



NIDCD Fact Sheet | Voice, Speech, and Language Telecommunications Relay Services

What are telecommunications relay services?

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (which took full effect on July 26, 1993) requires all U.S. telephone companies to provide telecommunications relay services.

A telecommunications relay service (TRS) provides a communications assistant (CA) that allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired to communicate with people who use a standard telephone. A TRS offers two options: voice carry-over (VCO) and hearing carry-over (HCO). VCO allows a person with a hearing impairment to speak directly to the other party and then read the response typed by a CA. HCO allows a person with a speech impairment to hear the other party and relay the typed response back to the telephone user through the CA. This service allows individuals with communication disorders to communicate with all telephone users.

How can I use a telecommunications relay service?

To reach a TRS, dial 711 and the assistant can place the 10-digit call on behalf of the text telephone device (TTY or TDD) user.

You can dial 711 to access all telecommunications relay services anywhere in the United States. The relay service is free. In the event of an emergency, TDD or TTY users can call 911 directly and do not need to make a TRS call via 711.

Communications assistants are trained to be unobtrusive. An assistant's responsibility is to relay the conversation exactly as it is received. All relay calls are confidential.

Regardless of which long-distance company or organization is providing a state's relay service, callers can continue to use the long-distance company of their choice.

Where can I find additional information about telecommunications relay services?

For more information on TRS, please visit the Federal Communications Commission at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trs.html>.

The NIDCD maintains a directory of organizations that provide information on the normal and disordered processes of hearing, balance, taste, smell, voice, speech, and language. Visit the NIDCD website at <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov> to search the directory.

For more information, additional addresses and phone numbers, or a printed list of organizations, contact us at:

NIDCD Information Clearinghouse

1 Communication Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20892-3456
Toll-free Voice: (800) 241-1044
Toll-free TTY: (800) 241-1055
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Email: nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov

<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov>

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The NIDCD supports and conducts research and research training on the normal and disordered processes of hearing, balance, taste, smell, voice, speech, and language and provides health information, based upon scientific discovery, to the public.



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