



Fact Sheet

Communication Access Provisions
Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act
for
TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE



What is Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS)?

Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) is a communication system that provides telephone communication access to deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-impaired persons. TRS must be functionally equivalent to telephone communication used by those who do have a communication disability. TRS enables two-way communication by wire or radio between an individual who uses a text telephone or other non-voice terminal device and an individual who does not use such a device.

What is a Text Telephone?

A text telephone is a machine that employs visual communication in the transmission of coded signals through a wire or radio communication system. "Text telephone", a term used in Title IV, is also known as: "TDD" (Telecommunications **D**evice for the **D**eaf) or "TTY" (Tele**TY**pewriter). The term TDD is most often used in state and federal government services. The TTY term is preferred by a majority of Deaf and hard of hearing relay users.

What is required of common carriers in terms of TRS?

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates the provisions of TRS. Each common carrier providing telephone voice transmission services must provide TRS, after July 26, 1993, throughout the area in which it offers services, individually, through designees, through a competitively selected vendor, or in concert with other carriers. TRS should be provided for calls within the state as well as between states. Emergency services, such as 9-1-1, should not depend on TRS but use text telephones for direct communication.

What are the mandatory minimum standards for TRS?

Communication assistants (CAs) or relay operators must be trained to meet the specialized communication needs of individuals with hearing and speech disabilities.

Calls must be confidential and may not be intentionally altered. (Contents of all relay calls are always deleted from the TRS system).

The TRS shall operate daily, 24 hours a day. Calls may not be refused, nor limited in volume or duration. The TRS users shall be charged no more than for functionally equivalent voice service. TRS must be capable of communicating with Baudot or ASCII formats.

The cost to provide TRS must be assessed and paid for by every subscriber receiving telephone services.

Who regulates the TRS?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates TRS providers in all states. The Public Utilities Commission monitors the local TRS. Complaints may be filed with the FCC, Common Carrier Bureau, TRS Complaints, Washington DC. 20554; or with the Public Utilities Commission, 465 South King Street, Room 103, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813; phone 586-2020 (Voice); 586-2066 (FAX).

Who operates the TRS in Hawaii?

The local TRS is operated by Relay Hawaii as of July 1, 2003. The phone is 711 or 1-877-447-5990 for people calling with a text telephone; and 711 or 1-877-447-5991 for people calling without a text telephone. For people with a hearing loss that prefer to speak call 711 or 1-877-447-5992. For speech-disabled users speaking to hearing people, call 711 or 1-877-447-8711. For text-telephone users who wish to have their call translated, call 711 or 1-877-447-7261.

How does the TRS work?

If a person who is hearing does not have a text telephone but wishes to talk with a person who has a text telephone, a phone call is placed to TRS. The Relay Operator (RO) will respond and in turn call the other party on a text telephone and relay the message, acting as an intermediary with the phone conversation. The process is reversed when a text telephone user wishes to call a person who does not have a text telephone.

Specific relay services are also available to accommodate special needs. Hearing Carry Over (HCO) is used by speech-impaired persons who can hear on the phone and type their messages on the text telephone. Voice Carry Over (VCO) benefits the deaf or hard of hearing person who can speak on the phone while reading the other party's message on the text telephone.

Brochures on how to use the TRS are available upon request from Relay Hawaii or the Disability and Communication Access Board office.

What other information should we know about TRS?

At the present time, no charges are assessed for local TRS calls made on a pay phone. Toll calls through TRS on a pay phone must be made with a calling or debit card at a rate that will not exceed a regular coin-sent call.

Long distance telephone service providers, such as AT&T, Verizon, and MCI, operate TRS for long-distance callers as well as Telebraille TRS for deaf-blind persons and ASCII relay for calls made through a computer modem.

Other types of relay service have been introduced on the mainland. Speech to Speech relay is for the caller who has a speech impairment but prefers to use speech or voice synthesizers on the phone. Video Relay Service (VRS) provides services through the TRS. Deaf and hearing consumers are in different locations and linked through an interpreter through the TRS. VRS allows users who use sign language to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment. The video link allows the CA to view and interpret the party's signed conversation and relay the conversation back and forth with a voice caller.

Main Office (Oahu):

Disability and Communication Access Board
1030 Richards St. RM.118
Honolulu, HI 96826
(808) 586-8121, Voice or TTY
(808) 586-8129, FAX

Communication Access Specialist

(Oahu): [Use TTY or Relay Service]
For Voice to TTY Relay Service, dial: 711 then
ask for TTY: (808) 586-8130
E-mail: accesshi@aloha.net
<http://www.hawaii.gov/health/dcab>