

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING AND HEARING IMPAIRED CLIENTS

AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania Policy

We provide services to all eligible persons, regardless of their language or disabilities. We recognize that in order to meet the needs of our non-English speaking and hearing and speech-impaired clients, we must have access to both telephone and in-person interpreters and the ability to have written materials translated into a comprehensible format.

4/18/2007

Using the PA Relay Service

PA Relay is making it easier for Pennsylvanians to communicate with persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability. If you have questions or concerns, please call a number below to connect with a live operator.

1-800-682-8706

1-800-682-8789 (TTY)

To place an actual relay call, dial 711 and follow the prompts.

What is it?

The Pennsylvania Relay Service is an AT&T phone service regulated by the Public Utility Commission offering persons who are hearing, deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled three ways to connect using the telephone: Traditional Relay, Video Relay, and Internet Relay. Each conversation is relayed by a skillfully trained Communications Assistant, or CA, who follows a strict code of ethics and confidentiality. PA Relay is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week and virtually eliminates the difficulty in communicating by telephone.

Traditional Relay: Traditional Relay has several variations.

- TTY Relay connects calls between voice telephone users and TTY users. A TTY device is a teletypewriter equipped with a keyboard and screen for typing and reading messages. Callers dial 711, follow the prompts and are connected with a Communications Assistant, or CA, who then reads text messages aloud to hearing persons and types messages to TTY users.
- Other variations of Traditional Relay include Voice Carry Over (VCO), Hearing Carry Over (HCO) and Speech to Speech (STS). These variations enable telephone users and those who need relay services but have speech or hearing abilities to communicate more efficiently.
- Speech disabled callers would benefit most from HCO (hearing carry over which is opposite of VCO). With HCO, the person can hear the other person talking (as opposed to CA speaking or typing) and then communicates by typing text on device.
- Video Relay: Video Relay enables users to place calls using a web camera and a high-speed Internet connection. Video Relay users sign conversations through a CA who speaks the message to a hearing person, then signs the hearing person's response back to the relay user. Internet Relay:
- Internet Relay allows users to place text relay calls. Instead of using a TTY, relay users connect to a Communications Assistant, or CA, through the Internet, type messages on the computer keyboard and read incoming messages on the computer screen.

Who can use PA Relay Service?

Anyone can use it. People who are deaf or hard of hearing primarily use it. Deaf blind people use a TTY fitted with Braille output. Persons who are speech disabled may use one of the variations described above.

How can I access Relay Services?

Anyone can access relay services by dialing 711 anywhere in the USA.

Protocols and Codes During PA Relay Calls

When a PA Relay call is placed, the CA identifies the call to voice telephone user, as a "PA Relay Call for Deaf/Hard of Hearing" and provides an operator number. The CA identifies relay calls for TTY relay users with "PARC" followed by a "GA."

The protocols and codes which are used are similar to those used during any TTY calls. Only one person can transmit messages one person at a time, and it is necessary to "take turns" to communicate. When one finishes "talking," he/she lets the other know that it is the other person's turn to talk. The code, "GA," is used by both to indicate changing speakers. On the TTY, GA represents "Go Ahead." The voice telephone user says "Go Ahead" and the CA relays the message to the TTY user. During the call, speak slowly enough for the CA to relay the message to the TTY user.

At end of the call after saying good bye, the CA uses the code, "SK," which represents "Stop Keying" to let the TTY user know that the call transaction is completed. The CA ends the call with the same operator number.

www.puc.pa.gov/telecommunications/telecommunications-relay-service/pa-relay-services/