

# Telecommunications Relay Service

## What is Telecommunications Relay Service?

Telecommunications Relay Service provides full telephone accessibility to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled. Specially trained Communication Assistants (CAs) serve as intermediaries, relaying conversations between hearing persons and persons using a text telephone device (TTY). Relay Service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with no restrictions on the length or number of calls placed. This valuable communications tool gives all individuals the opportunity to make personal and business calls just like any other telephone user.

The relay service makes it possible for teachers in postsecondary settings to notify deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled students of any class changes or cancellations. These students can also use the service to contact instructors when necessary.

## How do you use Relay Service?

### *What equipment is required for deaf people?*

The most common device used to make a relay call is a TTY that can be used together with a phone handset. However, the equipment you need may vary depending upon the type of relay service you use. For more information on how to obtain a device in your area for your specific needs, call your state relay service. In some cases, the equipment may be available at little or no cost to you.

### *What equipment is required for hearing people?*

You only need a telephone. Each state provides a toll-free number to reach a Communication Assistant. The number is listed in local phone books.

### *How much do you pay?*

There is no charge for using a relay service within your local calling area. Long distance call rates are determined by the carrier of choice. Please notify the Communication Assistant of your preferred billing option: direct; collect; third party; local exchange

carrier (LEC) calling card; other long distance calling card; or prepaid phone card.

## Basic services offered

### *For TTY users:*

A person who is deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled uses a TTY to type his/her conversation to a Communication Assistant who then reads the typed conversation to a hearing person. The Communication Assistant relays the hearing person's spoken words by typing them back to the TTY user.

1. Dial your state relay number.
2. Relay service will answer with "CA 1234" (for operator ID number), "F" or "M" (for operator gender) and "NUMBER CALLING PLS GA." ("GA" denotes "go ahead").
3. Type in the area code and telephone number you wish to call and then type "GA."
4. The Communication Assistant will dial the number and relay the conversation to and from your TTY. Type in "GA" at the end of each message.

### *For voice users:*

Standard telephone users can easily initiate calls to TTY users. The Communication Assistant types the hearing person's spoken words to the TTY user and reads back the typed replies.

1. Dial your state relay number.
2. You will hear, "Relay Service Communication Assistant 1234 (ID number). May I have the number you are calling to, please?"
3. Give the Communication Assistant the area code and telephone number you wish to call and any further instructions.
4. The Communication Assistant will process your call relaying exactly what the TTY user is typing. The Communication Assistant will relay what you say back to the TTY user. (Be sure to talk directly to your caller. Avoid saying "tell him" or "tell her" and say "GA" at the end of your response.)

## Expanded services for relay users

*For Hearing Carryover users:*

Hearing Carryover (HCO) allows speech-disabled users with hearing to listen to the person they are calling. The HCO user types his/her conversation for the Communication Assistant to read to the standard telephone user.

1. Dial your state relay number.
2. Relay Service Communication Assistant will answer with "CA 1234" (for operator ID number), "F" or "M" (for operator gender) and "NUMBER CALLING PLS GA."
3. Type in the area code and telephone number you wish to call and then type, "HCO PLEASE GA."
4. The CA will make the connection and voice your typed conversation to the called party. After you type "GA", pick up the handset to listen to the spoken reply.

*For Voice Carryover users:*

Voice Carryover (VCO) allows users who are hard of hearing or deaf and prefer to use their own voice to speak directly to a hearing person. When the hearing person speaks to you, a Communication Assistant will serve as your "ears" and type everything said to you on a TTY or text display.

1. Dial your state relay number.
2. Relay Service CA will answer with "CA 1234" (for operator ID number), "F" or "M" (for operator gender) and "voice (or type) now GA."
3. Voice or type the area code and telephone number of the party you want to call.
4. The CA will type the message "Voice Now" to you as your cue to start speaking. You speak directly to the hearing person. The CA will not repeat what you say, but only type to you what the hearing person says. You both need to say "GA" at the end of your response.

## TTY public payphones

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in November, 1993, issued an order outlining an interim plan for access to public payphone service through relay services.

*The order states that:*

- All local calls from TTY payphones are free of charge.
- Toll calls can be billed through calling cards, prepaid cards, collect or third party.
- TTY users who wish to use a coin TTY payphone can use Relay Service to assist in connecting calls.

## Emergency calls

In case of emergency, TTY users should call the TTY-equipped 9-1-1 Center or emergency services center in their community. All customers should verify the emergency phone numbers for TTY calls in their area. Calls placed directly and immediately to the local TTY emergency number can save valuable time in urgent situations. For more information on how to obtain emergency numbers in your area, call your state Relay Service number.

## How do you get information about the Telecommunication Relay Service in your state?

Each state has its own Telecommunications Relay Service provider, and a variety of relay features are available. California is the only state where relay users can choose from multiple providers. To find out who provides relay service in your state, check your local telephone book. You may also call your relay provider's customer service number and request up-to-date information on the special features your relay service has available. Telecommunications Relay Service is for everyone! Reach out and communicate without giving it a second thought!

For more information, contact:

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52 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY 14623-5604

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