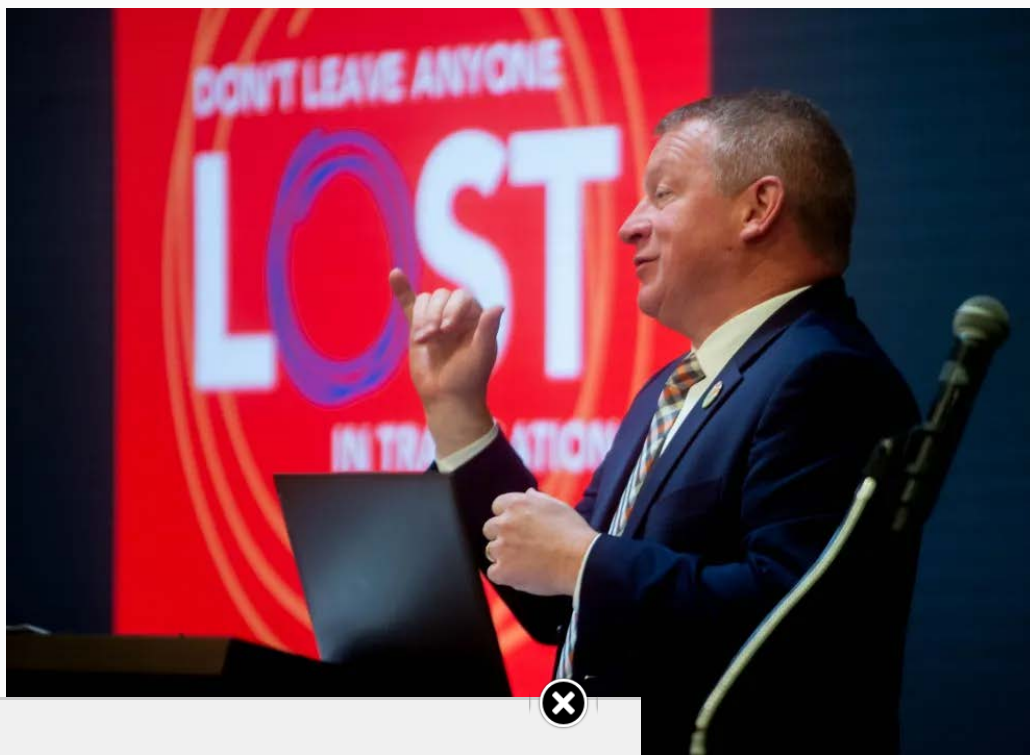


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'Lost in Translation' campaign aims to increase access for Connecticut deaf communities



Jeri Bravin, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf signs during the announcement for the "Lost in Translation" campaign at the American School of the Deaf in West Hartford on Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. The campaign is to create a better understanding and awareness in health care and the education fields for deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind communities. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)



By **STEPHEN UNDERWOOD** | sunderwood@courant.com |

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A man lying on a gurney stares up at the faces of a team of concerned medical doctors and nurses running down a hospital hallway. The man desperately tries communicating with them, but they seem confused by his hand gestures. The man's face grows more desperate and terrified as they approach the end of a hallway into an operating room.

The emotional video is part of a new public service campaign by the [American School for the Deaf](#) that aims to create more awareness in both health care and education of the Deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind communities.

“Imagine what it must feel like to be transported to the hospital in an ambulance and not know what paramedics all around you are saying, or to experience the same feeling of isolation while lying in an emergency room without any loved ones around,” said ASD Executive Director Jeffrey Bravin at a press briefing Tuesday. “Imagine being a student and what it must feel like to not hear what is being said all around you, and to have no knowledge of how you can gain the support you need. That is what we call being lost in translation, and that is what this campaign is about.”

The “Lost in Translation” campaign is funded by a grant from the state's Office of Aging and Disability Services. During the year-long campaign, ASD will work with both hospitals and schools across the state, encouraging them to pledge their support to increase awareness and eliminate communication barriers.



Luisa Soboleski, President, CT Association of the Deaf signs during the announcement for the "Lost in Translation" campaign at the American School of the Deaf in West Hartford on Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. The campaign is to create a better understanding and awareness in health care and the education fields for deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind communities. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)

The campaign will include an intensive social media campaign and several public service announcements that will be broadcast on various media outlets to raise awareness of the barriers Deaf people often face.

"Deaf children are often experiencing language deprivation," Soboleski said. "It's a problem in both the education and the medical field. We want to improve the system so that all children, regardless of which families they're born to, have access to communication."

Ninety percent of Deaf or hard of hearing children are born to parents that can hear, according to Luisa Soboleski, president of the Connecticut Association of the Deaf. Because of this, parents are often left scrambling to find supports to effectively communicate with their children, while many don't receive equitable supports in school or at home.



Jeff Bravin, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf looks on as Bryan Klimkiewicz, CT State Department of Education, Director of Special Education addresses guest during the announcement for the "Lost in Translation" campaign at the American School of the Deaf in West Hartford on Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. The campaign is to create a better understanding and awareness in health care and the education fields for deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind communities. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)

To improve access for students, the campaign will work towards ensuring school districts across the state complete a Language Communications Plan for Deaf, hard of hearing or DeafBlind students to ensure they have access to an equitable and accessible education.

In health care, the goal of the campaign is to ensure hospitals provide full communication access including signers for Deaf patients who need medical care. The school will be offering signers to an unspecified number of hospitals throughout the region.

"For Deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind patients who face additional challenges in emergency room situations – such as ambulance rides and emergency room visits – communication can also mean the difference between life and death," Bravin said.

[The Connecticut Hospital Association](#), which has partnered with the ASD since 2002, said it will play a role in ensuring hospitals are ready for interpreters to integrate with medical staff. The CHA has also distributed thousands of clear face masks to help Deaf individuals who often read lips and facial expressions.

“The hospitals are eager for the upcoming rollout of the new pilot program and for the training videos that have been developed,” said Marielle Daniels Director of Regulatory Advocacy. “We are excited and ready for this launch.”

Stephen Underwood can be reached at sunderwood@courant.com



Jeff Bravin, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf signs with Lisa Flaherty-Von after the announcement for the “Lost in Translation” campaign at the American School of the Deaf in West Hartford on Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024. The campaign is to create a better understanding and awareness in health care and the education fields for deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind communities. (Aaron Flaum/Hartford Courant)
