



29 November 2018

This is an open letter to the court community. For those who have been staying informed of the evolution of the stenographic court reporting profession, you are aware of the internal and external forces and the resulting changes that are occurring. If your court employs or contracts with stenographic court reporters, it is critical that you are aware of the grave shortage of stenographers currently facing the court reporting profession.

- *Reporting agencies nationwide are offering digital reporting services to meet client demand.*
  - The practice of recruiting stenographic students to a two- to four-year curriculum to learn the theory and speed building has failed, resulting in a continuous decline in enrollment for more than a decade. Schools have lost their funding and are closing their stenographic programs. As this educational system collapses, so does the supply of stenographers. For 2017, across the United States, there were fewer than 200 students who graduated. As a result, the stenographic shortages are creating a shift within the industry and court reporting agencies are adding digital reporters and technology to meet the demand, along with transcription services.
- *Digital reporting and transcription curricula follow approved court reporting programs.*
  - Digital reporters are trained to provide quality recordings from which highly accurate verbatim transcripts are produced. Digital reporters can be trained and certified in a few months. AAERT recognized training and certification programs ensure high standards for digital reporters and transcribers nationwide. When best practices are implemented, digital reporting provides an accurate record and a positive experience for courts, attorneys, litigants and reporting professionals.
- *The courts are not immune to this shortage.*
  - Courts which employ stenographic court reporters have been or will be affected. There are certain types of cases required by statute or by court rule to be reported by a stenographic court reporter. Courts must be aware of and acknowledge this shortage, so plans can be made to amend the statutes and/or

rules to recognize digital recording as a viable method for capturing the official record for all types of cases in all venues. An AAERT Certified Electronic Reporter (CER<sup>®</sup>) producing annotations and using best practices for digital recording can produce an accurate and high-quality recording. An AAERT Certified Electronic Transcriber (CET<sup>®</sup>) can produce an accurate and quality transcript from annotations and recordings. It is the trained human who is responsible for “making the record,” not the machine.

- Additionally, if depositions are scheduled around the availability of a stenographic court reporter, case management and timeliness of adjudication are likely to be impacted.
- *AAERT provides a framework for best practices and certification nationwide.*
  - AAERT is the certifying body that promotes the education, certification, continuing education, and public awareness of digital reporting. Standards for best practices and school curricula already exist. AAERT is working closely with schools to initiate online and “brick and mortar” digital reporting and transcription programs across the United States. Additionally, our government relations team is working at the state level to advocate for the interests of the Association and its members regarding policies and regulations. The AAERT certifications are widely recognized and accepted by the courts, government agencies, and the business community. AAERT supports the court reporting community and those who are interested in learning more about digital technology.

For the past several decades, digital reporting has provided millions of hours of verifiable recordings. It has provided millions of pages of transcripts for countless trials, depositions, hearings and meetings across the globe. In this digital age change is inevitable. AAERT and digital reporting are positioned to embrace new technologies and continue moving forward with verifiable solutions.

AAERT welcomes all those who provide services within the court reporting profession. For more information about digital reporting and AAERT, we invite you to visit us at [AAERT.org](http://AAERT.org) and review the links below for further information:

- [> Standards for Coursework in Court Reporting](#)
- [> Standards for Coursework in Legal Transcription & Proofreader](#)
- [> Code of Ethics](#)
- [> Certification](#)

- [> Continuing Education](#)

This is an exciting time for the digital reporting industry. We welcome your interest – as a judge, administrator, or clerk. If you should have any questions, please reach out to us at [aaert@aaert.org](mailto:aaert@aaert.org).

Thank you,

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President

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