

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
RSA-IM-01-38  
DATE: August 20, 2001

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)  
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)  
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS  
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
PROTECTION & ADVOCACY OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS  
PROGRAMS  
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS  
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
PROGRAMS  
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT: Information Regarding the Speech-to-Speech Telephone Relay Service  
and Its Potential Benefit to Certain VR Consumers.

CONTENT: The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to provide  
information to front-line vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff regarding a  
service provided to telephone users with speech disabilities. Speech-to-  
Speech (STS), available nationwide and provided through the  
Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) Relay Service, could  
provide greater independence, confidence, and more successful  
socialization when using the telephone for those who sometimes have  
difficulty making themselves verbally understood.

STS works very similarly to the standard relay service. The biggest  
difference is that, instead of vocalizing from a TDD written message, the  
operator or communication assistant (CA) listens to and repeats the spoken  
word of a speech-disabled caller. Thanks to specialized training in speech  
patterns, the CA is able to simply repeat what has been spoken so that it is  
easier to understand. The conversation is three-way, allowing the person  
with a disability to hear what the other party is saying without  
interpretation by the CA.

The potential uses of this service are numerous. An individual with a  
speech disability can speak more readily by telephone to potential

employers, educational institutions, banks and lenders, etc, and is freely able to communicate with anyone not familiar with his or her unique speech pattern.

STS is being used with great success in some States, such as Minnesota, California, and Maryland. In most areas, the newness of the service and lack of understanding of its availability among potential users has limited its call volume. This service could be of significant benefit to individuals with speech disabilities. For this reason, we would hope that VR staff would refer consumers, when appropriate, to the STS service.

It is the purpose of this memorandum to provide State VR agencies with the information they need to assist consumers with speech disabilities in accessing and utilizing the STS service. A list of United States STS access numbers is available at [www.stsnews.com/Pages/STSDial-UpTelnumbers.html](http://www.stsnews.com/Pages/STSDial-UpTelnumbers.html).

If you require more information regarding STS, please refer to the website: [www.stsnews.com](http://www.stsnews.com) or telephone the developer of the STS concept, Dr. Bob Segalman, Research Analyst with the California Department of Rehabilitation at 916-263-8689. If you have difficulty accessing the website or need other information, contact Jenn Rigger, VR Program Specialist, at 202-260-2179 or via e-mail at [jenn.rigger@ed.gov](mailto:jenn.rigger@ed.gov).

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Mark E. Shoob  
Deputy Commissioner

cc: COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON INDEPENDENT LIVING  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY SYSTEMS  
NATIONAL REHABILITATION FACILITIES COALITION