

The RELAY Connection

News, information, updates and more from Maryland Relay.

Joseph Kolash Joins the Maryland Relay Team

Please join us in welcoming Joseph Kolash, AT&T's public relations account manager for Maryland Relay. In his new position, Joseph will work closely with Maryland Relay's in-house public relations team to further promote Maryland Relay features and programs and make informative presentations to various groups and organizations across our State.

Most recently, Joseph worked as a resource manager for the AT&T National Relay Center in Providence, Rhode Island, and as an outreach manager for AT&T New York Relay. Prior to that, he served as chairman of



both the Virginia Association of the Deaf's Dual Party Relay Committee and the Virginia Dual Party Relay Advisory Board.

Joseph currently lives in Baltimore City and is the very proud father of two children.

Upfront Automation: Providing Faster, More Efficient Access to Maryland Relay

In the past, when Maryland Relay users dialed 7-1-1, their call was answered by a live Relay Operator. Now, thanks to upfront automation, incoming Maryland Relay calls are answered by a computer and later transferred to a Relay Operator.

Here's how upfront automation works: After dialing 7-1-1, you will receive an automated message asking you to enter the phone number you wish to call. (Text users will be sent a text message and standard phone users will receive this request verbally.) Once you type the area code and telephone number of the person you are calling, along with any special calling instructions or information (e.g. "Please ask for the billing department"), your call will be transferred to a live Relay Operator. The Operator's identification number and gender ("M" for male or "F" for female) will appear on your text screen. If all Operators are busy, you will receive a message asking you to wait for the next available Operator. (Note: Never wait more than 90 seconds for a Relay Operator; instead, hang up and try
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Ask the Operator

What are the benefits of establishing a Relay Choice Profile?

Completing a Relay Choice Profile (RCP) allows you to establish a personal profile that lets the Relay Operators know the communications options you want, such as TTY, VCO, HCO or voice. Relay users can indicate their preferred long-distance telephone service carrier on their RCP and even any special calling instructions. For example, if you would like your name to be announced at the beginning of every Relay call, you can put this preference on your RCP.

Many Relay users appreciate the RCP's speed-dial option as well. Let's say you call your mom several times a week, and you're tired of typing in her phone number each time. On your RCP, you can enter mom's telephone number and the words "Call Mom." Now, whenever you tell the Relay Operator to "Call Mom," he or she will automatically know to dial your mom's phone number.

To create your RCP (Multi-User Relay Choice Profiles [MURCPs] also are available for multiple users calling from the same home or business location), contact Maryland Relay Customer Service at 1-866-669-0865 (TTY) or 1-866-669-0853 (voice). Or, you can visit www.mdrelay.org or www.att.com/relay.

Whenever I call an 800 number, the Relay Operator types the entire automated greeting. Can I ask the Operator to skip this step?

Maryland Relay Operators are required to type everything that they hear, including any automated greetings. However, if you do not want the Operator to relay an automated greeting, simply let the Relay Operator know upfront which prompts or extensions you would like him or her to enter (e.g. "Dial 1-800-555-1212 and press option one, then ask for the special order clerk"). This way, the Relay Operator can immediately begin voicing your response or entering the prompts you request.



Tired of Telemarketers? Join the National Do Not Call Registry!

Telemarketers always seem to call at the worst times, like just when you're sitting down for dinner, when you're expecting an important phone call or while you're watching your favorite television program. But did you know that there's a free, easy way to limit these calls?

A service of the federal government, the National Do Not Call (DNC) Registry gives Americans the opportunity to block most of the telemarketing calls they receive. Once an individual visits the registry's Web site—www.donotcall.gov—and enters their home and/or cell phone number, along with their e-mail address, telemarketers will be required to stop calling the registered number(s) within three months. Any telemarketer that violates the registry will be subject to an \$11,000 fine.

It's important to understand that the DNC registry will eliminate most, but not all, telemarketing calls. Calls will still be permitted from charities, telephone surveyors and political organizations, as well as companies that you have contacted.

If you do not have Internet access, you can call 1-888-382-1222 (voice) or 1-866-290-4236 (TTY) and register by phone. However, you must place the call from the phone number that you wish to register. If you register through www.donotcall.gov, you will receive an e-mail confirming your request. You will then be required to click on the link in the e-mail within 72 hours to activate your registration, which is good for five years. You can check the status of your registered number(s) anytime by calling the above 888 or 866 number, or by visiting www.donotcall.gov.

Attention Readers:

• Upcoming GABTR Meeting

The next GABTR (Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay) meeting will be held on March 20, 2004, from 1:30-4:30 p.m., at Greenbelt Community Center (15 Crescent Road, Greenbelt, MD, 20770). The meeting is open to members of the public. For more information, call 1-800-552-7724 (voice/TTY) or visit www.mdrelay.org.

• A New Way to Make 900 Pay-Per-Calls

Maryland Relay's 900 pay-per-call access numbers for English and Spanish speakers have been disconnected. To make a 900 pay-per-call, dial 7-1-1 or 1-800-735-2258.

• A Tip for VCO Users

VCO users should wait for "VCO ON GA" to appear on their text screen before they begin speaking. This way, they won't have to keep repeating the phone number they want to call.

The RELAY Connection

A quarterly publication of the Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) program in the Maryland Department of Budget & Management.

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GABTR Representatives

You can contact representatives of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) at the numbers and e-mail addresses below. They are on this Board to serve the needs of their community and welcome your input.

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The Case for Spaces

During a recent phone conversation with a close friend, a Maryland Relay TTY user saw the following words on her TTY screen: “MEET ME AT E U T A W STREET.” A few days later, the TTY user wrote to us asking why the Maryland Relay Operator inserted a space between each letter of the word *Eutaw*.

The use of a single space between the letters of a name actually has a very important purpose and is not the result of Operator error.

When the person on the other side of the TTY user’s conversation used a name, like *Sarah*, *San Diego* or *Eutaw Street*, during the conversation, the Relay Operator automatically checked the spelling with him. The Relay Operator then put a single space between each letter of the name to let the TTY user know that the spelling of that word was confirmed by the speaker. That’s why the phrase, “Meet me at Eutaw Street,” was typed “MEET ME AT E U T A W STREET ” and appeared this way on her text screen. This kind of verification also assured the TTY user that the person she was talking to definitely meant *Eutaw*, and not another similar-sounding word, like *Utah*.

Are You Ready for an Emergency?

An emergency can strike any of us, at anytime. That’s why it’s helpful to learn as much as we can beforehand about dialing 9-1-1. This is particularly important for people who have difficulty communicating over a standard phone.

By law, all 9-1-1 emergency call centers in the United States must be TTY accessible. This means that when a TTY user dials 9-1-1 directly, the emergency center that he or she is connected to must be able to handle the call—without any assistance from a state relay service.

Listed below are some important tips for Maryland Relay users to remember when dialing 9-1-1:

- In an emergency situation, remember to dial 9-1-1 directly! This applies to all Maryland Relay users, including people who use a TTY—or any other assistive device—to communicate by phone.

- Attention TTY users: If you dial 9-1-1 and the emergency services center does not send text to your TTY promptly, using the palm of your hand, hit your TTY’s keyboard several times. This will cause the 9-1-1 operator’s equipment to automatically switch over to TTY mode.

- Be sure to give the 9-1-1 operator your name, phone number and the address where help is needed. After you give the operator this information, he or she may ask you some other questions. Remember to stay calm and give the operator as much information about your emergency as possible.

- If you do not answer an operator’s question, let him or her know. Otherwise, the operator will keep repeating the question until you respond.

- If you are deaf or hard of hearing with understandable speech and find yourself in an emergency situation in which the only telephone available is a standard phone, dial 9-1-1 and tell the operator that you are deaf. Don’t forget to give him or her your location and describe the nature of your emergency.

If you do not have understandable speech, lay the phone down on a table to keep the phone line open. This will allow the 9-1-1 center to determine your location and send an emergency vehicle to assist you. Remember that cell phones cannot be traced to a specific location at the present time.

- If it is safe to do so, stay on the line until you have answered all of the operator’s questions. If you must leave the phone because it is not safe to stay, keep the phone off the hook. If you must hang up, try to let the operator know why.

For the supervisory staff of 9-1-1 call centers, Maryland Relay offers ongoing training to ensure that these staff members and their employees are prepared to handle calls from Maryland Relay users. For more information, contact Maryland Relay Customer Service at 1-800-552-7724 (voice/TTY) or e-mail moreinfo@mdrelay.org.

It’s helpful to learn as much as we can beforehand about dialing 9-1-1.

Put a Stop to Garbling

Garbling—when a TTY transmits unintelligible text (e.g. “Hi, how are you?” comes across as “kime12#olimse87ik” on your TTY screen)—can be frustrating for any relay user. This is similar to when a standard phone user hears a lot of static during a phone call.



Here are some simple ways that relay users can reduce, and hopefully eliminate, garbling:

- People who use TTYs with an acoustic coupler are more susceptible to garbling due to background noise. (The signal light flashing on your TTY when no text is being sent or received is a common indicator of background noise.) To solve this problem, make sure your telephone handset fits snugly in the coupler.

- Some TTYs are powered by rechargeable batteries. Over time, these batteries may weaken and will not hold a charge. This may cause an inconsistent current from the battery’s charging circuit, leading to garbling. Check the manual that came with your TTY or call your TTY’s manufacturer to find out how often rechargeable batteries should be replaced.

- Garbling may be the result of worn telephone line cords. Don’t forget to inspect your lines regularly.

- Place your TTY in a quiet area, away from televisions, radios, refrigerators, clanging pots and pans, microwaves, air conditioners and fans.

- Try using your TTY in direct connect mode, if possible.

- If you are experiencing garbling, press the space bar on your TTY several times.

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MARYLAND RELAY CONTACT NUMBERS

7-1-1 in Maryland	1-877-735-5151 ASCII	1-800-877-1264 Spanish
1-800-201-7165 Voice	1-800-785-5630 Speech-to-Speech (STS)	1-800-552-7724 TAM Office/Customer Service
1-800-735-2258 TTY/HCO	1-866-669-0874 Reservation number for Maryland Conference Relay, Voice/TTY	Visit our Web site: www.mdrelay.org
1-888-VCO-WORD (1-888-826-9673) Voice Carry-Over (VCO)	1-866-669-0853 (Voice) 1-866-669-0865 (TTY) 1-866-669-0871 (Fax) AT&T/Maryland Relay In-House Customer Service Numbers	Or send us an e-mail: moreinfo@mdrelay.org
1-877-258-9854 Two-Line VCO		

When using Relay technologies like VRS and Internet Protocol Relay (IP), remember that computer and Internet connections can shut down unexpectedly. Always keep your TTY nearby to use as a backup communication device in case of an emergency.



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your call again.)

Upfront automation not only speeds up call processing, but also relieves the Relay Operator from having to re-enter the number to be called, virtually eliminating the possibility of a misdialed call. In addition, this advancement provides a way to notify Relay users if their call does not reach the Maryland Relay Center via a flashing signal light on

their phone. (This signal light is actually a message from the phone company, telling you to hang up and redial.)

To streamline your calls even further, Maryland Relay recommends establishing a Relay Choice Profile (RCP). It takes just minutes, and you can edit your RCP at any time. For more information, see the "Ask the Operator" article on page one.

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- If you are a VCO user with a TTY, make sure you place the handset onto your TTY's cradle quickly, immediately after you say, "Go Ahead."

- Garbling may be caused by worn phone lines leading to your home, high power lines or nearby construction activity. Ask your local phone company to check the lines leading to your home, as well as the wiring inside your home.

If you have tried all of the above suggestions and are still experiencing a lot of garbling, contact your TTY's manufacturer. Those who received their TTYs through the MAT program should call 1-800-552-7724 (voice/TTY).