use with Hearing Aids or Cochlear Implants	No devices available	Partial accessibility	There are devices available
Those without Hearing Aids	No devices available	N/A	There are devices available
Device Maintenance	No operational devices	Some devices work	All devices work
Connectivity	Devices are unable to connect to the theater	Devices connect to the theatre, but inconsistent	Devices connect easily and display captioning

RESULTS

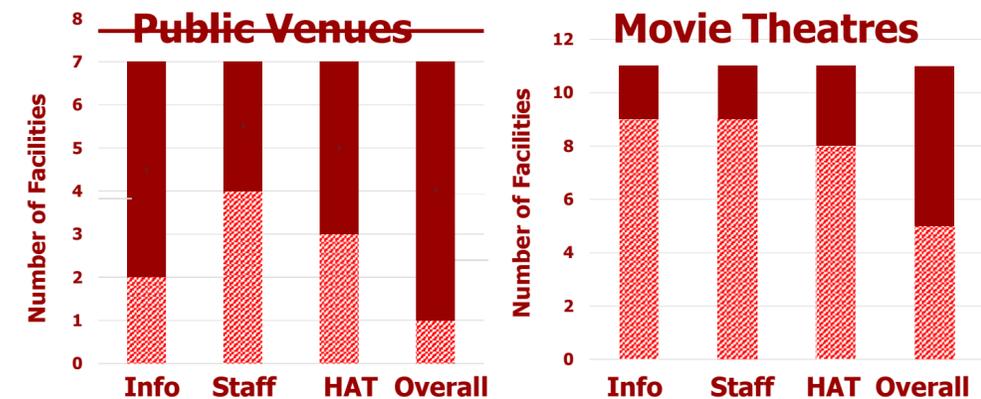
Figure 2. Public performance venues (red) and movie theatres (purple) in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area



Seven public performance venues and 11 movie theatres were surveyed.

During data collection, some of these facilities were shut down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. A cross-section of facilities was assessed which constituted a representative sample.

Facilities were first assessed on availability of information at the box office, on the Website, and over the telephone prior to site visits. A reliability judge independently assessed some of the venues with 95% reliability.



Figures 3 and 4. The number of public venues (left) and movie theatres (right) that met standards (stripes) for information, staff, HAT devices, and overall.

All criteria for information, staff, and HAT needed to be met to be considered "accessible" to those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Only one public performance venue and five movie theatres were accessible.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR PATIENTS?

Persons with hearing loss should be able to obtain information about accommodations, help from staff, and appropriate HAT or access to ASL interpreters. The results of this cross-sectional survey indicated that most public performance venues and only about half of movie theatres provide appropriate accommodations to persons with hearing loss.

Our patients need to be advised to plan ahead prior to an outing to one of these venues. If accessibility information is not available on Websites, phone calls or inquiries at the box office may be in order. They are advised to arrive in plenty of time before events begin to secure assistance from trained staff, if needed. Those with hearing loss should advocate for greater accessibility for these venues within their communities.

CLINICAL OUTCOME

A handout was developed for our patients on how to best access accommodations at public performance venues and movie theatres in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area

REFERENCES

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, §36, 104 Stat. 328 (1990).