

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) providers to be able to handle all calls normally carried by telephone companies, including “coin sent-paid” calls (calls made from a coin-operated payphone). A program developed by local and long distance telephone companies, TRS providers, independent payphone service providers, and organizations representing persons with hearing and speech disabilities can help you make a relay call from a payphone.

TRS and How It Works

TRS is a service that enables persons with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate by telephone with persons who do not have such disabilities. This communication is accomplished through TRS centers using trained communications assistants (CAs) who relay conversations using either text, voice, or video devices. For more information about TRS, see the FCC’s consumer fact sheet at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/trs.html.

TRS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at no extra cost to callers. Your local relay service can be accessed by dialing 711, a toll free relay service number, or the TRS center’s seven digit number that can be found in the Customer Guide pages of your local telephone directory.

The Payphone Relay Program

The payphone relay program covers local and long distance calls. You can make such calls from any coin-operated public payphone using TRS. If a call is local, you do not need to use coins, a calling card, or a prepaid card. Just dial 711 on most payphones and give the local number you wish to call. You can make long distance calls by charging them to your calling card, including a prepaid card, or by calling collect. Charges for calling cards may vary, so check with your provider about applicable rates.

The Payphone Relay Program (cont’d.)

For more information on prepaid phone cards, see the FCC’s consumer fact sheet found at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/prepaidcards.html.

Getting a Telephone Calling Card or Prepaid Card

If you want information about obtaining a telephone calling card or prepaid card, call your TRS provider, the business office of your local telephone company, your long distance carrier, or, if available, a center for individuals with special needs. The TTY and voice numbers for such centers can be found in the Customer Guide pages of your local telephone directory. Prepaid cards are also available at convenience stores, gas stations, grocery stores, newsstands, and other public places.

The FCC does not currently regulate prepaid card rates, so check with the provider and shop around for the best prices.

(More)
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Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you have a complaint about lack of or improperly functioning payphone relay service, first try to resolve it with the service provider. If you cannot resolve the matter directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

What to Include in Your Complaint

The best way to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line complaint form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number where you can be reached;

What to Include in Your Complaint (cont'd.)

- whether you are filing a complaint on behalf of another party, and if so, the party's name, address, email address, day time phone number, and your relationship to the party;
- preferred format or method of response (letter, fax voice phone call, e-mail, TRS, TTY, ASCII text, audio recording, or Braille);
- that your complaint is about accessing TRS;
- the name, address, and telephone number (if known) of the company or companies involved with your complaint; and
- a brief description of your complaint and the resolution you are seeking, and a full description of the equipment or service you are complaining about, including date of purchase, use, or attempt to use.

For More Information

For more information about payphone relay service, TRS, or FCC programs to promote access to telecommunications services for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's Disability Rights Office Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro. For information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

10/20/08*

