

# Bridging the Justice Gap

How Digital Court Reporting Expands  
Access to Legal Proceedings



# Introduction

The American legal system faces a significant challenge in ensuring equal access to justice for all. A critical component of this challenge is the accessibility and affordability of accurate and timely court records. Traditional court reporting methods, reliant on stenographers, are increasingly strained by a shortage of skilled professionals and rising costs. This whitepaper examines how technology, and specifically digital court reporting, can address these challenges, offering solutions to reduce backlogs, increase affordability, and expand access to legal proceedings.

Digital court reporting offers a pathway to a **more equitable justice system** by modernizing the way court records are created and managed.

# The Current State of Access to Justice

The ability to obtain justice is a cornerstone of a fair and democratic society. Equal access to legal proceedings and accurate documentation of these proceedings forms the bedrock of our judicial system. However, several complex and interconnected factors are converging to create a growing “justice gap” in the United States—a widening divide between those who can fully access and navigate the legal system and those who cannot.

This justice gap manifests in numerous ways across the legal landscape. In many rural and underserved communities, residents must travel hours to reach their nearest courthouse, creating geographic barriers that disproportionately affect lower-income individuals who may lack reliable transportation. Budget constraints have forced many courts to reduce operating hours or consolidate locations, further limiting physical access to justice. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated court backlogs nationwide, with some jurisdictions reporting case delays extending more than a year beyond pre-pandemic timeframes.

The financial burden of legal proceedings presents another significant barrier. According to the American Bar Association, more than [80% of low-income Americans](#) cannot afford necessary legal help when faced with civil matters. This affordability crisis extends beyond direct legal representation to encompass the entire ecosystem of legal services, including court reporting and transcription services that are essential for creating the official record of proceedings.



Perhaps most concerning is the documentation gap that emerges when courts cannot secure proper recording of proceedings. Without accurate transcripts, individuals lose the fundamental ability to effectively appeal decisions or fully understand the reasoning behind judgments that affect their lives, property, and liberty. This documentation accessibility issue represents one of the most pressing yet overlooked aspects of the justice gap—one that particularly impacts disadvantaged communities who most need protection under the law.

As these challenges compound, they threaten the core principle that justice should be equally available to all citizens regardless of socioeconomic status, geographic location, or other factors beyond their control. Addressing this multifaceted justice gap requires innovative solutions that can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and expand access points throughout the legal system.

## The Stenographer Shortage Crisis

The traditional method of court reporting relies heavily on stenographers, highly skilled professionals who create verbatim records of legal proceedings using specialized equipment. However, the field is experiencing a profound transformation due to workforce challenges that threaten the very foundation of legal documentation.

The [2025 Court Reporting Industry Trends Report](#) reveals a troubling trend: the number of practicing stenographers has declined by approximately 21% over the past decade. This reduction stems from multiple factors, including an aging workforce where nearly half of stenographers are 55 or older, coupled with diminishing educational opportunities. The closure of numerous stenography schools—a 42% decrease in training programs—has created a pipeline problem that shows no signs of improving. New enrollment in stenography programs has plummeted by an estimated 74%, with even prestigious institutions like Brown College of Court Reporting discontinuing their court reporting programs due to insufficient student interest.

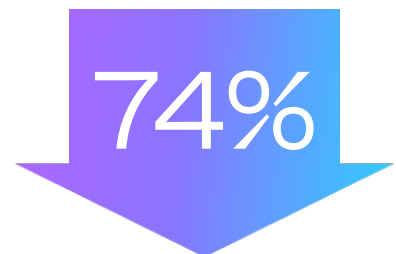
### The Stenographer Shortage Is Worsening

**1 in 5**  
stenographers  
have quit or retired

21% of practicing stenographers have left the profession in the past decade.



Nearly half of  
all stenography  
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**closed**



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This shortage has created ripple effects throughout the justice system. As courts and law firms struggle to secure qualified stenographers, legal proceedings face delays, sometimes extending cases by weeks or months. The [AAERT's 2025 industry report](#) also states that 76% of legal professionals report difficulty scheduling proceedings due to stenographer unavailability. The scarcity has also driven up costs significantly, with 55% of respondents citing increased expenses for court reporting services—costs that are ultimately passed on to clients, creating additional barriers to justice for those with limited financial resources.

The impact extends beyond mere inconvenience. The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) projects nearly 20,000 unfilled court reporting positions over the next decade, potentially leaving countless legal

proceedings without proper documentation. This documentation gap threatens the fundamental right to appeal, as accurate transcripts form the basis for appellate review. Without accessible stenographic services, the justice system faces a critical breakdown in one of its essential functions: creating and preserving the official record of proceedings that forms the backbone of due process.

## Court System Backlogs

The consequences of the stenographer shortage have been magnified by mounting pressures on an already strained court system. Since 2020, court filings have increased by [approximately 11%](#), creating additional demand for documentation services at precisely the moment when stenographer availability has reached critical lows. This growing caseload stretches existing resources thin and further extends the timeline for legal resolutions that impact people's lives and livelihoods.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, it delivered another significant blow to judicial efficiency nationwide. Courts across the country were forced to suspend operations or drastically limit proceedings, creating unprecedented backlogs that continue to plague the system today.

These challenges become even more pronounced in rural and underserved communities, where geographic isolation already creates barriers to justice. In these areas, litigants often must travel considerable distances to reach courthouses, and the scarcity of stenographers is particularly acute.

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## The Cost Barrier to Legal Services

The financial aspects of litigation create another substantial hurdle for many seeking justice, with court reporting expenses representing a significant component of these costs. Traditional stenography services often come with premium price tags that reflect both the specialized skill required and the current market scarcity.

These expenses pose particular challenges for small law firms and legal aid organizations operating with limited budgets. Many smaller practices find themselves in the difficult position of either absorbing these rising costs—potentially threatening their financial sustainability—or passing them along to clients who may already be struggling to afford representation. Legal aid organizations, which provide critical services to low-income individuals, face similar constraints as their fixed budgets must stretch to accommodate increasingly expensive court reporting services.

For individual litigants, especially those representing themselves or working with limited resources, transcript costs can become prohibitive obstacles to justice. Appellate courts typically require official transcripts to review lower court proceedings, meaning that individuals unable to afford transcription services may effectively lose their right to appeal unfavorable decisions. This financial barrier creates a two-tiered justice system where procedural rights become luxuries available only to those with sufficient financial means, undermining the fundamental principle that justice should be equally accessible to all.

# How Expedited Transcription Services Reduce Case Backlogs

Timely access to accurate transcripts is crucial for the efficient progression of legal cases. Delays in transcript production can significantly contribute to case backlogs and impede the judicial process.

## The Critical Role of Fast Transcript Delivery

Legal professionals depend on transcripts for several essential functions throughout the litigation process. When attorneys can get their transcripts back quickly, they can get to motion practice faster and move their cases along more efficiently. This speed becomes particularly valuable when dealing with time-sensitive matters.

As [Mark Ivey](#), founder and CEO of eDepositions LLC, a Nevada-based agency leading the way in non-stenographic depositions, notes, “For attorneys, it’s time value of money. So if we can help them be more efficient in their world, then we’re more impactful in their business.” The ability to provide fast transcript delivery creates a competitive advantage for court reporting agencies while serving their clients’ needs better.

## How Transcription Delays Contribute to Case Backlogs

When transcripts are delayed, the entire legal process slows down. According to the [2025 Court Reporting Industry Trends Report](#), 39% of legal professionals cite transcription shortages as directly causing “a delay of legal proceedings,” while 26% report increased workloads and sometimes accepting “lower-quality transcripts” out of necessity. By implementing expedited transcription services that deliver results in days rather than weeks, courts and legal teams can reduce these bottlenecks, maintain case momentum, and provide faster resolution for all parties involved.

## Digital Court Reporting and Turnaround Times

Digital court reporting offers the potential to significantly reduce transcript turnaround times, addressing one of the most pressing challenges in the legal industry today. There are a few key ways that digital court reporting is able to make this happen.



### Technology-Enabled Workflow Improvements

Digital court reporting leverages technology to streamline the transcription process in ways traditional stenography cannot match. Digital court reporters can capture high-quality audio recordings that can be processed immediately after proceedings conclude. Because of this, digital court reporters are valued for their ability to deliver transcripts at a much faster pace (10 days or less) than traditional stenographers (2 weeks).



### Comparison of Traditional and Digital Turnaround Times

The difference in turnaround times between traditional stenography and digital court reporting is significant. [Research from AAERT](#) indicates that 30% of end users cite “faster delivery of transcript” as their primary reason for choosing digital reporters over alternatives. This speed advantage comes from the ability to quickly generate draft transcripts using advanced technology, significantly reducing the time required to produce a finished document.



### Real-World Impact on Case Scheduling and Court Capacity

The faster delivery of transcripts has tangible effects on the efficiency of the entire legal system. When transcripts are delivered more quickly, courts can schedule proceedings more efficiently and process more cases. According to [industry experts](#), this consistent, on-time delivery “not only improves the efficiency of legal proceedings, but critically it ensures that with digital court reporters, proceedings can remain on schedule and without delay.”

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opt for faster  
delivery

## AI-Powered Solutions and Efficiency Gains

Alongside the rise of digital court reporting, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are further enhancing the efficiency of court reporting, creating new possibilities for speed and accuracy in legal transcription, which in turn helps provide more access to justice. In order to understand this process, it's important to understand how AI works within the legal world.

### How AI Transcription Technology Works

AI-powered transcription leverages sophisticated algorithms trained on vast amounts of speech data to convert recorded audio into text with remarkable accuracy. For example, Rev's ASR (Automated Speech Recognition) technology has been trained on **over 7 million hours of human speech data**, enabling it to understand complex legal terminology, identify multiple speakers, and handle challenging audio conditions. This extensive training allows AI systems to produce highly accurate initial drafts of transcripts.

### Real-Time Transcription Capabilities

Some AI-powered systems now offer real-time transcription capabilities, providing immediate access to draft transcripts of proceedings. AI tools can create a workflow that helps attorneys review incoming summaries in real time and ask follow-up questions based on the data. This real-time insight creates new efficiencies in the courtroom and during depositions.

### Quality Assurance Processes and Human Review

While AI significantly speeds up the transcription process, human review remains essential for ensuring accuracy and quality. The most effective digital court reporting solutions combine AI technology with human expertise in a hybrid workflow.

A multi-layered quality assurance process typically includes initial AI transcription optimized for legal terminology, followed by review by professional transcriptionists with legal expertise, quality control checks for formatting and technical accuracy, and final validation against source audio. This comprehensive approach delivers both speed and the high level of accuracy required in legal proceedings.

# Increasing Affordability Through Technology

In addition to accelerating the timeline of cases, digital court reporting offers significant opportunities to reduce the cost of creating and accessing court records. By streamlining workflows, optimizing resource allocation, and leveraging technology, digital solutions can make court reporting more affordable for courts, legal professionals, and individuals.

## Economic comparison of traditional vs. digital court reporting

The cost structures between traditional stenographic and digital court reporting methods differ substantially. Traditional court reporting typically involves fees for stenographer time, transcript preparation, and various ancillary services, creating a pricing model heavily dependent on skilled labor availability. Digital court reporting, by contrast, often presents lower overall costs due to reduced labor requirements and the ability to achieve economies of scale through technology integration.

These differences translate into meaningful potential savings for courts and legal professionals. Courts can substantially reduce their operating expenses by adopting digital court reporting systems, while legal professionals—particularly those in small firms or solo practices—can significantly lower their costs for obtaining high-quality transcripts. The value proposition becomes especially compelling for different types of legal proceedings, with cost savings from digital court reporting proving particularly beneficial in routine or high-volume proceedings such as traffic court hearings or administrative proceedings.



# How digital solutions optimize resource allocation

Digital court reporting fundamentally transforms how resources are deployed across the legal documentation process. The training requirements for digital court reporters are substantially reduced compared to the extensive education needed for stenographers, lowering both the time investment and cost associated with developing new professionals in the field. This streamlined training approach helps address workforce shortages more rapidly while maintaining quality standards.

Furthermore, the scalability benefits for court reporting agencies are particularly noteworthy, as digital systems can be more easily adjusted to handle fluctuations in demand, enabling agencies to operate more efficiently while maintaining better cost control across varying workloads.

## The role of AI and automation in cost reduction

Artificial intelligence and automation technologies are revolutionizing the economics of court reporting by fundamentally transforming traditional workflows. AI-powered transcription systems and other automation tools create streamlined processes that significantly reduce the need for manual labor and associated costs, enabling court reporting agencies to operate more efficiently while maintaining high accuracy standards.

The impact on manual labor requirements is particularly substantial, as automation can minimize the time professionals spend on routine tasks such as formatting, editing, and proofreading transcripts. This shift allows skilled court reporters to focus their expertise on more complex aspects of legal documentation while technology handles repetitive processes.



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# Case Studies and Success Stories

The benefits of digital court reporting are not just theoretical. Numerous success stories demonstrate the positive impact of this technology on access to justice, operational efficiency, and overall satisfaction for both court reporting agencies and their clients. Let's look at one key example.



eDepositions LLC, founded by Ivey, has established itself as a pioneer in the digital court reporting space. As the first company to do video recordings of depositions in the state of Nevada, eDepositions has successfully navigated the transition from traditional stenographic methods to digital recording.

Ivey notes that while there was initial resistance to new technology in the legal industry, their partnership with Rev has been instrumental in overcoming these challenges:

“Rev is our most important partner in our business in regards to depositions. We have to trust who we use to create our transcripts, and Rev has done a tremendous job at gaining that trust from my team.”

## Faster Transcript Delivery

One of the most significant improvements reported by CRAs using digital court reporting is the speed of transcript delivery. Traditional stenographic transcripts typically take about two weeks for completion, while digital reporting can deliver finished transcripts in 10 days or less.

Per Ivey : “The efficiency that Rev creates in our business model, talking to [attorneys] about how impactful that is on our business cost savings as well as being able to get things to our attorneys faster at a more economical price, provides a lot more access to justice for people.”

## Enhanced Access Opportunities

By incorporating digital court reporting into their service offerings, CRAs can expand into new markets and provide additional services. Digital court reporting also enables CRAs to offer more competitive pricing options without sacrificing quality, opening up opportunities to serve clients who might otherwise be priced out of the market.

## Client Satisfaction and More Roads to Justice

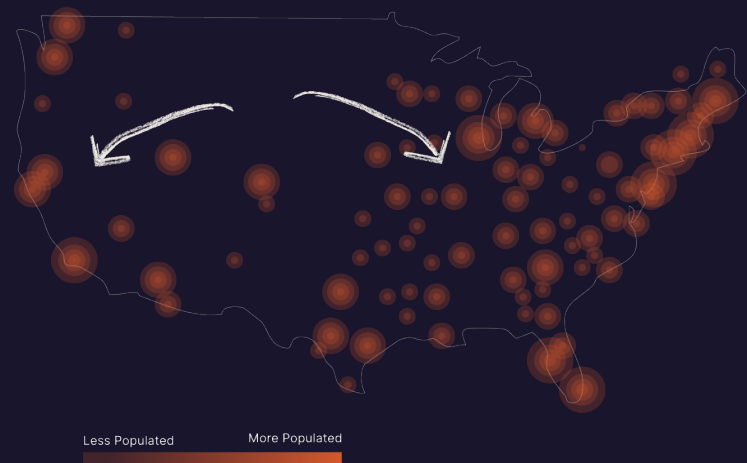
Law firms and attorneys have reported high satisfaction with digital court reporting services, particularly regarding the accuracy and timeliness of transcripts. As Ivey notes, “If we can provide them a deposition and transcript quicker, they can get to that motion practice faster and move their cases along quicker. Knowing attorneys, it’s the time-to-value of money for them. So if we can help them be more efficient in their world, then we’re more impactful in their business.” These impacts to an attorney’s workdays mean better outcomes for their clients and more people seeing the role of the court system being implemented as it is meant to be.

## Addressing Rural Access

Ivey’s experience with digital court reporting illustrates the transformative impact it can have on legal proceedings and access to justice. As the founder of the first company to record depositions in Nevada, Ivey faced significant resistance from an industry slow to adopt new technology. However, by partnering with Rev for transcription services, he has been able to build a thriving business that delivers superior service to attorneys.

Ivey emphasizes the broader impact of digital court reporting: “Access to justice has become a major focus point, not only with attorneys but legislatively as well. With the court reporting industry shrinking...access to court reporters to get to rural areas and provide those services has just dwindled. Where now we have the ability to, through Zoom and through technology, provide more access to justice for people that don’t have it.”

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# Ensuring Equal Access to Justice

Digital court reporting, enhanced by AI-powered technology, represents a transformative approach that addresses these challenges head-on. The integration of sophisticated multi-channel audio recording technology, real-time monitoring capabilities, and quality control features provides CRAs with powerful tools to maintain the high standards of accuracy that the legal industry demands while expanding access to underserved communities.

The future of court reporting lies not in choosing between traditional stenography and digital solutions, but in crafting a seamless hybrid workflow that leverages the best of both worlds. By combining cutting-edge technology with human expertise, agencies can create robust processes that ensure accuracy, efficiency, and reliability.

The future of digital court reporting will continue the trend of using human-AI models that keep humans highly involved in the process as guardians of the legal record our justice system depends upon.

## Champions of Justice

Mark Ivey from E-Depositions says it best: **“Access to Justice has become a major focus point, not only with attorneys but legislatively as well... if we can provide better tools and cheaper tools to help people that need it, it’s a big deal.”**

The future of court reporting is here, and it’s digital, efficient, and equitable.

The only question that remains is: how will your agency help write the next chapter in this evolution?

By partnering with industry leaders like [Rev](#), agencies can access cutting-edge technology and skilled human expertise to build more efficient, profitable, and sustainable businesses—ensuring they’re ready to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead while serving the cause of justice itself.

