

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Workforce Program Policy
Technical Assistance Bulletin 311

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Subject: **Customers Requiring Relay Services**

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This Technical Assistance (TA) Bulletin provides Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with information on Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). These services enable individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities to communicate over various platforms, including telephone and internet-based options. TRS allows these individuals to communicate with anyone, regardless of hearing or speech ability, in a manner that is functionally equivalent to standard telephone services. The communication typically occurs through a relay agent who facilitates clear and effective interaction between all parties involved.

Revisions

TA Bulletin 225

Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Title IV, addresses telephone and television access for individuals with hearing and speech disabilities. The ADA mandates that common carriers (telephone companies) establish interstate and intrastate TRS that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. TRS enables callers with hearing and speech disabilities who use teletype devices (TTYs, also known as TDDs) and voice users to communicate with each other through a third-party communication assistant. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has set minimum standards for TRS.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) 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 Solutions Offices based on program eligibility. To ensure accessibility for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-disabled, Boards may need to use TRS for effective communication.

Relay Services

[T-Mobile USA, Inc.](#) serves as the [Relay Texas](#) provider, facilitating accessible communication for individuals with hearing or speech disabilities. By dialing 7-1-1, Texans can access a range of relay services. However, it is important to note that 7-1-1 dialing access does not apply to Video Phone (VP) or Internet Protocol Relay (IP Relay), as these are initiated via internet-based platforms.

In Texas, customers have access to the following TRS services:

- **Internet Protocol Relay**

Internet Protocol (IP) Relay customers access relay services through a website without needing a special modem or software. When an IP Relay customer enters their message into a text box on the browser, the message is sent to a relay agent who reads it aloud to the voice user. The relay agent types the voice user's response, which then appears on the IP Relay customer's screen. IP Relay services are available from the following providers:

- [Texas - CapTel Captioned Telephone](#)
- [Hamilton CapTel](#)—Spanish captions are available 7am to 11pm CT, seven days a week.
- [Hamilton Web CapTel](#)
- [T-Mobile Accessibility](#)

- **Video Phone**

Video Phone (VP) enables customers with a web camera and high-speed internet connection to speak through a video interpreter using American Sign Language (ASL). The relay agent interprets the sign language for the voice user and then translates the voice user's response back to the VP customer in ASL. VP providers include the following:

- [Hamilton Relay](#)—available in English and Spanish
- [Sorenson Video Relay Services](#)—available in English and Spanish
- [ZP Better Together](#)—available in English and Spanish

- **Voice Carry-Over**

Voice Carry-Over (VCO) enables individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to use their own voices during a phone call. By using a specially designed telephone with a text screen, a VCO user can communicate with a hearing individual. A relay agent then types out the hearing individual's reply.

- **Hearing Carry-Over**

Hearing Carry-Over (HCO) uses a TTY device to enable individuals with speech disabilities to type their part of a conversation. A relay agent then reads the HCO user's text aloud to the hearing individual and/or voice user.

- **Speech-to-Speech**

Speech-to-Speech (STS) allows an individual with a speech disability to connect with a specially trained agent. This agent serves as the caller's voice and repeats their responses to the other party when necessary.

The FCC maintains a detailed [consumer guide](#) that provides instructions for using 7-1-1 for TTY-based TRS.

Please distribute this information to appropriate staff. Send inquiries regarding this TA Bulletin to wfpolicy.clarifications@twc.texas.gov.