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ASSOCIATION OF  
ELECTRONIC  
REPORTERS AND  
TRANSCRIBERS

## SOUNDBYTES

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**Certified  
Deposition  
Reporter**

### Registration Opens Monday, February 6, 2023

Registration for the new professional credential, the Certified Deposition Reporter (CDR), will open on Monday, February 6.

The CDR is designed specifically for the digital reporter who captures and preserves the verbatim record by digitally recording depositions and other out-of-court legal proceedings, including examinations under oath (EUOs), statements on the record, oral replies, and aids of execution.

Requirements to test for all AAERT exams have changed!

In order to sit for the exam(s), testers must:

1. be eligible for a notary public commission and
2. have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent

For a greater likelihood of passing the exam, the following is recommended (not required) for testers:

1. have one year of experience as a reporter or transcriber; or

2. have completed a course of study in court reporting.

Testers do not need to be a member of AAERT in order to sit for an AAERT exam. If they pass the exam(s), they must become a Professional Member within 30 days in order to receive their certification.

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## 2023 AAERT EXECUTIVE FORUM

March 31<sup>st</sup> – April 1<sup>st</sup>

Renaissance New Orleans  
Arts Warehouse District

A graphic for the 2023 AAERT Executive Forum. It features a gold saxophone on a white background with musical notes. Surrounding the saxophone are various career paths: Court Reporters, Workforce Development, Advocacy, Professionalism, Transcribers, Leadership, Technology, Opportunities, Education, Communication, and Business Leaders. The AAERT logo is in the bottom right corner.

## Meet Our Keynote Speaker - William Snowden

Will is the New Orleans Director of the Vera Institute of Justice. In this role, he continues and strengthens Vera's existing partnerships with criminal justice actors and community leaders while identifying new collaborative relationships with government entities and community organizations.

Prior to joining Vera, Will was a public defender for five years representing New Orleanians in all stages of a case from arraignment to trial. Will also launched The Juror Project—an initiative aiming to increase the diversity of jury panels while changing and challenging people's perspective of jury duty. Will leads workshops around the country as it relates to how implicit bias, racial anxiety, and stereotype threat influence actors and outcomes in the criminal justice system. He received his JD from Seton Hall University School of Law and a BS from the University of Minnesota.



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## Intonation, Meaning, and Punctuation

By Carrie Clouse, CET

As transcribers or proofreaders, our job is to make sure that the written record is accurate. Of course, we want to get the right words, but we also need to capture the intention of the attorney, witness, or judge. We need to give

thought to the punctuation we use so that anyone who is reading it without hearing the inflections is able to understand what is going on.

Sometimes knowing what to do is simple. A lot of attorneys repeat the answers after the witnesses. These should take a period. "Q. How many times?" "A. Five." "Q. Five. And what did you get there?" But if they didn't hear the witness and are asking for clarity, you'll want a question mark. "Q. How many times?" "A. Five." "Q. Five?" "A. Yes."



Intonation also gives us clues if we should be using a dash or a period. Take this exchange. "Q. Where was this?" "A. High school. Central Academy." If the witness is giving additional information and naming the high school, we'll want a period. But what if they are correcting what they had started saying? Then we'll want a dash. "Q. Where was this?" "A. High school -- Central Academy." The words are the same, but the meaning is not and we have to rely on the intonation to ensure that the correct meaning is clear in the written transcript.

Sentence fragments plague our work. While we try to follow grammar rules, we understand that people often do not speak in complete sentences. While we might be tempted to put some of these fragments together to form a full sentence, that doesn't always work. In order to convey the answer as the witness intended it, we often have to just punctuate a fragment as though it were a complete thought. "Q. Where did you stop?" "A. Over there. Do you see the red pickup truck? It was next to that." "Q. How long were you on the road?" "A. An hour. That's how long it usually takes." A semicolon doesn't work in these instances because you don't have two independent yet related clauses. A dash can be tempting, but unless you hear a change of thought or a correction in the intonation, using a dash in these instances makes the record less clear. Using periods in this case most closely captures what the person is saying.

You've probably heard people joke that they stick a comma whenever someone pauses to take a breath. This is, of course, a terrible way to determine comma placement, but sometimes you do come across phrases that may take a comma or may not. It all depends on how they say it. "He was therefore upset with the situation." "He was, therefore, upset with the situation." Which one is correct? It depends on how it was said.

A comma around therefore might not change the meaning of a transcript, but it's a good habit to get in for the cases where intonation does change the meaning. "Q. Do you know?" "A. You know I don't" reads slightly antagonistic. On the other hand, "Q. Do you know?" "A. You know, I don't" conveys introspection.

So while we always want to be careful with the words we capture, sparing a thought for intonation and punctuation allows us to help the reader of the transcript to appreciate the full record. There's not always a hard and fast rule about what to do in a situation. That's why as professionals we bring our discernment, education, and human touch into maintaining the record.

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## Digital Reporters Find Value in Certification



by Nicole Kidder-Perry on behalf of The Court Reporting Academy

Displaying the CER or CDR credentials after your name is a career-boosting move for both newcomers and experienced digital reporters. The time you invest in getting certified pays dividends in validating your professional competency, accelerating your earning potential, and demonstrating your continuous dedication to elevating industry standards. It also opens the door to networking opportunities and gives you an edge in marketing your freelance business.

Geri DeAngelis, who serves as the director of TCRA's Scholarship and Agency Sponsorship programs, notes that increasingly more contracts are requesting certified reporters whether they are steno or digital. "Becoming AAERT certified brings you into a special community. When you join an association, you are automatically included in a group and part of the team," says



DeAngelis, who serves on the AAERT Board of Directors. “By certifying your knowledge, you get to have a voice in the industry.”

AAERT’s standard proficiency test is the CER (Certified Electronic Reporter), but it recently added the CDR (Certified Deposition Reporter) credential to prove your skills and knowledge of the trade. Since 1994, this professional association has promoted the benefits of adopting new technologies and methodologies to enhance the digital court reporting industry. AAERT worked with the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts in Washington, D.C., and consulted certification materials from federal court reporting, state stenographic, and digital recording vendors to establish the certification guidelines.

### Taking the AAERT CER Exam

Typically, digital reporters must have one year of working experience, but TCRA students receive a letter of recommendation that allows them to test immediately upon graduation. The 120-minute knowledge exam consists of multiple-choice questions covering technical equipment and setup, legal vocabulary, court procedures, and log annotations. TCRA is proud that 99% of its graduates who take their test are able to pass the first time.

To ensure professional standards are upheld, recertification is required every three years. At age 59, reporters who have been AAERT members for six years can apply for a non-expiring Emeritus status during their recertification year. The application process includes writing a short essay on how certification designation has helped your professional life and why you believe it is important to maintain the designation.

Credentialed professionals are also required to complete three continuing education units (CEU) every three years. One unit is received for every 10 contact hours. CEUs are obtained by participating in industry webinars, attending or presenting at digital reporting conferences, or enrolling in AAERT-approved classes. Preapproved units may be earned through college-level business, computer skills, and English courses that have at least a C grade as well as adult education and CPR/First Aid classes. Other opportunities include serving on the AAERT board or writing for AAERT publications.

### Prepare to Pass the CER Exam

Students who enroll in TCRA’s DCR 101 and 102 courses spend significant time preparing to sit for the AAERT exam. The Academy also offers working professionals an accelerated Prepare to Pass course. Typically priced at \$395, a discount is available to current AAERT members. This comprehensive program includes six study modules that can be completed online and at your own pace. The course emphasizes vocabulary comprehension, the reporting process, and the expectations of a highly qualified reporter. It also reviews the complexities of working in remote proceedings, properly setting up digital equipment, understanding jurisdictions and legal processes as well as developing basic transcript knowledge.

“Certification opens up doors to unlimited job opportunities. Along with gaining industry recognition, becoming a CER puts you in an elite group that lets you stand out among others. Validating your professionalism also helps you exude confidence when you enter that room,” says Patricia Falls, managing director

for TCRA. "I always tell our students that once you are certified, there ain't no stopping you now!"

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### Advocacy Update: Indiana

There has been a lot of talk lately about court reporting in Indiana. The Indiana Supreme Court's Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure put forth a proposed amendment to the state's Rules of Trial Procedure. The proposed amendment would change Rule 74(B) to require all courts (including city and town courts) to audio record hearings in all case types. It also states that recording, through shorthand or stenographic means, is prohibited.

AAERT is in support of the expanded utilization of digital/electronic court reporting and transcribers; but more importantly, AAERT supports having a reporter in the proceeding who is responsible for capturing the record and producing an accurate, certified transcript, regardless of the method of capture.

As the leading provider of certification for digital reporters and transcribers, AAERT encourages certification for all professional reporters. We believe the record should be preserved by a trained and well-qualified reporter who is following industry best practices.

A few important facts about Indiana's Court Reporting Landscape:

1. A large majority of proceedings in Indiana courts state court system are captured by digital court reporters.
2. All courtrooms in the Indiana state court system are equipped with digital recording technology

So how can you be heard:

Submit your comments online by Feb. 6, 2023, 12 p.m. Eastern at

<https://www.in.gov/courts/publications/proposed-rules/january-2023/feedback/>

Call the Indiana Office of Court Services at 317-232-1313 and voice your opposition.

Comment via mail to:

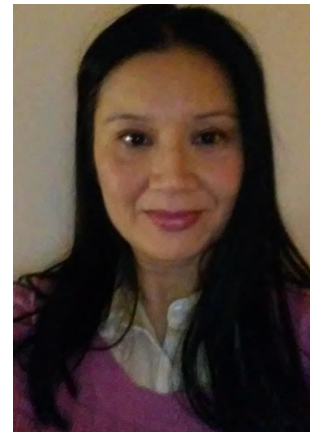
Office of Judicial Administration  
Indiana Office of Court Services  
251 N. Illinois Street, Suite 800  
Indianapolis Indiana 46204



## Call me Court Reporter – please!

By Lisa Chung, CER CDR

“Call me Court Reporter – please!” Hear my battle cry, adapted from the late Sidney Poitier’s character, Virgil Tibbs, whose famous line, “You call me, Mr. Tibbs!” unintentionally captured the essence of the black male experience in America. It reached iconic stature like other famous lines in history such as “I am Spartacus!” and “I Am Woman, hear me roar!” My personalized one-liner call to arms is now fit for a revolution. Get ready. COMES NOW my own Spartacus moment in the court reporting world.



Growing up, I wanted to be many things and court reporter was one – like those, I saw on television and in movies. They were officers of the court, typically women in their power suits, pounding away at 235 wpm on steno machines, sitting near the judge in the courtroom. In post COVID era, I got my chance. The stars and planets aligned to mark my moment to be one of those, albeit a remote digital one, but a court reporter, nonetheless. I can now pound away on my own machine. But wait....something was awry. Yes, something was rotten in Denmark. I felt cheated – bamboozled; and it wasn’t the court pomp and circumstance I was missing either or the power suits I had glorified. It was the TITLE (cue in – dun dun dun) – my rightful title of pure “Court Reporter” as it has always been throughout the annals of court reporting. No digital/electronic qualifier in front. No postscripts. No asterisks. Just Court Reporter. Please.

I am not a digital or electronic anything. I am a court reporter. I might just do all depositions and may never step into a courtroom; however, my work product might show up there as my brainchild with my name on it. Besides, it is not healthy on so many levels to be segregated or branded by one word for the rest of our working careers. I so cringe at all the title variations found on LinkedIn that are chosen by reporters for their profiles. It has come to this – chaos and confusion. The following is an actual sample of these LinkedIn profile titles: Digital Reporter; Digital Court Reporter; Electronic Reporter; E-Court Reporter; Legal Stenographer; Official Court Reporter; Remote Court Reporter; Certified Electronic Reporter, Legal Reporter, etc. And these are just my friends. So, the million-dollar question is: why isn’t Court Reporter good enough?

It was good enough for the most famous court reporter in history, Charles Dickens. It does not need embellishment. It does not need a makeover to reflect the impact or precision of the digital age; and it certainly does not need to be stripped of the one word that legitimizes us as bonafide Guardians of the Record — Court. The court is not just a place or venue for justice. We associate it with the judge who is a person. He or she is the Court, and they are used interchangeably. They both are one to symbolize inviolable judicial power and law. Both five-letter words instinctively and universally command respect and awe.

Likewise, court reporting is an indispensable accessory to the court which also needs no introduction, let alone any modern dissection into digital minutiae (or bytes, if you prefer). We are more than the sum of our skillset parts. We are the Robin to the Court's Batman. (Yeah, it's like that.) It is our primary function that defines us, not by what machine we use to do it. Capturing the record is such a complex process that division along tech lines dangerously oversimplifies what we do, as well as engenders rivalry and strife that ultimately does more harm than good. The continued distinction between steno and digital reporters will only magnify and stoke the flames of what schism is already there, just like their cousins in the legal support field. As a former paralegal, I had a front seat to the same chaos and confusion caused by the paralegal and legal assistant dichotomy. In the eyes of the law, there is no difference between them as non-lawyers, and all are subject to the supervision of licensed practitioners.

In the end, we have no crystal ball to tell us the final score. We can only speculate and predict based on the facts. In due time, the industry will see for its own eyes when this all transpires in the projected fifteen to twenty years from now. They will see that the bestowed tech designations will have been superfluous. By then, my revolution will also be superfluous.

As for me and my revolutionary moment, I will settle on the solace and comfort I find in the predictability of our hardy yet slow-to-change American legal system. I can depend on the judiciary and legal counsel to not think twice before calling me Court Reporter. I can bank on that. And as no love lost ever existed between law and tech, I can happily say that my issue with Lady Justice is a non-issue (Digital who?). We know all too well that she is no pushover and will never take a back seat to technology. The truth of the matter is that tech takes a backseat to Lady Justice and all her law-making cohorts. The first-ever showdown was in the early 1970s at the proverbial crack of dawn when the first federal technology laws were passed to keep tech in check. We are not a nation ruled by technocracy, but by law and laws. It might just appear that tech is looming larger than life at times on the horizon of corporate America, but that is because its leash is just a little bit longer than it was before.

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## Tech Corner: File Formats You Need to Know

By Benjamin Jaffe, CER, CDR

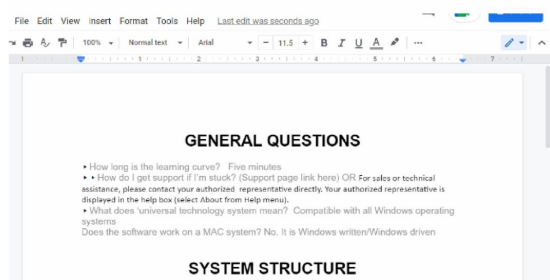
In this technology-enabled world, it is important to understand the type of file one is working with. Whether video, text, images, compressed folders, or a proprietary data type, knowing what it is and how to open it is half the battle.



### File Structure

To unlock a file and be able to use it, there are two components at play: the file extension (.jpg, .mp4, .docx) and the codec. The extension allows the system to know which program is able to open a specific file. A .docx is a Microsoft Word document file that contains text and sometimes images or other graphics. This .docx file can be converted so it can be opened in a simple text editor, like Notepad, but it cannot be opened in the program natively. This is due to the second part of the equation, the codec.

In Word Processor: In Notepad:



Codec, which stands for encode/decode, is the Rosetta stone sypher to open a file. Be aware, not all files with the same extension have the same codec. An m4a audio file that is compressed using PCM, ADPCM, or is completely

uncompressed, will significantly influence the file size. The Microsoft Word file above opens perfectly in Word, email, or other word processors, like OpenOffice or Google Docs that knows how to read it; but when opened inside a program that has a similar operation but not the ability to decode it, like Notepad, the end result is basically unreadable code.

## Audio

Since audio files are the most commonly exchanged files between court reporters, court reporting agencies, transcribers, courts, and others in this industry, it is fitting to start there. There are dozens if not hundreds of different audio extensions, with as many compression types, that can be configured to millions or even billions of different unique codec.

The most common file extensions are .wav, .mp3, .m4a, .wma, and .aiff. WMA and AIFF are usually specific to Windows (WMA) and Mac (AIFF). Even if not natively, most backup recorders, even digital recording systems, will export to WAV or MP3. The big difference between WAV and MP3 is that MP3 is highly compressed while WAV is usually uncompressed or minimally compressed. Both are considered rather universal formats. This article provides more specifics on this topic: <https://emastered.com/blog/audio-file-formats>

## Video

As with audio, there are various extensions and codecs for files. Not as common as audio files in our industry, they can be extremely challenging to deal with. The most common file extensions used today are .mp4, .avi, .mpg, .mkv, .mov, and .wmv. As with audio, some are native to a specific operating system; MOV and WMV are examples. MOV is a QuickTime file usually associated with Macs and some iDevices; WMV is associated with Windows. For those desiring more specific information, this link is helpful: <https://blog.filestack.com/thoughts-and-knowledge/complete-list-audio-video-file-formats/>

## Images

Images are typically more prevalent in operating systems than audio and video files, but some require special software to open. For example, a .psd file is specific to one computer program, Adobe Photoshop; this is common in the design and print world but might not be readily available on your computer. Files like .jpg, .tiff, .gif, and .png are more universal and are hosted on the web for all to see. Some, like TIFF and PNG, have special properties like transparency; and these sometimes make it harder for a computer to open the file because it does not know what to do behind the image. This article gives more detail into image formats: <https://www.techsmith.com/blog/understanding-image-file-formats/>

## Documents

As mentioned earlier in this article, there are also a variety of document formats. Most commonly, the simplest extension is .txt or text files. In the court reporting industry, these are sometimes referred to as ASCII files. Referring to them as ASCII, which means American Standard Code for Information Interchange, is a bit antiquated, based on the idea that TXT files can be in any language. On the opposite end of the spectrum, .pdf, .xlsx, and .pptx files are some of the most complicated document files as they hold images, videos, data, relationship codes, links, and even macros inside. Often these files must be opened in specific software, which must be updated to the latest version. More information about these formats and others can be found at

## Wrap Up

Get it? Because files are wrapped up in their file extension. Don't worry; it wasn't that funny. 😊

If you are a court reporter having to manage exhibits, or a transcriber needing to download files to transcribe a proceeding, understanding what you are seeing helps troubleshoot and get your work done more efficiently. Do not worry, though, if you encounter an unfamiliar one; Wikipedia has a list of thousands of extensions at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_file\\_formats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_file_formats). Even though a long list, it will never be exhaustive because new software platforms are being continually released with unique file extensions.

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## Welcome New AAERT Members!

Pamela Abuchaibe, Plantation, FL  
Natalie Aceba, Miami, FL  
Maria Acebal, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Sarah Albaladejo, Pembroke Pines, FL  
Crystal Alexander, Glendale, WI  
Xylia Allen, Largo, MD  
Jabriel Alshehabi, New Orleans, LA  
Alma Alvarado, Minot, ND  
Kathleen Anderson, Atlanta, GA  
Ariel Andrew, Blue Springs, MO  
Carrie Barrett, Menasha, WI  
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Brandon Bryant, Beaverton, OR  
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Brynn Schweitzer, Clarksville, TN  
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Yamise Siggers, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
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Jessica Simmons, Ludowici, GA  
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Cody Szaro, San Antonio, TX  
Lindsay Todd, Louisville, KY  
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Deandre Tucker, Miami, FL  
Cheyenne Veino, Deltona, FL  
Erica Volz, Little River, SC  
Andrea Waldrige, Kremlin, OK  
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Alma Alvarado, CER, Minot, ND  
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Jefferson Barrett, CER, Omaha, NE  
John Bilich, CER, Tallahassee, FL  
Fiona Borrajo, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Sarha Buzi, CER, Lincoln, NE  
Jeffrey Castano, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Nicholas Cintas, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Kayli Ciociola, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Austin Costello, CER, Silver Spring, MD  
Gabriela Delgado, CER, Fort Lauderdale

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Deyanira Frankland Araiza, Bradenton, FL  
Maya Funk, St. Augustine, FL  
Naila Gonzalez, Miami, FL  
John Gore, Saint Louis, MO  
Olivia Hale, Ponte Vedra, FL  
Ebony Hazeleger, Cumming, GA  
Evie Heffner, Dunwoody, GA  
Billinda Henderson, Knoxville, TN  
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Jessica Hottmann, Pocatello, ID  
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Hillary Koby, Tampa, FL  
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Jesse Lyell, Richmond, VA  
Juan Pablo Macias, Brownsville, TX  
Richard Magee, St Petersburg, FL  
Diane Manthei, Grand Forks, ND  
Tina Mauch, Omaha, NE  
Lindsay McElhinney, Germantown, MD  
Brandi McLean, Greensboro, NC  
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Christopher Melton, Washington, DC  
Leslie Melton, Chesapeake, VA  
Arika Michel, Dallas, TX  
Anita Moore, Eastanollee, GA  
Simon Mu, Sacramento, CA  
Liam Muckala, Nashville, TN  
Sandra Munoz, Morrisville, NC  
Keith Myers, Cinnaminson, NJ  
Deborah Pawlin, Shawboro, NC  
Lori Peck, Pocatello, ID  
Crystal Pedersen, Maxwell, NE  
Christopher Perez Moreno, Boston, MA  
Sherona Pike, TAMPA, FL  
Jillian Porter, Jacksonville, NC  
Natalie Puelles, Pembroke Pines, FL  
Rosa Ragoonan, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Megan Ramirez, Honolulu, HI  
Marina Ramos , Houston, TX  
Carrie Ravenscroft, Huntington Beach, CA  
Deanna Reeve, Bremerton, WA  
Tabatha Richards, Mobile, Alabama  
Kimberly Roberts, Avon, OH  
Catherine Rojas, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Daria Romaniuk, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Jennifer Rose, Salinas, CA  
Kathy Rose, Arnold, MO  
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FL  
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Ericka Richardson, CDR, Cliffwood, NJ  
Courtney Robinson, CER, Hollywood, FL  
Daria Romaniuk, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Steven Samedy, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Sarah Schroeter, CDR, Richfield, OH  
Brynn Schweitzer, CER, Clarksville, TN  
Lucas Shaker, CER, Reseda, CA  
Gary Siffort, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Yamise Siggers, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Jazlyn Simon, CER, Winchester, TN  
Lisa Singley, CER, Covington, GA  
Stacy Socoski, CDR, Houtzdale, PA  
Carolina Sohr, CER, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
LeAnn Sullivan, CET, Virginia Beach, VA  
Cody Szaro, CER, San Antonio, TX  
Kyra Tate, CER, Louisville, KY  
Lindsay Todd, CER, Louisville, KY  
Judaya Vasquez, CER, Miami, FL  
Erica Volz, CER, Little River, SC  
Andrea Waldrige, CDR, Kremlin, OK  
Ilene Watson, CDERT, Fishers, IN  
Jacqueline, Watts, CDR, Dacula, GA  
Tristan Welch, CER, Columbus, NE  
Jacob White, CER, Fort Lauderdale FL  
Kayla Williams, CER, Pembroke Pines FL

**CONGRATULATIONS!**





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## Stay Safe

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