

RCW 49.60.540 Closed captioning at motion picture theaters.

(Effective January 1, 2026.) (1) A place of public accommodation that is a motion picture theater shall provide access to fully operational and well-maintained closed captioning technology for the general public for each screening of a motion picture that is produced and available with closed captioning as required by Title III of the federal Americans with disabilities act.

(2) If a motion picture is produced with open captioning content and distributed to motion picture theaters, a motion picture theater company that controls, operates, owns, or leases five or more motion picture theaters in the state shall provide open captioning screenings of such motion picture that has at least five scheduled screenings at that theater, provided that the theater has digital projection systems that support open captioning files. Such open captioning screenings must occur within each of the time periods set forth below:

(a) Within each of the first two weeks of such a motion picture's release, the motion picture theater shall provide at least two open captioning screenings, of which at least one must begin between 5:59 p.m. and 11:01 p.m. on Fridays or between 10:59 a.m. and 11:01 p.m. on Saturdays or Sundays.

(b) Within each week after the first two weeks of such a motion picture's release, the motion picture theater shall provide at least one open captioning screening per week, which must begin between 5:59 p.m. and 10:01 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays; between 5:59 p.m. and 11:01 p.m. on Fridays; or between 10:59 a.m. and 11:01 p.m. on Saturdays or Sundays.

(3) If a motion picture is produced with open captioning content and distributed to motion picture theaters, a motion picture theater company that controls, operates, owns, or leases four or fewer motion picture theaters in the state shall, at each theater that has digital projection systems that support open captioning files:

(a) Provide an open captioning screening within eight calendar days after receiving a request; or

(b) Offer open captioning consistent with the requirements for motion picture theaters in subsection (2) of this section.

(4) Nothing in this section shall prevent a motion picture theater from offering more open captioning screenings than required by subsections (2) and (3) of this section.

(5) Motion picture theaters shall provide contact information on their websites for the purpose of receiving and fulfilling requests for open captioning screenings.

(6) If an open captioning screening of a motion picture overlaps with one or more other open captioning screenings of the same motion picture at the same motion picture theater, no more than one such motion picture screening may be counted toward the minimum number of screenings required by this section, except where it is not practicable to avoid such overlap.

(7) A motion picture theater shall advertise the date and time of open captioning screenings in the same manner as the motion picture theater advertises all other motion picture screenings and indicate which screenings will include open captioning by using the character symbol "OC."

(8) A motion picture theater shall maintain documents sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of this section for a period of at least one year.

(9) This section does not apply to drive-in theaters.

(10) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Closed captioning" means the written display of a movie's dialogue or transcript and may include nonspeech information such as music, character identities, and other sounds or sound effects by means of a personal captioning device that delivers captions to individual patrons.

(b) "Motion picture theater" means an establishment in which feature motion pictures are regularly exhibited to the public for an admission charge.

(c) "Motion picture theater company" means any individual or business entity that operates one or more motion picture theaters.

(d) "Open captioning" means the written, on-screen display of a motion picture's dialogue and nonspeech information, which may include music, the identity of the character speaking, or other sounds and sound effects. [2025 c 355 s 1.]

Effective date—2025 c 355: "This act takes effect January 1, 2026." [2025 c 355 s 2.]

Short title—2025 c 355: "This act may be known and cited as the John Waldo act." [2025 c 355 s 3.]