

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

November 7, 2009  
Maryland Relay Center  
Frostburg, Maryland

**Attendance:**

GABTR Members: Mitch Travers, James Stevenson, Terry Romine, Betty Dodds and Ken Putkovich

Absent: Louis Schwarz, Rebecca Ladew, Joyce Lehrer, Paula Holbrook, Joy Larson and Paul Rasinski

TAM Staff: Brenda Kelly-Frey, PAM Stewart, Patricia Barrick, Meredith Wehrle, Susan Levi and Michael J. Hollywood

Hamilton Relay Staff: Babs Williams, Donté Bibbins, Anne Girard and Sudan Khan

Interpreters: Liz Mohr, Heather Mewshaw and Stephanie Harlan

CART Transcriber: Darian Elliott

Public: Dan Whetzel, Bruce Harlan, Thomas Fair, Sr., Barbara Fair, and Cathy Meekins

**Call to Order:** Chairman Mitch Travers has called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. at Maryland Relay Center in Frostburg, MD.

**TAM Reports:**

**Michael J. Hollywood, GABTR Liaison:**

- o Introduces two new board members; each share brief background. Ms. Terry Romine represents MD state government; Mr. Ken Putkovich represents senior citizens.
- o Announces two board vacancies for representatives of Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. (Board member Schwarz no longer resides in Maryland and must resign.)
- o Addresses general formatting question regarding consumers' complaint/ commendation report.
- o Explains that report category labeled 'attitude' contains complaints made by relay users, both hearing and deaf. Sometimes, TTY users assume incorrectly that unfavorable remarks are made by OPR and not other party.
- o Ms. Stewart notes that training related problems are immediately addressed by center manager.
- o Discusses scheduling of 2010 board meetings; agrees to poll members via email.
- o Acknowledges that future meeting minutes need greater detail.

**PAM Stewart, Contract Administrator:**

- o Encourages board members and public to provide feedback in order to help MD Relay improve.
- o Expects new customer survey to be available soon; hopes to distribute at next meeting.
- o Explains that complaints for wrong numbers are most reported; next most reported are commendations for OPRs' good performance.

- Explains that call volumes in general are declining, and comparisons vary month to month (not seasonally) for unknown reasons.
- Mr. Travers comments that several board members use video relay almost exclusively and other times a wireless device.
- Responds that most MD Relay customers are TTY users who do not have high-speed internet service, many need VCO and/or HCO service and can't use wireless devices.
- Mr. Stevenson suggests growth is likely in number of VCO users due to greater number of people who are late deafened.
- Acknowledges impact on MAT program with greater distribution of amplified phones and alternatives like VCO or captioned phones.
- Mr. Stevenson encourages all board members to share MD Relay info with people who may benefit from the service.
- Acknowledges that she will provide copies of captioned telephone call volume reports at future meetings.

**Meredith Wehrle, MAT Coordinator:**

- Acknowledges Susan Levi and Diana Ashby, evaluators for the MAT program.
- Reports MAT statistics; acknowledges request for report on net difference of customers served from meeting to meeting.
- Describes pilot program for distribution of wireless devices and its two calling plans. Expects MAT to soon distribute a hearing-aid compatible phone (Jitterbug).
- Mentions new captioned telephone model 800i is now on the market; costs \$99 and will likely replace current model 200. Explains that MAT will not distribute (it requires a high-speed internet connection).
- Acknowledges seeing article on TracFone, device offered free to Marylanders, that Mr. Putkovich mentioned.

**Brenda Kelly-Frey, TAM Director:**

- Welcomes new board members Ms. Terry Romine and Mr. Kenneth Putkovich; explains that there are still two vacancies and encourages interested relay users to apply.
- Introduces Hamilton's new outreach coordinator Sudan Khan.
- Explains decision to freeze distribution of captioned telephones due to dispute over Ultratec/CTI's record keeping.
  - CTI reports higher number of captioned phones in service in Maryland than TAM does; will not share records with TAM.
  - Hamilton Relay is assisting TAM in resolving dispute.
  - Without reconciliation, State of Maryland may be paying for minutes of service on phones that it did not purchase.
  - Acknowledges that CTI operates call centers for captioned phone service.
  - States that CTI no longer tracks phones using ESNs (electronic serial numbers).
  - Proposes that TAM purchase a dedicated 800 number that dials CTI call center directly, and pre-programming it in any newly issued captioned phone.
  - Explains freeze doesn't apply to model 800i because it uses internet connection and minutes are paid by federal government, not state.
- Discusses continued growth of MAT program.
- Compares TAM's revenues and expenditures for fiscal years '08 and '09; shares projections for '10 and '11.
- Recognizes declining revenues due to fewer numbers of landlines contributing to the USTF.
- Explains Public Service Commission's decision to decrease the Universal Service Trust Fund (USTF) surcharge from \$.20 to \$.18 per landline based on TAM's fund balance surplus.

- Points out the purpose of maintaining surplus is to have funding mechanism for provision of alternative relay services, such as Internet and Video Relay, which the FCC may impose upon TAM in near future.
  - Describes consumer shift from landlines to wireless phones, resulting in less revenue.
- Describes recent legislation (under Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act [BRFA]), that reallocated \$5MM of TAM's FY '09 fund balance surplus to general funds and another \$6MM in FY '10 (\$1MM to general funds; \$5MM to Maryland School for the Deaf general funds).
- Discusses need for consumers who use Internet Relay and VRS to register for an additional ten-digit number that is separate from one assigned by a service provider upon sale of new cell phone. Consumers must do this in order to use those services. States that when this is enforced, the impact on TAM's surplus will be significant.
- Describes potential for states to become fiscally liable for intrastate portion of VRS expenses. If so, it would necessitate an RFP that could result in multi-vendor contract.
- Shares info on recent attendance at two conferences (NASRA [National Association of the State Relay Administrators] and TEDPA [Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program Association]).

**Patricia Barrick, Public Relation Coordinator:**

- Explains that outreach reports have been distributed to board members that provide details of recent outreach efforts.
- Describes collaborative efforts with Baltimore County Department on Aging and Howard County Office on Aging to reach out to seniors who apply to MAT program but have transportation issues that prevent them from getting a phone assessment.

**Hamilton Relay Reports:**

**Babs Williams, Hamilton Relay Account Manager for MD Relay and Captioned Telephone Services:**

- Introduces Hamilton colleagues Donté Bibbins, MD Relay Center Manager; Sudan Kahn, Hamilton TRS Outreach Coordinator and Anne Girard, Hamilton Marketing Director.
- Reports on captioned telephone outreach (on behalf of Karen Hawley, Captioned Telephone Outreach Coordinator, absent).
  - Since last meeting, 15 exhibits, 22 presentations.
  - Describes media interviews and taping of public service announcements.
  - Announces Hamilton Relay's award to recognize Lisa Kornberg as the 2009 Deaf/Hard of Hearing Leader for the State of Maryland (ceremony to be held November 12 at Hearing and Speech Agency).
- Reports on TRS outreach (outreach position is vacant).
  - Since last meeting, 23 exhibits, 5 presentations.
  - Describes outreach focus on healthcare settings based on survey results.
  - Recognizes potential for future outreach in Hispanic community.
- Ms. Kelly-Frey thanks Ms. Williams for her willingness to assist in Maryland during transition period.
- Reports captioned telephone call traffic statistics; clarifies number of captioned telephones in use in Maryland.

**Donté Bibbins, MD Relay Center Manager:**

- Reports TRS call traffic statistics.
- Notes that data from 'call trends by time of day' is helpful tool for staffing purposes.
- Explains that there are currently 45 OPRS, with nine more in training, and most staff work peak times in morning and early afternoon.

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

### **James Stevenson, Government Member:**

- Introduces Dan Whetzel, supervisor for Allegany County Public Schools.
  - Mr. Whetzel explains student service learning program, the current graduation requirements of 75 hours community service, and elective credit for additional 75 hours.
- Suggests opportunity for Maryland Relay and students to collaborate in outreach to low income seniors in Allegany County who could benefit from Maryland Relay/MAT.

### **Betty Dodds, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Member:**

- Mentions recent attendance at conference on telecommunications for people with disabilities with Mr. Putkovich, who presented on emergency preparedness.

### **Kenneth Putkovich, Senior Citizen Member:**

- Shares demographic information on Maryland seniors and its impact on MD Relay; as relay funding decreases, the number of people needing relay service/equipment increases.
- Explains his and Ms. Dodd's recent membership with Maryland Federation of National Active and Retired Employees
  - Expresses interest in sharing info about Maryland Relay with the organization.
  - Mentions that local chapter president may be interested in serving on board as representative for Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

### **Mitch Travers, GABTR Chairman:**

- Describes positive experience using ten-digit number for videophone.
- Defines some barriers to having a more mobile videophone:
  - Camera is necessary for both user and operator
  - 3G has insufficient bandwidth
- Mentions his collaboration with a video service provider to find a solution.

### **Rebecca Ladew, Speech Disabled Member:** (absent –report submitted)

- Describes attendance at TRS Forum in TDI's 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference at Washington, D.C.
- Describes participation in FCC's Broadband Workshop for people with disabilities; expresses concern about technology not being adaptable to people's needs (i.e. Blackberry's small keyboard).
- Emphasizes need for video-assisted STS calls.
- Continues STS outreach efforts with Ms. Barrick.

## **Public:**

### **Anne Girard, Hamilton Marketing Director:**

- Describes recent Hamilton summit attended by outreach staff Karen Hawley and Sudan Khan, and benefits of participation there.
- Commends Ms. Williams for her willingness to work in Maryland for several months.