Making Online Communication Accessible for the Deafblind Community

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Summary

As a Deafblind person, I have used a variety of online communication platforms. As my vision has deteriorated, I have noticed that there are certain elements that can severely impact the success of online communication. This includes a dark coloured background, dark coloured clothing, modifying signing style (such as slower fingerspelling for clarity), large print text, and other supports. Having the right combination of accessibility options available will ultimately lead to better access for the Deafblind community in a new world of physical distancing.

Since COVID-19 started, I've been learning about this new platform out there called Zoom. For a webinar, people who are Deafblind/low vision might be able to see the signing on screen better when there is a dark background and the signer is wearing dark clothing. I have support from my intervenor, my wife and friends. They can relay that information to me using Tactile ASL. Another option would be to have the signed information typed out so I can read it in large print. Some Deafblind people who are Hard of Hearing might have a cochlear implant or hearing aids that allow them connect their phone to their hearing device and have a conversation that way.

This webinar presents the key components of making online video communication as accessible as possible for the Deafblind community in a world where physical distancing is necessary.