

**Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay
Saturday, September 21, 2002
Baltimore, Maryland**

ATTENDEES

Board Members: Mitch Travers (Chair), Isaac Agboola, Susan Boswell, Patsy Bowman, Marie Campbell, Rebecca Ladew, Joy Larson, Annette Reichman,, Jim Stevenson.

TAM Staff: Brenda Kelly-Frey, Willis Mann, Nancy Seidman, Pam Stewart, Mike Hollywood, Patty Bird

Visitors: Yvonne Dunkle (Director, ODHH), Mike Graziano, Harry Larson, Randy Murbach, Linda Webb, Earl Tingstrom

Captioner: Natalie Prunty

INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m. He noted that the meeting would be shorter than normal due to the Relay Center open house at 1:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as corrected previously through e-mail.

TAM STAFF REPORTS (Pam Stewart reporting for TAM staff)

Next GABTR Meeting: The next GABTR meeting is scheduled for November 9th at the Maryland School for the Deaf in Columbia.

Community Feedback: During this transition period, GABTR members should be especially attentive to public opinion about the Relay and participate in the efforts to help Relay users get used to the new vendor. Questions from the public about the relay operations may be directed to Pam Stewart at her e-mail address (pam@mdrelay.org) or telephone number (410-767-6970).

Reappointments: Letters of reappointment for GABTR members whose terms expire in June are still pending from the Governor's Office but they should be going out soon.

Public Relations: Recent public relations activities include interviews involving TAM staff on cable shows and local television. The taped interviews, which features Brenda Kelley-Frey and Nancy Seidman, are showing on several local cable channels. Nancy is also coordinating the open house activities today.

Calling the Relay: When asking the general public to call back, deaf users should specify the Relay's voice number: 1-800-201-7165 or 7-1-1, both of which are answered voice first. However, dialing 7-1-1 from PBX systems may not always be possible.

Call Processing: When Relay users call and the message: "Number Calling Please GA" is displayed, it is really the computer that responded with this message and the time it takes for the computer to respond is what is factored into the average speed of answer (ASA). The call request is then forwarded to an available operator who would simply press the "Dial" button to call the other party, because the number specified by the Relay user is automatically set as the number to call. So, if a wrong number was dialed it would probably be because the Relay user had entered an incorrect number in the first place. If a call is not picked up, the phone would continue to ring until the deaf user presses any key on the TTY. This gives the user control to stop the call.

Meeting Room: The room in the Relay Center where the GABTR is meeting will be available as a community room which relay users could reserve for a meeting by calling 410-368-8567 (TTY/V). Relay operators are encouraged to interact with the users and required to participate in one community event per year as a way to get to know the users and for the users to get to know the operators. As a morale booster, relay users are encouraged to commend an operator who has done a good job.

IP Relay: One reason for requiring users to have a username and password to use Maryland IP Relay is to minimize the abuse of free long distance service by unauthorized persons, including those from outside the country. Users who do not wish to login could go directly to the ATT IP Relay website: iprelay.att.com but they would not get Maryland Relay operators.

CAPTEL Trial: The CAPTEL trial is going on well and the feedback has been very positive. Some people who would not use the relay in the past, such as senior citizens who are losing their hearing as a result of age, have begun to use it through the CAPTEL service.

Brenda Kelley-Frey

Transition: The TAM team has been great during the transition. The former director, Gilbert Becker, will be attending the open house and he will be given a plaque to thank him for his many years of service with Maryland Relay.

The MAT Program: The MAT program has just completed its five-year plan and some individuals who were among the first to receive equipments are now requesting new ones. There is an increase in requests from western Maryland recently and there is an evaluation site in Oakland.

Complaint Logs: A summary of the complaint logs submitted by Maryland Relay is available at the FCC website. Similar information for other states relay are also at that site.

Recertification: TAM is currently working on recertification of Maryland Relay and the paperwork is due October 1st.

Questions for TAM Staff: Rebecca Ladew asked how to identify whether an operator is located in the Maryland Relay center or elsewhere. Pam Stewart responded that the plan is for all Maryland Relay calls to be handled at the Maryland Relay center. Linda Webb asked if there is still a dedicated VCO number and whether the operator answers or whether the computer answers. Pam Stewart responded that there is still a dedicated VCO number and that if a relay user already has a profile, then the system would handle the VCO call automatically as specified in the customer profile. Linda Webb noted that she could not use her profile at work, due to the PBX access problem. Pam Stewart responded that setting up and using a PIN access could solve that problem as well as when calling from out of state. The user just needs to provide the operator with the PIN and the profile would come up.

CAPTEL Trial: TAM is in discussion with CAPTEL to extend the Maryland trial period due to the popularity of the service.

AT&T REPRESENTATIVE REPORT (Patty Ferran)

Caller ID: Caller ID is now available and Maryland Relay users should see the phone number of the calling party. Relay users may also chose to display Maryland Relay number instead of the calling party's number. They can specify this as part of their customer profile.

Relay Customer Profile: The Relay Customer Profile (RCP) form has been revised and it will allow for multiple profiles within the same household.

Conference Calling: The details of the conference calling feature are still being worked out and it is not clear at this time what the demand for this service would be like. The setup would involve an operator who will voice what is typed, and a transcriber, who will type everything she or he hears during the call. Conference calls must be scheduled at least 2 days in advance.

Operator Hiring and Training: There are currently about 110 operators, with the goal of hiring a total of 130. New operators go through a two-week training period.

Call Volume: About 90% of calls are being handled at the Maryland Relay Center. Calls Averaged about 130,000 during the months of June and July. TTY initiated calls are about 87% of the total.

BOARD DISCUSSIONS

CAPTEL Trial: The Chair requested feedback about the CAPTEL trial from Board members. Several Board members have personally used CAPTEL or have family

members that used them. They reported that hearing friends and relatives appreciate the opportunity to hear the voice of the deaf or hard of hearing caller, the ability to interrupt and the relatively faster speed of CAPTEL. One member reported that friends and relatives called her more often since she started using CAPTEL, another reported that family members were more communicative during a call using CAPTEL than when using regular relay.

IP Relay: The Chair requested feedback about IP Relay. Some members said they prefer the version of IP provided by Sprint over the one available at the Maryland Relay website, due in part to ease of use and the split windows feature of the Sprint version. In response to a comment about call disconnection during IP relay calls, Pam Stewart responded that the problem is not limited to Maryland's IP relay because the technical problems are line-related. For instance the call-waiting feature of the phone line might interrupt and disconnect IP relay regardless of the provider.

Giving Instructions at Beginning of a Call: Patricia Bowman reported that sometimes she is asked by the operator to repeat something she has already typed at the beginning of a call. Missy Devlin responded that, with up front technology, what is typed in response to the prompt for the number to call is sent to the operator up to the point where the user ends with a "GA". Any additional instructions typed after that will not be captured and sent to the operator.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Isaac Agboola
Secretary