



## **Voiance Language Interpretation and TTY**

*Dear Ask Amy: How can I call for help if I don't speak English or am deaf or hearing impaired? S.Y. - Oriskany*

The Oneida County 911 Center uses a company called Voiance for language interpretation. Voiance offers 24/7 Over-the-Phone Interpretation (OPI) in over 200 languages, Translation and Localization in over 100 Languages and Video Remote Interpretation. ([www.voiance.com/About-Voiance-Language-Services.aspx](http://www.voiance.com/About-Voiance-Language-Services.aspx)) In our community, interpretation services are needed now more than ever.

Did you know that Oneida County has the fourth highest concentration of refugees in the United States? The City of Utica alone has hosted over 12,000 refugees over the past 25 years from 31 countries. That makes up 12% of the entire population. (<http://www.ocgov.net/google>) In total, there's over 40 languages that are spoken in this community including American Sign Language, as the New York State School for the Deaf is located in Rome.

When a 911 dispatcher receives an emergency call and is unable to converse with the caller due to a language barrier, an already stressful situation intensifies. This is where Voiance Language Interpretation comes into play. The dispatcher attempts to obtain the language spoken and connects to the Voiance service. The Voiance operator connects the dispatcher and caller to the proper interpreter and then information can be gathered and the appropriate help can be sent.

As dispatchers, we are used to dealing with emergency situations but when there is a language issue, it is important for the caller to remember to stay calm, cooperate with the dispatcher and remain on the line. There is a slight time delay and there may be some silent period on the line while we are connecting to Voiance, but in order for us to be able to send the right kind of help to the correct location, these services are necessary.

Along with Voiance, the Oneida County 911 Center is also equipped to use TTY; the telecommunicating device for the deaf. When we receive these calls, we are able to type back and forth with the deaf or hearing impaired caller to obtain the necessary information to get the appropriate help on the way. We have pre-programmed questions as well as the ability to type freely and converse with the caller.

These two programs are alternative ways to make sure all of the citizens of Oneida County get the emergency help they need in a timely fashion. At Oneida County 911, we strive to serve the public to the best of our abilities.