

Relay Texas Offers New Features

Access to the Telephone = Access to Health Care, Education and Rehabilitation

Being able to make private, independent, confidential phone calls is a privilege many people take for granted. Relay Texas is a service that makes it possible for individuals with speech and/or hearing disabilities to make phone calls. While many speech-language pathologists and audiologists are familiar with TTY Relay calls that have been available for several years, now Relay Texas offers new features. Gary Smith, with the Better Business Bureau Consumer Education Foundation in Austin, is working with the Texas Public Utility Commission and Relay Texas to promote these new features.

Video Relay Interpreting (TVIS)

TVIS enables a caller who knows American Sign Language to communicate with an interpreter over the Internet using sign language. Using a computer camera and streaming video, the signing caller and interpreter can see each other on their computer screens. The caller can tell the interpreter what phone number to call. The interpreter then places the call and uses sign language to translate the conversation, relaying the messages between the two parties with no delay, which is generally associated with traditional TTY Relay calls. Free videoconferencing equipment is also available. Contact Gary Smith at gary7@ix.netcom.com for details.

711 Dialing

The FCC required all 50 to have 711 dialing in place by October 1, 2001. To call a Relay operator, just **dial 711** (or 9-711). Many university PBX systems need to be programmed to recognize 711 as a 10-digit number. Often, this can be easily fixed by contacting your telecommunication systems manager. However; if, for any reason, you have problems getting a Relay operator, contact Gary Smith, 512-445-4748 or gary7@ix.netcom.com.

To learn more about Relay Texas services, call the Relay Texas Customer Service (800-676-3777) or check the following websites.

FCC http://www.fcc.gov/cib/dro/trs/con_trs.html

Texas Public Utility Commission <http://www.puc.state.tx.us/relay/index.cfm>

Video Interpreting Services <http://www.c-s-d.org> Click on Services, then click on Video Interpreting (VI).

<http://www.wavrs.com>