

**Governor's Advisory Board**  
**On Telecommunications Relay**  
**Meeting Minutes**

March 21, 2009  
Abingdon Public Library  
Bel Air, Maryland

**Attendance:**

**GABTR Members:** Mitch Travers, James Stevenson, Paula Holbrook, Betty Dodds, Paul Rasinski, Joyce Lehrer, Rebecca Ladew and Joy Larson

**Excused Absences:** Louis Schwarz and Annette Reichman

**TAM Staff:** Brenda Kelly-Frey, Pam Stewart, Patricia Bird, Meredith Wehrle, Susan Levi and Michael Hollywood

**Hamilton Relay Staff:** Karen Hawley, Paula Murrell, Babs Williams, Donte' Bibbins and Beth Slough

**Interpreters:** Ann Meyers and Gary Thomas

**CART Transcriber:** Megan McKenzie

**Public:** Harry Larson, Rita Pyle, Barbara DeGross, Brittney Little, Karen Platt, Ken Putkovich and Lisa Kornberg

**Call to Order:** Mitch Travers has called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m.

**TAM Reports:**

Patricia Bird, Public Relations Coordinator:

- Thanks Hamilton and TAM staff and board members for their participation in outreach efforts.
- Provides details on TAM's advertising in senior publications, resource guides, and phone directories.
- Reports that the customer surveys have been distributed.
- Responds to a question from audience and explains that the purpose of printing business cards is for outreach and other staff to use when conducting business.

Michael J. Hollywood, GABTR Liaison:

- Introduces board members to the public.
- Clarifies date of next board meeting as June 13<sup>th</sup>, not June 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Announces that next meeting will be held June 13<sup>th</sup> at Ocean Pines Public Library.
- Reminds board members about their term expirations.
  - Emphasizes importance of sending their original resumes and biographical forms to Governor's Office of Appointments, with copies to Mr. Hollywood, if they are interested in maintaining membership.

- Responds to Mr. Stevenson's and Ms. Dodds' concerns about delays in paperwork (resumes and biographical applications) at the Governor's Office of Appointment and continues to follow up.

PAM Stewart, Contract Administrator:

- Introduces Hamilton Relay staff to board members and public.
- Explains that relay operators receive training not only on Deaf-culture, but cultures and communication modes for other user groups.
- Invites members to become involved and/or send other suggestions for training
- Responds to Ms. Lehrer's question and confirms that relay operator training includes information on disability etiquette, appropriate language and behavior.
- Responds to Ms. Dodds' question and confirms that sensitivity training is also provided to captionists at the Captioned Telephone call center.
- Responds to audience question that the location of the Maryland Relay center is in Western Maryland and the call center for Captioned Telephone is in Wisconsin.
- Responds to audience question that when captions are not clearly understood or misspelled, the captioned phone user should ask the other party for clarification and take control of the call.

Meredith Wehrle, MAT Coordinator and Susan Levi, TAM Lead Practitioner:

Ms. Wehrle:

- Presents statistics on MAT equipment program.
- Commends Ms. Hawley and Ms. Murrell for their outreach efforts to inform people about MAT program.
- Shares information about the MAT wireless pilot program.
  - MAT will distribute AT&T's Pantech Slade Phone, beginning with Maryland deaf population first.
  - Responds to Mr. Travers' questions:
    - Explains that many things were considered when establishing pilot program.
    - AT&T was chosen because it offered a data-only plan and was very responsive.
  - Ms. Levi responds to Ms. Ladew's question and explains that MAT is beginning with wireless pilot program as a solution for the deaf, and in the future, may offer wireless solutions for people with other kinds of disabilities.

Ms. Levi:

- Describes MAT program's newest technology, the Deaf-Blind Communicator (DBC).
  - Responds to Mr. Rasinski's question and explains that DBC is not like a cell-phone, but a text-messaging device.
  - Ms. Wehrle responds to Ms. Lehrer's questions and explains that future MAT applications will indicate that they are available in alternative format upon request, including Braille.
  - Ms. Wehrle responds to Ms. Lehrer's questions and explains that the DBC costs about \$6,000.
  - Responds to Ms. Holbrook's question and explains that DBCs aren't covered under Medicare, but are provided by the MAT program.

Brenda Kelly-Frey, TAM Director:

- Discusses NASRA (National Association of State Relay Administrators) and explains that currently, state relays have no jurisdiction over and are not financially liable for Internet and Video Relay Services (VRS).
- Users of Internet and VRS are assigned ten-digit numbers that can be recognized when calling 9-1-1.
- Expresses concern over shrinking numbers of available sign language interpreters in the community.
- Explains reverse 9-1-1 and Harford County's C.T.Y.Y. and their incompatibility with VRS and Internet Relay's ten-digit numbers in database.
- Responds to question from audience about the inclusion of cell phone numbers in the reverse 9-1-1 database and suggests that Verizon keeps that database.
- Responds to Mr. Rasinski's question and explains that she will need to verify from roam secure group whether or not reverse 9-1-1 service is tested, and how often.
- Replies to Ms. Holbrook's question and explains that counties that have reverse 9-1-1 include Harford and Montgomery, but not Howard.
- Explains that Universal Service Trust Fee per landline has been reduced from \$.20 to \$.18 effective immediately.
- Explains that due to recent legislative action, through a BRFA (Budget Reconciliation Fund Adjustment), a portion of TAM's special funds will be reallocated to Maryland School for the Deaf this fiscal year.
- Expresses concern over need for additional revenues should the state relay become fiscally liable for internet and video relay services.
- Informs board members that Hamilton's annual report is available for review.
- Ms. Stewart responds to Mr. Travers' questions about state relays become fiscally liable for internet and video relay services:
  - Explains that the FCC has the authority to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPR) and request comments.
  - The FCC can enact new rules sometimes within as short a time as three months.
  - Ms. Kelly-Frey added that the Public Service Commission's recent comments regarding surcharge reduction included that should any such liability occur, it recommends that TAM/DOIT propose legislation to increase the USTF surcharge from \$.45 to \$.68.

### **Hamilton Relay Reports:**

Paula Murrell, Hamilton TRS Outreach Coordinator:

- Reports that outreach efforts included 22 presentations and/or events.
- Shares details on targeted outreach activities to agencies and organizations, etc.
- Answers question from audience and informs that presentations to government agencies include state and county.
- Answers question from audience and explains that presentations focus on traditional relay service.
- Answers question from audience and explains that students who have disabilities who transition from high school to college need to know about free Maryland Relay services.
- Replies to Ms. Lehrer's questions and explains that Maryland Relay customer service can offer referrals to people who need special equipment that MAT does not provide.
- Answers Ms. Dodd's question and explains that presentations are intended to educate hearing people and general public about how relay works, what a TTY is, etc.

Karen Hawley, Hamilton Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator:

- Demonstrates Hamilton's 30-second advertisement on Captioned Telephone recently developed for distribution as a public service announcement.
- Shares details about demo project to offer six-week trial of captioned phones on-site at three locations such as retirement communities or assisted living facilities.

Babs Williams, Hamilton Account Manager for Maryland:

- Provides call statistics on Captioned Telephone and TRS.
- Ms. Wehrle responds to Mr. Travers' question and explains that about 650 captioned phones have been distributed in Maryland.
- Ms. Hawley responds to Ms. Dodds question and explains that it is helpful when waiting for captions for users to use 'conversational holds' to remind other party they are waiting.

### **GABTR Members' Reports:**

Rebecca Ladew, Speech-Disabled Member:

- Shares information on FCC's report on Speech-to-Speech (STS) rate for outreach purposes.
- Discusses the possibility of creating a STS advisory committee at FCC.
- Mentions her recent submission of article on relay services for people with speech disabilities to National Spasmodic Dysphonia Organization's publication, Our Voice.
- Shares her experiences about her participation in STS outreach with Ms. Bird and Ms. Murrell.

Joy Larson, Deaf/Blind Member:

- Describes product demo of Z phone at recent MDSC (Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens) meeting.
- Answers to Ms. Dodds' question and explains that demo was different from previous OJO phone demo at prior GABTR meeting.

James Stevenson, Government Member:

- Describes Allegany County's effort to develop PSA to create awareness for the relays.
- Commends Hamilton Relay staff for jobs well done.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.