

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Workforce Policy and Service Delivery Branch
Technical Assistance Bulletin 225

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Subject: Customers Requiring Relay Services

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This Technical Assistance Bulletin provides Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with information on relay services, which enable deaf, hard of hearing, and speech-disabled individuals to contact hearing individuals over the phone by communicating through a relay agent.

Communication Access Requirements

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title II, requires that effective communication tools be provided for individuals requiring accommodation.

The Texas Workforce Commission does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation. All individuals have access to the full range of services offered at Texas Workforce Centers. To ensure accessibility for deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-disabled individuals, the use of relay services for communication may be required.

Relay Services

Following is a list of relay services and providers that are free of charge to the public:

- **Internet Relay (IR)**

IR customers access relay services through a Web site, with no special modem or software required. The IR customer types into a text box on the browser window and the message is sent to a relay agent who in turn reads the typed communication to the voice user. The relay agent types the voice user's response and the response appears on the IR customer's screen.

IR providers include the following:

- AT&T—www.relaycall.com
- MCI—www.ip-relay.com
- Sorenson—www.siprelay.com
- Sprint—www.sprintip.com

IR User Instructions

- IR customers receive a personal 10-digit number for making and receiving calls when setting up an account with an IR provider.

- An IR customer's experience will differ depending on the provider, but most customers log on to their provider's Web site, enter a phone number, and then communicate online in a "chat" window with the call recipient through a relay agent.
- As long as IR customers are logged on they can be notified of and receive incoming calls through the chat window. Most IR providers have a service that allows hearing callers to leave messages when the IR customer is not available to take the call.

Hearing/Voice User Instructions

Dial the 10-digit phone number that will connect the call and begin talking to the IR customer on the other side of the connection. If the IR customer does not answer the call, leave a message.

- **Video Phone (VP)**

VP enables customers with a Web camera and high-speed Internet connection to speak through a video interpreter in American Sign Language (ASL). The relay agent interprets the sign language to the voice user and then translates the voice user's response back to the VP customer in ASL. Many IR providers also offer a VP option.

VP providers include the following:

- Hamilton—www.hamiltonrelay.com
- Hands On—www.hovrs.com
- Life Links—www.lifelinksvrs.com
- Viable—www.viable.net

VP User Instructions

- VP customers receive a personal 10-digit number for making and receiving calls when setting up an account with a VP provider.
- A VP customer's experience will differ depending on the provider, but most customers log on to their provider's Web site, enter a phone number, and then sign in ASL to the relay agent through their Web camera.
- As long as VP customers are logged on they can receive calls. Most VP providers have a service that allows hearing callers to leave messages when a VP customer is not able to take the call.

Hearing/Voice User Instructions

Dial the 10-digit phone number that will connect the call and begin talking to the VP customer on the other side of the connection. If the VP customer does not answer the call, leave a message.

- **Teletypewriter (TTY)**

A TTY is a typing device that connects to the telephone of an individual who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled. The TTY is used to communicate with a relay agent who reads the typed communication to a hearing individual. The relay agent then transmits the hearing individual's spoken words by typing them back to the TTY

user. Use of the TTY device typically involves abbreviated terms. A glossary of abbreviated terms is available at http://www.puc.state.tx.us/relay/relay/relay_gloss.cfm.

TTY User Instructions

- Using the TTY device, TTY users dial the Relay Texas number:
 - ❖ 711; or
 - ❖ 1-800-RELAY TX (735-2989).
- A flickering on the TTY equipment signals the user to wait a few seconds.
- When the relay agent answers with the text *RTX XXX (F OR M) NBR PLS GA* (NBR=number, PLS=please, GA=go ahead), the TTY user types the area code and number he or she wishes to call and then types *GA*. The relay agent then processes the call.

Hearing/Voice User Instructions

- Dial the Relay Texas number, 711.
- A voice message answers, “You have reached Relay Texas. Press number one to place a relay call.” After number one is pressed, the relay agent comes on the line.
- Give the relay agent the area code and phone number of the individual to be called.
- The relay agent will read the abbreviated text the TTY user types, and will type the hearing/voice user’s response. Always speak directly to the TTY customer and do not say, “tell him/her.” Make sure to say “GA” when it is the TTY customer’s turn to talk.

- **Voice Carry-Over (VCO)**

VCO allows deaf or hard of hearing customers to use their own voices during a call. Using VCO and a specially designed telephone with a text screen, a VCO user can speak directly to a hearing individual. A relay agent types the hearing individual’s reply. Use of the VCO device typically involves abbreviated terms. A glossary of abbreviated terms is available at http://www.puc.state.tx.us/relay/relay/relay_gloss.cfm.

VCO User Instructions

- Dial 1-TRS-VCO-1RTX (877-826-1789).
- The relay agent answers and types *Voice Carry-Over* or *TYPE GA*. VCO customers then speak or type the phone number of the party they want to call.
- The relay agent types the message *VOICE NOW* to the VCO customer as the cue to start speaking. The VCO customer speaks directly to the hearing individual. The relay agent then types what the hearing individual replies. Make sure to say “GA” when it is the hearing individual’s turn to talk.

Hearing/Voice User Instructions

- Dial the Relay Texas number, 711.

- A voice message answers, “You have reached Relay Texas. Press number one to place a relay call.” After number one is pressed, the relay agent comes on the line.
 - Give the relay agent the area code and phone number of the individual being called.
 - The relay agent types what the hearing individual says and transmits it to the deaf or hard of hearing individual. The deaf or hard of hearing individual responds in speech.
 - Always speak directly to the VCO customer and do not say, “tell him/her.” Make sure to say “GA” when it is the other individual’s turn to talk.
- **Hearing Carry-Over (HCO)**
HCO uses the TTY device to allow individuals with speech disabilities to type their part of the conversation. A relay agent reads the HCO user’s text to the hearing/voice user. Use of the TTY device typically involves abbreviated terms. A glossary of abbreviated terms is available at http://www.puc.state.tx.us/relay/relay/relay_gloss.cfm.

HCO User Instructions

- Dial 1-800-RELAY TX (735-2989).
- After the relay agent answers, type *Hearing Carry-Over PLEASE GA*.
- The relay agent connects the call and voices what the HCO customer types to the call recipient. After typing *GA*, the HCO customer picks up the handset and listens to the spoken reply.

Hearing/Voice User Instructions

- Dial the Relay Texas number, 711.
- A voice message answers, “You have reached Relay Texas. Press number one to place a relay call.” After number one is pressed, the relay agent comes on the line.
- Give the relay agent the area code and phone number of the individual being called.
- The relay agent voices what the HCO customer types. In reply, always speak directly to the HCO customer. Make sure to say “GA” when it is the other individual’s turn to talk.

- **Speech-to-Speech (STS)**

STS allows an individual with a speech disability to connect to a specially trained agent who serves as the caller’s voice and repeats his or her responses to the called party when necessary.

STS User Instructions

- Dial 1-866-734-2305 to reach a dedicated STS Communications Assistant (CA).
- CAs are trained to provide assistance to people with mild to severe speech disabilities, as well as people using voice synthesizers, voice enhancers, and other devices.

- Verbally inform the CA of the area code and phone number to be called and choose preferred role for the CA to take during the call:
 - ❖ Active role: CA will repeat to the other party everything the STS user says; or
 - ❖ Passive role: CA will intervene only upon request by STS user or call recipient.
- CA dials the call. STS user will hear the line ringing and everything the call recipient says once the call is answered.
- Speak directly to the call recipient. CA repeats actively or passively, as requested.
- When finished, CA disconnects the call. Let the CA know if there is another call to be made.

Hearing/Voice User Instructions

Initiate a call by dialing 1-877-826-6607.

Customer Access

If customers have questions about accessing accommodation devices or relay services, refer them to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) of Texas.

PUC provides information on the following:

- Internet and video relay
- Relay Texas
- Glossary of relay terms
- Video phone
- Registered vendors for TTY devices

PUC contact information:

- <http://www.puc.state.tx.us/relay/index.cfm>
- Eileen Alter, Relay Texas Administrator
 - Phone: (512) 936-7132
 - Phone: (512) 936-7147 (TTY)
 - E-mail: eileen.alter@puc.state.tx.us
 - E-mail: relaytx@puc.state.tx.us

Please distribute this information to appropriate staff. Direct inquiries regarding this TA Bulletin to wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.state.tx.us.

RESCISSIONS:

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