

TELECOMMUNICATION ACCESS

THE DEAF AND DISABLED TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM (DDTP)

The technological advances of today have allowed the deaf and hard of hearing populations the ability to communicate via the telephone and internet in ways that were unavailable in the past. The Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP), a part of the California Public Utilities Commission, administers two programs: the California Relay Service (CRS) and the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP). The purpose of these programs is to provide access to basic telephone service for Californians who have difficulty using the telephone.

California Relay Service (CRS)

CRS provides specially-trained operators that relay telephone conversations back and forth between people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-disabled and all those they wish to communicate with by telephone. There are numerous types of relay services provided for people with differing kinds of communication difficulties.

One of the biggest challenges for a person making a relay call is that the party that they are calling may hang up because he/she is unfamiliar with this service. Should a caller state, "Hello, this is Mr. X. speaking to you through a Sign Language Interpreter" or "This is Mr. X. talking to you through a video relay service" be aware that this person will be using the CRS and the operator will guide you through the appropriate protocol for these conversations. If a business has been contacted and the conversation takes longer than anticipated and the call must be ended, it is courteous to provide the caller with a direct number, so he/she may conclude the call at a later time.

A step by step guide for making various types of relay calls can be found at: http://ddtp.cpuc.ca.gov/Relay/How_to_Make_a_Relay_Call.aspx . An explanation of each type of service provided by the CRS is listed below.

Video Relay Service (VRS) makes use of a web cam and the Internet, or a videophone and high speed Internet access. A Relay Operator/Interpreter, fluent in sign language, can see and be seen by the calling party. VRS is often preferred by people who wish to use sign language and/or lipread the relay operator.

Teletypewriter (TTY) Relay Service utilizes a TTY which is a small telecommunications device with a keyboard for typing and a screen for reading conversations. A TTY is often used by people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-disabled.

Voice Carry Over (VCO) Relay Service is for people who are deaf or hard of hearing but who wish to speak through the telephone receiver directly to and be heard by the other party. The relay operator types what is said by the other party and the VCO user reads it on his or her TTY.

Hearing Carry Over (HCO) Relay Service is for people who can hear but who have difficulty speaking clearly but wish to hear the other party directly. The HCO user types on a TTY what he or she wishes to say and this is spoken by the relay operator to the other party.

Speech To Speech (STS) Relay Service makes it possible for people who can hear but who have a speech disability to carry on a telephone conversation with anyone they might wish to communicate. Some STS users communicate with a voice synthesizer or voice enhancer device. As needed, a specially trained STS Relay Operator re-voices what is being said by the STS user. The STS user hears the other party's voice directly.

Internet (IP) Relay Service is a web-based relay service. Text-users who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled can initiate a relay call by connecting with an Internet Relay Operator who, in turn, dials the phone number of the other party to be called.

There are three ways to dial a CRS operator. Should you be kept on hold for a lengthy period of time when dialing using the first option, try using the second or third option to connect with a CRS operator.

1. Dial the DDTP dedicated toll-free numbers

- **TTY:**
English: (800) 735-2929
Spanish: (800) 855-3000
- **Voice- including Voice Carryover (VCO) and Hearing Carryover (HCO):**
English: (800) 735-2922
Spanish: (800) 855-3000
- **Speech to Speech:** (800) 854-7784
OR

2. Dial 711 from any telephone

OR

3. Dial the CRS providers' number

There are two CRS providers (AT&T Relay and Hamilton Relay) - the websites with all of the numbers are listed below:

<http://ddtp.cpuc.ca.gov/relay.aspx> and click on the quick link on the right side "California Relay Service CRS) Providers"

California Telephone Access Program (CTAP)

CTAP Call Center

P.O. Box 30310

Stockton, CA 95213

(800) 806-1191 (Voice)

(800) 806-4474 (TTY)

Website: <http://ddtp.cpuc.ca.gov/homepage.aspx>

Californians who are deaf, hard of hearing, speech disabled, blind, or who have low vision, cognitive impairments, or restricted mobility, are eligible to receive free, assistive, telephone equipment with certification by a medical doctor, a licensed audiologist, a qualified state agency, or a hearing aid dispenser. A CTAP application form, now available in six languages, can be downloaded at: <http://www.californiaphones.org/apply.html>