

## **Captioning Quality Matters**

**October 10, 2014**

**Adam Finkel, Darlene Parker**

**Adam Finkel:** Thank you very much. I have been with the National Court Reporters Association for a little over four years now. I handle a lot of the federal legislation and we work a lot with some of the officials of the groups that represent people who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. We work on several initiatives with the Hearing Loss Association of America, Telecommunications for the Deaf and National Association of the Deaf. One of the initiatives in particular that we focused on over the past 18 months was the captioning quality rule making with the FCC. This was one of the first of its kind and Darlene Parker and I are going to get into that topic.

**Darlene Parker:** I began my career as an official court reporter at the Superior Court of DC. At age 30, after 10 years of hard labor, I was paroled and excited; there was a brand new thing called captioning. I was a TV kid, and I couldn't believe I was going to be paid to watch TV and provide a service. I got tired of judges saying, "What's that guy doing back in here? I thought we sentenced him to jail. Now he is back." I was thrilled to know my skill would be put to a much better use.

I was lucky enough to be the sixth person in the country to ever caption. And we will go into more detail later as to the history. But we are going to learn more about the Federal Communication Commission's quality rules, and you are going to learn more about how captioning is done in further awe of our wonderful CART captioner, Tess, by the time we are done explaining how this is performed.

**Adam Finkel:** The NCRA, the National Court Reporters Association, began with stenographic court reporters. Then about 20, 25 years ago, when captioning

started coming around, that percentage of membership grew. Roughly five percent of our members work as captioners or broadcast captioners. Essentially there are two types of captioning. One of them is broadcast captioning, the folks who caption for broadcast television. We will focus predominantly on that today. The other type of captioning is CART, what Tess is providing today, which takes place predominantly in classroom settings like this or in universities or religious and civil services. The differences really lie in what the laws require. As of January of 2015, the FCC will be in charge of assuring there is high quality captioning that meets the guidelines the FCC passed.

The Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990 is what requires CART captioning to provide equal access for folks who need it. In 1984 realtime captioning occurred for the first time. It has only been around about 30 years and it's still evolving. Darlene was the sixth person in this country to caption. The founding fathers and mothers of captioning are still around and active in the industry.

**Darlene Parker:** The history is quite fascinating to me. It starts with Julia Child who some of you know was with the OAS, precursor to the CIA. She was on the forefront in many areas. Her program was open captioned, which meant that everybody saw captions that they could not turn off. I believe it was WGBH who provided captions. In 1973, the captioned ABC news was the only accessible, somewhat timely news program provided for almost a decade. Then someone at WGBH would listen to the ABC World News Tonight newscast and get it into a format that could then be what we called "punch back," line by line as captions. I don't think those captions aired until 11:00 that night. So while it was somewhat timely, it wasn't in realtime.

In 1979, the National Captioning Institute was founded. The federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare, now Health and Human Services, told NCI to make realtime happen. It took a few years. In 1980 the first prerecorded program, the Wonderful World of Disney, was aired. Then in 1982, the space

Shuttle shot was the first realtime captioning. The program that was pre-announced because we knew it worked was for the Academy Awards. We punched it back, preparing line by line. But when someone accepted an award, you would have to have realtime because we didn't know what he or she were going to say.

The first realtime captions occurred when Johnny Carson gave Bob hope a lifetime achievement award. Later that year, ABC World News Tonight with Frank Reynolds was the first regularly scheduled realtime program. Of course later on Peter Jennings and Diane Sawyer followed, all real time captioning.

I joined NCI in 1984 when only a half hour a day of captioning was being done. But then it began to grow by leaps and bounds. Good Morning America came on and others. Now, NCI captions more than 300 hours per day, and we are only a portion of the market. I am thrilled to be part of the growth of captioning.

**Adam Finkel:** I want to give a brief review of the laws and regulations related to broadcast captioning and even CART captioning through the years. The biggest advance, a landmark bill, for people with disabilities was the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act passed. The lead sponsor of that bill was Senator Tom Harkin, who is partially Deaf himself and has a brother who is totally Deaf, I believe. He has been one of the most active legislators in pushing equal rights for those with hearing loss. That bill required equal access for everyone in the classroom. Captioning really was such a young industry at that point. In 1990, the Congress also passed the Television Decoder Circuitry Act. A lot of television stations didn't want to offer captioning. Stations didn't want to offer captioning until more people had tv and individuals didn't want tv because there wasn't enough captioning to make it worth buying the equipment. So congress mandated in 1993 that all television screens that were larger than 13 inches had to have the decoder built in so viewers could have access to captioning. That

helped push captioning more.

In 1996, the Telecommunications Act required that the top 25 tv stations have realtime captioning for all their programs. This meant essentially we needed to have captioning done off line for the programs that were done beforehand.

Throughout the 2000's, we would meet that need that was set up by Telecommunications Act of 1996. We also received funding for court reporting programs. In 2009, the Higher Education Act specifically stated that there would be approximately four grants totaling about a million dollars every year for court reporting programs with the explicit goal of training more CART captioners.

In 2010, one of the biggest rules brought the Telecommunications Act up to modern day by including cell phones and Internet access. The Communications and Video Accessibility Act, CVAA, required captioning for a program that was broadcast later, put on-line later. If you went to ABC.com, what news you found had to be captioned. This provided access for the Internet where previously there had been no rules governing access to the Internet.

Then just recently earlier in 2014, the FCC approved the best practices rules and regulations regarding broadcast captioning. This was such a major step forward for the industry which had not previously had quality rules or standards.

**Darlene Parker:** There are essentially two different types of broadcast captioning: First for live programs, local news, sporting events, election results, emergency coverage, whatever is absolutely live, is going to be done by someone like Tess. The expectations for live captioning versus pre-recording captioning are very different. We will go into that later as to the difficulties with live captioning.

As for prerecorded captioning, industry wide, we use people who are English or journalism majors. We don't need someone like Tess with her court reporter skills. This person with an English or journalism degree is going to get the program in advance. Every once in a while they will get a script, but not always.

They then listen to the program and use special software and a computer keyboard to create the captions. With prerecorded captioning, the expectation is 100 percent accuracy because there is time to review the captions. They are going to include ambient noises, a dog barking or a doorbell ringing.

The expectations are different for realtime captioning. In realtime captioning, there are redundant systems to minimize lost air. The captioner listens and inputs onto the steno machine. The steno type is based on a theory of syllables and phonetics. The Captioner's software searches the dictionary for the correct English match and that data travels via modem or the Internet to the encoder at the broadcast origination site where it is merged with the video signal. The viewer sees captions in about three to five seconds after the words are spoken. As with interpreters, there's a very small universe of people who are qualified to provide broadcast and CART captioning. Only one in 10 who starts court-reporting school graduates.

**Adam Finkel:** That's one of the biggest challenges the captioning profession faces in the next generation of captioners as the current ones sort of retire from the profession. The NCRA is trying to address this problem, trying to figure out what sort of students would likely graduate from the school. We are pushing for a PR program that talks about how great this profession is. We had a great hit recently on Fox And Friends program in the morning, talking about how great court reporting and broadcast CART captioning are for someone looking for a job. It's a difficult job, but if you attain that skill, you could make a good living, certainly.

**Darlene Parker:** The court reporting program could take two to four years usually with an associate's degree, but there are some students who have a bachelor's degree. It also takes people sometimes two to three years to attain that skill. That means the graduate is to take down the spoken word at 225 words per minute. If they live in a state that requires licensing, then they must

pass that word per minute test in order to work in that state. I encourage people who don't have a state test to take the national test offered by the National Court Reporters Association. There are a myriad of certification tests that NCRA offers and captioners should have some type of certification.

Only one in seven graduates from court-reporting school or who is an experienced court reporter who applies to work for NCI, is accepted. Even though you graduated from court reporting school and have been a court reporter for many years, that doesn't mean you have a skills to become a CART or broadcast captioner yet. There are people who offer further training and there are some schools that offer captioning training as well as regular court reporting training. After passing rigorous tests and being hired at least at NCI, I know that you will succeed. It usually takes about four months to get that trained captioner on the air captioning local news and on something such as C Span.

That's probably true for other companies as well. It's not easy. Think about sports captioning. Think about ESPN and how quickly some of those people speak. A game is actually an easy thing because it's more paced. When you have a sports talk show, with several people talking at once, it could be a difficult 18 months to two years to attain that skill.

There are different steno companies and different steno machine models, but the keyboard will remain the same. There are no markings on those keys, like on our customary keyboard. Some people are hunt-and-peckers who need to see where the keys are that says that's an A, that's a B. No such thing on the steno machine. On the left side of the machine are the initial consonants, the ending consonants are on the right side and vowels are at the bottom. There are 22 keys. One of those keys in the center is the asterisk key. We can use that to differentiate words like peak and peek. We also use that as a correction. If you hit it fast, three times you can knock out three prior strokes that you didn't want to

get out.

On the left side of the machine, STPH on the top, the SKWR on the bottom. The left side are the initial keys that start the word. On the bottom we have vowels. A, O, E, U. There's no "I", because a combination of keys equal letters. There's the E and U that have to be hit together with the right thumb to equal an "I".

On the right side of the keyboard, FPLTD at the top, on the bottom, RBGSZ. Again, not every key, every letter of the alphabet is going to be there. So, combinations of keys have to equal a word. (Demonstration of spelling 'Adam Finkel' on the steno machine)

**Darlene Parker:** We learn all of this in steno school. I say it's akin to learning a foreign language coupled with manual dexterity. We use our thumbs on the vowels. When someone says they are all thumbs... (Laughter)

**Adam Finkel:** That's why it's so difficult.

**Audience Member:** I have a four-year degree in Political Science, but if, on Friday afternoon, if I decide I don't have anything to do on the weekend, and I'm not going to read, I didn't forget how to read on Monday. For court reporters, in particular, and captioners, if they don't practice that skill, especially at the lower speeds, they lose essentially every day that they don't practice. You need a dedicated student who is willing to type and practice every day in order to graduate from school.

**Darlene Parker:** Sometimes ESPN and other sports talk shows and any of the political round table shows can hit speeds of 300 words per minute. Now you can appreciate how mistakes can occur. Do you think any of us could go through the entire day of writing e-mails and never make a typo? Hitting one extra key on the steno keyboard or missing one key on the steno keyboard can result in an entirely different word. As for quality control, the captioners review their work

after their broadcast and make any entries in their dictionary correcting words where necessary. They perform housekeeping, meaning that they have to have their dictionaries in the correct order. They may use the same brief form on occasion for the same name. The dictionaries are in sequential order. It will read the top entry first. So if you have two of the same entries in steno outlines, in dictionary one and in dictionary two, you better want the outline that's in dictionary one. If you think you are going for the outline in dictionary two, it's not going to translate. Descending order takes precedence.

Supervisors also regularly review captioner's work. They review files, the printed word and they also review on screen spot checks. There are those spot checks as well as printouts. Errors are caused also by transmission errors. You might see captions jump around the screen or the end dropped off. You might see colors changing; it's very bizarre. The problem is with the phone line. You don't see transmission errors as much with IP, internet protocol, and people are moving towards that now.

We say today the captioner has to be the pilot and the air traffic controller. Back in the day when I walked into a studio, I had a coordinator with me, somebody else in the room. That person called back to the engineering department. "Please connect us for ABC World News Tonight." All I did was concentrate on captioning; it was wonderful. Now, rates have gone down; we have fewer people and the captioner is now in charge of their technical connections.

I'll talk you through the captioner's software. The NCI's captioning system shows the video and the captions on the screen. The captioner can connect to a server, enter IP addresses, phone numbers, up to six connections. We have done some shows such as Stand Up for Cancer where we had world-wide connections. No pressure, right? You better not screw this up, get all your technical connections correct. This system allows seamless work. That means when it's a long show, somebody else needs to take over. The captioner shouldn't go for an entire five



hours alone. The other captioner has to take over.

We have the ability to get audio as a backup up from the caption delivery system. This (pointing to visual) is called a soft phone so we can get the audio as quickly as possible. If a line goes down and we are getting a satellite feed, we can go back to the backup audio. The caption delivery system will tell us if there's a technical problem. We have IM, instant messaging, in case there is a breakdown somewhere. Maybe the next captioner is having technical problems. Or somebody is on standby. You might get a message saying you need to jump on whatever because they are having a hurricane right now. You can see the captioner has to have her attention in so many different places it ends up that captioning is almost the easy part of it. Captioners have to be technically savvy and have to work well under pressure. They cannot get flustered. If something goes wrong, they have to calmly and quickly troubleshoot.

NCI has a 24-hour engineering department that's there for captioners if they need it. But we can often resolve the problems on our own.

With this caption delivery system, the great thing is, somebody else could jump on, put in the correct session ID and join the session and take it over from the captioner. We had someone pass out the other day. How can you predict something like that? My goodness. So, we have that ability to then have somebody jump on quickly. Therefore, I want you to appreciate that we are not just captioning, any more, we have many things taking our attention.

**Adam Finkel:** When NCRA started the best practices project, probably two years ago, the motivation was the fact that there are so many different places in the process of live captioning where an error can occur. It could start with a poor, untrained captioner; it could be from multiple transmission errors; it could be errors with the cable equipment; it could be that the consumer's equipment is

faulty. In 2010 the FCC did a study based on all the complaints they had received the previous year from consumers regarding captioning. It showed that 12 percent were errors due to cable or satellite equipment; 21 percent were due to the broadcast equipment; and the much smaller percentages were due to an untrained captioner.

To address that NCRA started by the defining roles of the key players involved in the captioning process. They asked, How can we get the best captioner to write their best words so that the broadcaster can then transmit that content to the cable company, the satellite company, eventually to be displayed to the consumer? Every chain in the link needs to be unbroken.

To start the process toward creating some best practices, two years ago we asked a number of captioning companies that had been in the industry for several years to write up how to get high quality captions. We defined different roles for individual captioners, for captioning companies, content creators, for the cable, as well as the consumers and consumer groups.

After we devised what we thought would create these high quality captions and allow them to get to the consumer as much intact as possible, we reached out to groups in Washington. In this case, the groups were the Hearing Loss Association of America, the National Association of the Deaf and Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. We reached out for their feedback because the captioning quality had been essentially open ended for about a decade. There had never been any quality standards or quality rules. Neither the broadcasters, nor the caption companies, the cable companies nor the consumers could agree on what a good standard might be. How can we measure that? It's a difficult thing to do. After we got very good feedback from these organizations, the NCRA approached the FCC. We showed them what we put together. We suggested that if all the groups follow this particular process, we will be able to address the issue of quality.

**Darlene Parker:** Let me give you some more background on how this came about. I was privileged to be asked to be on the captioning quality subcommittee for NCRA. I was there with several other captioners and Carol Studemund who was the Chairperson. She was front and center on this. We devised what we thought were best practices for captioners, the captioning companies, the content providers and the video distributors.

When one of the major networks was meeting with the FCC, I was asked to accompany them and talk about caption quality. When asked about NCRA best practices, I called Adam who provided me with a copy. I provided that major network with NCRA's copy of the best practices. On November 20, 2013, a meeting took place between the FCC and this major network that I won't name but applaud for being on the forefront and bringing the major captioning companies with them. I was happy and privileged to be there as an NCI employee, but also as a representative of NCRA presenting the best practices. The network thought it was great and suggested that all the players need to create their own best practices." We thought that was a good idea, also.

After everybody dispersed, my boss at NCI headed up the captioning companies where they all worked together to come up with best practices for captioners and captioning companies. I'm proud to say that most of what ended up being adopted was what came out of the NCRA committee, and then, of course, the content providers, the networks and the stations and the cable providers ended up presenting their own best practices.

What the captioning companies are expected to do is ensure proper screening of candidates. Remember, I talked about the one in seven graduates from captioning school? Captioning companies have to supervise their captioners and provide them with all the materials that they need. They need to educate the clients as to what is necessary to produce good quality captions, and that

includes preparation material. For this talk today, Adam and I made sure that our interpreters and Tess had all our information because they need that to do a good job. We sometimes get requests for very difficult scientific conferences where you have to have a PhD in Biochemistry to understand these things. So it's like, please, throw us a bone, help us out, give us some information. Give us your PowerPoints, so we can do a good job for you. It's important to get those materials.

I'm happy to say that we impressed on one local news conglomerate to let us into their electronic newsroom. We wanted to see the scripts in advance so when we caption the news, we get the spellings correct. Otherwise, we are guessing at the spellings of some foreign names. We don't always get that prep for local news. There, you can go to their website and you do your best.

In addition, captioning companies should conduct periodic quality reviews, both of printouts and spot checks on air. Captioning companies need to alert clients when there are problems on the client's end, and help address them. If a client has a problem with an encoder, all of a sudden we have trouble. The station never told us they switched to a new encoder; that's why there's trouble. We alert them that if we think they have a problem with the encoder, we need to test them to make sure captions are going out properly. Captioning companies also need to respond in a timely manner to issues raised by clients and by the viewers.

About the individual captioners' responsibilities, I first want to say no one feels worse about an error than the captioner, herself or himself. We are perfectionists by nature and it pains us to know that we caused an error. Sometimes it may be a finger went to the wrong key, or made an error in an entry but the message is not coming out correctly. The captioner's responsibility is to be prepared for every broadcast as thoroughly as possible. That means that they are allowed access to the electronic news room for that local station. They need

to make sure they get in there and get those prep materials. They need to be technically savvy. Remember I said they need to work well under pressure and troubleshoot. Captioners should never do a program they are not qualified to caption. When you are captioning for a company, you may be an employee of that company. The company will make sure that you are ready for that hockey game. They would not throw a rookie into a hockey game or a brand new captioner. There are captioners who are independent contractors working for lots of different companies. Captioners shouldn't volunteer for that program if they are not qualified for it. It is also up to the company to vet and make sure that that captioner is ready for that program. If I have a relatively new, independent contractor, I keep an eye on her, and make sure that she is ready for that.

**Adam Finkel:** Eventually the FCC adopted these best practices for individual captioners and captioning companies as well after getting feedback from the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Cable and Telecommunications Association and the Motion Picture Association of America. There was a back and forth several times with the FCC but eventually we got this product that the National Association of Broadcasters wrote for companies like CBS, Comedy Central, NCTA, Time Warner and the Motion Picture Association for post production.

The FCC's final product mentioned four non-quantitative qualities. They included accuracy, or how well the captions were written compared to what was spoken. Synchronicity, was about the correct time so there is not a major delay from when the word is spoken on the program, and it should be just several seconds between when it shows up on the screen. Completeness is meant the whole program. Is the whole segment of the program captioned? Is there no a drop off for sentences, for segments? Lastly was the placement of the captions so the viewer's experience isn't hindered. These are non-quantitative.

We didn't want the captioner having to meet accuracy goals that may be difficult

to attain, or so high or so low that that they are worthless. We wanted to avoid quantitative metrics because there isn't a captioner who is 100 percent accurate. Canada and Australia have adopted some standards that proved to be unattainable by folks involved with that process.

**Darlene Parker:** Qualitative metrics ended up being counterproductive. Captioners became frustrated and began leaving the industry. We were actually losing the best captioners in Canada when we were trying to raise quality.

**Adam Finkel:** Since outside of the top 25 media markets, stations are not required to provide realtime captions, something called electronic newsroom and technique, ENT, evolved. Essentially the producer will program the script from the teleprompter to scroll through on screen as it's being spoken. As long as the reporter stays on script, that's accurate. ENT doesn't work with reporting on sports or the weather or from a reporter on the street because those reports are not scripted. When ENT scrolling doesn't occur, the viewer doesn't know what the breaking news was on the street. Entire segments critical to the news program wouldn't be available to viewers who can't hear the news. The FCC decided it needed a regulation to fix that. The FCC asked the National Association of Broadcasters for a remedy. The NAB claimed that there was an improvement available and they were going to work on it. Then if broadcasters didn't follow the new ENT best practices, broadcasters could be subject to fines. What was more important, the FCC instead required broadcasters to offer realtime captioning by a broadcast captioning company.

**Darlene Parker:** I'm happy to say that we and other companies have been contacted by many stations outside the top market 25, the 26 and up, asking for realtime captioning. They felt it was more difficult to beef up their graphics than to hire a real time captioner. Another part of the 2015 order is that if programs are completed more than 24 hours in advance of broadcast, they really should be

real time captioned. This may sound bizarre, but real time captioning costs less than off-line captioning. The reason is off-line captioning takes longer. We caption companies welcome this rule because we have gotten tired of realtime captioning Gilligan's Island, a program that aired in the 60's in real time,. It should have captions on it by now. We are hoping that the networks that air some of the close to live reality programs will have them captioned in an off-line manner.

Another way that we can do this is with off-line FX. If we can get a program in advance and slow it down, we have far more accurate captions because the words are not coming at at 225 words a minute. No reason with off-line FX that sitcoms from the 50's and 60's can't be live captioned.

**Audience Member:** Is there a way to permanently apply the captions to the Gilligan's Island so every time an episode repeats, you don't need the realtime?

**Darlene Parker:** Yes, but different entities air the program and they don't always have access to the captioned copy of the program. Those captions should be burned on there forever so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel every time.

**Adam Finkel:** The implementation of all the new regulations is January 15th of 2015. The ENT regulations took place several months ago, June 30, 2014. We see more broadcast stations offering live captioning as opposed to ENT because they felt they couldn't meet the requirements. Otherwise the producers would have to make momentary decisions whether to caption a live-breaking news segment or the weather or a sports report. Most captioning companies were pleased with the results. The companies were offering high quality training, written by key players in the industry. We got buy-ins from smaller companies as well.

This was the first time we have seen an open dialogue among all the key players in that industry on what is involved in providing high quality captions. One of the best things that has resulted is captioners have been requesting a script. They

want to know something about what the program is going to be about or what the people are going to talk about. For years a lot of programs kept the script as their proprietary information, so they wouldn't share it. We are not going to put the script on the internet; we won't leak the information; we want to know exactly what they are talking about so we can provide the best quality captions to the viewers at home.

**Darlene Parker:** What can you do to help the process? We, and all the captioning companies, encourage feedback. Do not think of it as complaining. Think of it as helping. Think of it as feedback. For example, say, "on W- whatever, at 5:30, I saw this..." That helps us track down what the problem was as opposed to saying the captions were awful on the 5:00 news cast. It could have been caused by transmission errors, or maybe the captioner didn't do a good job. But if you tell me *what* you saw at 5:30 on W- whatever, I could track it down, see what the problem was. And correct it such as giving that captioner further training or giving the station a heads up. We can't see this broadcast, it's audio only, so please help us and keep an eye out for garbling. The captioner leaves his or her name and number before every show so if you see garbling, call the captioner. The quickest resolution is to have the captioner redial that line and get rid of that garbling. With your feedback, we can all continue to improve.

**Adam Finkel:** In the past few years the FCC has taken noticeable steps toward making that process much simpler. The only way the FCC gets a good understanding of whether its regulations are working is if people file feedback. They call them complaints. An unfortunate term because no one wants to be a complainer, but it's the only way for us to know where we are falling short. We revisit the rules after one year. In January 2016, we will meet to see what improvements have taken place and what still needs to be addressed. Aside from sending feedback, you can engage your local ALDA chapters and other organizations letting them know what you are seeing with regards to captioning. If you are constantly talking to a broadcast station about poor captioning but their



programs continue to lack high quality captions, we need to address that.

Here are several resources for your information. NCRA.org offers a lot of information. Captionmatters.org, is an advocacy-focused site for consumers and captioning. It will show you how to file feedback with the FCC, how captioning works and more. It's very effective. If you are looking for a captioner or a CART captioner, JCR.com has information in particular on that as well.

Okay. We're done. Questions?

**Audience Member** Do you have any control over the time delay that we get to see with captions? The Olympics are the worst offenders: 20 seconds after you hear the audio, you see the captions.

**Darlene Parker:** 20 seconds is not the norm and should not be acceptable. Delays can go up to five to seven seconds. We found we are getting more delays with HD. The captioner has to hear the information so of course we are the slow part. We have to process what we hear first. My husband doesn't like captions on sports. He says they get in the way and they are too far behind. Until I have clairvoyant captioners, we should let whoever was captioning know, about the delay. That's the kind of feedback we want to hear.

**Audience Member:** Since you don't get to see the action prior to showing on the air ... ?

**Darlene Parker:** The best we can do is get the audio a second or two before you are getting your audio. There are a lot of syndicated programs the distributors receive so close to air time that it has to be realtimed. They will play a tape for us and we will caption it audio only, but we don't have the benefit of the graphics. When viewers complain, "Why can't I read the graphics and see how they spell the names," we have to explain that it is not possible to have access to the video.

Actually, we had a client who listened to us. We asked that they run the audio a little ahead of the video so that we can be ahead just a bit. Then the captioning comes out being more in sync.

**Audience Member:** What happens when you get the program on TV where the captions do not match the program? That just happened several times in Chicago.

**Darlene Parker:** Call the station. Contact the station immediately. There was a mix up in the connection. The captioner might have gotten confused and dialed into the wrong station. That's a case where it's really important to give immediate feedback.

**Audience Member:** Sometimes there are no captions at all. Is that a station problem? It happens sometimes on PBS.

**Darlene Parker:** The requirements right now are for the top 25 markets. I'm surprised that PBS doesn't have captions. Is this a program that usually had captions?

**Audience Member:** It was a rerun.

**Darlene Parker:** Somehow the captions might have gotten stripped. That's another place to give feedback.

**Audience Member:** That would be a station issue?

**Darlene Parker:** Yes.

**Audience Member:** I work in New Jersey. We have realtime captioning for conference calls to dial in. When I'm working with a client, I can't necessarily share proprietary PowerPoint and things like that. We share a key word list. Is there anything else I should be doing to help captioners prepare? Caption Colorado does the captions.

**Darlene Parker:** Provide as much information as you are comfortable providing, that will give you the best result.

**Audience Member:** I'm finding a problem with the digital recorders. When I rewind, I can see some of the program. If I skip ahead, every time I let off the fast-forward, I get a bar directly across the bottom over the captions for 10 seconds.

**Darlene Parker:** That's interesting. I have to ask my engineers about that one. I know we have problems where people have recorded an HD show in SD. They will not get captions that way.

**Adam Finkel:** We have talked to the engineers at these companies, and they have put a lot of work into how that's designed. That's a very interesting point that we have. Actually I have never heard how to make that better.

Thank you all for your participation.

**Darlene Parker:** Thank you all very much for attending today. Again, we welcome your feedback to help us do a better job. Thank you very much.

---

**Adam Finkel** joined the National Court Reporters Association's Government Relations Department in August 2010. He has been active with multiple state-level legislative initiatives while overseeing NCRA's federal legislative portfolio on Capitol Hill.

**Darlene Parker**, CAPM, RPR, graduated from court reporting school in 1974 and began her career as an official court reporter at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Currently she is a realtime captioner for the National Captioning Institute. Most recently she has served on NCRA's Caption Quality Subcommittee.