

**Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay
Saturday, June 1, 2002
Deep Creek Lake, Maryland**

ATTENDEES

Board Members: Mitch Travers (Chair), Isaac Agboola, Susan Boswell, Patsy Bowman, Marie Campbell, Joy Larson, Susan Stevens Miller, Annette Reichman, Jim Stevenson, Becky Ladew

TAM Staff: Gilbert Becker, Patty Bird, Brenda Kelly-Frey, Willis Mann, Nancy Seidman,

Visitors: Bob Daniels, Missy Devlin (AT&T) Patty Brennan Ferran (AT&T), Herb Larson, Randy Murbach (Sprint), Theresa Murbach, Muriel Strassler.

Absent: Brenda Battat.

Interpreters: Anne Acampora, Tona Swaggert, and Anne Leahy

Captioner: Anne Blazejewski

INTRODUCTIONS

Mitch Travers welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the AT&T representatives, Missy Devlin and Patty Brennan. He also introduced Marie Campbell, a new GABTR member.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as corrected previously through e-mail. Mitch Travers suggested including a statement in the GABTR section of the Maryland Relay website clarifying that the minutes posted are consolidated and abbreviated descriptions of what was discussed during GABTR meetings and that readers could contact either TAM or the GABTR for additional information about the minutes.

SPRINT FAREWELL

Randy Murbach, speaking on behalf of Sprint, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as the Maryland Relay vendor since its inception over ten years ago. He gave a multimedia presentation spanning the years of Sprint relationship with Maryland Relay. The presentation was very well received.

TAM STAFF REPORTS

Gilbert Becker

Moving on: Gilbert Becker announced that he has accepted a new position as Director of Telecommunications for the State of Maryland, which is also part of the Maryland Department of Budget and Management (DBM). He reviewed the past ten years of Maryland Relay, expressing pride in the accomplishments of the Relay since its inception. He also expressed appreciation to the TAM staff, the GABTR, Sprint, and all those who have contributed towards making Maryland Relay a leader among its peers right from the beginning.

NASRA Meeting: The National Association for State Relay Administration (NASRA) met in Baltimore during the first week of May. Gilbert Becker was elected as the NASRA Vice Chairman at the meeting.

New Director of TAM: Mr. Becker announced that Brenda Kelly-Frey had been promoted to the position of Director of TAM.

Brenda Kelly-Frey

AT&T Switchover: Brenda Kelly-Frey said she would maintain an open door policy as the new Director of TAM. She expressed confidence in the TAM staff to continue to provide the best relay service. She announced that AT&T formally took over as the Maryland Relay vendor at 12:45 a.m. June 1st and that she made one of the first calls through the new vendor.

MAT Program: The MAT program is constantly growing. The program has received approximately 1,600 applications to date, of which approximately 1,400 have been approved. The MAT program loaned TTYs to be used in the command center in La Plata after the recent tornado damage in the town to help out deaf individuals who were affected by the tornado.

CAPTEL Trial

The CapTel trial began in March and will run through December. Feedback shows very high (88% - 93%) customer satisfaction with CapTel, and CapTel users also tend to talk longer on the phone, probably because they liked it better than standard Relay.

Willis Mann

New Reimbursement Rates: New reimbursement rates for GABTR members for mileage and meals will be in effect starting July 1st. Board members may also be reimbursed for road tolls, long distance phone charges, and other expenses relevant to the performance of their duties. The rates are:

Breakfast:	\$ 8.00
Lunch:	10.00
Dinner:	21.00
Mileage:	\$.34 cents per mile

Term Renewals: Four GABTR members are currently up for term renewals. They should send their application for renewal to the Governor's Office of Appointments as soon as possible if they are still interested in serving on the Board.

Next GABTR Meeting: Mr. Mann suggested that the next GABTR meeting be located at the new Relay Center in Baltimore in September, in conjunction with an Open House.

Nancy Seidman

Maryland Relay Website: Work on improving the website continues, and traffic to the site in recent times have been up.

Educational Program: The Maryland Relay educational kit for schools is called Kids Keeping in Touch. The curriculum has four units with lesson plans -- the human body, society and culture, technology and communication, and students to students. The program is designed to educate the teachers and students about deafness and deaf culture, and to promote interaction between deaf students and their hearing peers.

Outreach: Recent outreach activities include direct mass mailings to neurologists and oncologists, cerebral palsy associations and other health providers who may have patients who that could benefit from using speech-to-speech for telecommunications.

Pam Stewart (*Willis Mann*)

Pam Stewart sent in a written report that included a substantial section on the features of the new AT&T relay service. They are summarized below:

- More automated and streamlined call sequence.
- Relay Choice Profile (RCP), in which the relay customers may specify, preferred calling parameters, long distance carriers, and special instructions. Primary RCP is available immediately. Secondary RCPs (for additional household members) will be available in September and will require a PIN.
- IP Relay is available immediately.
- The Maryland Relay number will appear as 800-855-0000 on Caller ID's until September.
- The calling party number will begin appearing on Caller ID's in September.
- Calls that are long distance if dialed direct from the customer's phone will also be billed as long distance. (Previously, calls within a 40-mile radius were treated as local calls)
- If the customer profile does not specify a long distance carrier, the customer would be asked each time to supply that information.
- Conference calling with high speed captioning will be available beginning. There must be at least four parties involved in the call and the call must be scheduled 48 hours in advance. The initiator of the request will be called on the morning of the date scheduled to make sure the captioner will be utilized that day.

There is no change in the Relay dial-in numbers. Customers are encouraged to request a supervisor during a call or immediately after, if they wish to make a comment, commendation or a complaint.

AT&T REPORTS

Patty (Brennan) Ferran (AT&T Account Manager for Maryland Relay)

Introduction: Patty Ferran said she is looking forward to working with TAM and the GABTR. She outlined her previous experience in relay services, which spanned eleven years in various capacities including account management, network management and marketing. She introduced Missy Devlin, who has extensive experience managing relay centers.

Special Promotion: For a limited time (until September 7th), the rate for interstate and intrastate long distance calls through AT&T will be zero for relay customers.

Missy Devlin (AT&T Center Director for the new Maryland Relay Center)

Introduction: Miss Devlin said she has over 25 years experience with AT&T, eight of them with relay services. She said she is committed to providing the best relay service possible and that she is focused on quality controls and quality improvement. There are currently 70 operators, and the total is expected to reach about 180.

In response to a question from Annette Reichman, Missy Devlin said most calls are currently processed through the AT&T national services located in different cities but that eventually, when the Baltimore Relay Center is fully staffed, all Maryland calls will be handled at Baltimore. This is expected to be on September 1, 2002.

Joy Larson said she has recently experienced problems when calling numbers that use interactive voice recognition (IVR) technology. She said would often get disconnected during the call. Brenda Kelly-Frey suggested that the option of pressing zero usually leads to a live operator and that Joy Larson should try that.

PUBLIC INPUT

Bob Daniels

Bob Daniels gave a multimedia presentation introducing Hands On Communications, Inc., a company that provides support services focused on deaf, hard of hearing, and speech-disabled consumers. The company also produces training videos and promotional videos. Bob Daniels expressed hope for a future business relationship between Maryland Relay and Hands On Communication.

BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

Marie Campbell

Marie Campbell is the newest GABTR member. She has worked at the IRS for 16 years and is active in the deaf community, including the MDAD and the Deaf Timberfest. She is currently helping to raise money for the Miss Deaf Maryland Pageant through the stadium concessions profit-sharing program at the Baltimore Orioles stadium.

Patricia Bowman

Patricia Bowman announced that she would be moving to the newly created Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing once the director is appointed and an office location selected.

Susan Boswell

Susan Boswell said she recently attended a public forum and technology exposition sponsored by the FCC. Emerging technology at the expo included CapTel, TTY servers (which enables TTY capability on desktops company-wide through a server), TTY voice recognition systems, and automatic sign language recognition. She also mentioned that she had one of her articles printed in the journal of the American Speech, Language & Hearing Association that dealt with the under-utilization of speech-to-speech relay.

Joy Larson

Joy Larson announced that she has recently left her job with the American Association for the Deaf and Blind after 17 years of service, but that she expects to continue to be involved with the deaf community statewide.

Annette Reichman

Annette Reichman recommended that members read a recent paper entitled “Benefits of Broadband for People with Disabilities”, authored by Frank Bowe from Hofstra University. The article is available at the NAD website.

Isaac Agboola

Isaac Agboola said he recently wrote an article about Maryland Relay for the District of Columbia chapter of the Black Deaf Advocates. In April, he made a presentation about Maryland Relay at a monthly general meeting of the chapter. Gilbert Becker and Brenda Kelly-Frey also made a presentation before the chapter a few weeks later. Isaac Agboola commended the efforts of the TAM office to reach out to minority groups and encouraged the continuation of such interactions with various minority groups in order to promote mutual understanding.

Jim Stevenson

Jim Stevenson commended Gilbert Becker for a job well done as the Director of TAM. He also said he is talking with the city administrator for Frostburg about hosting a deaf awareness week. There are retired citizens in that area that might benefit from using the Relay. Jim Stevenson said he is also exploring the possibility of involving the Relay in the 21st Century Awards grants, a program of the U.S. Department of Education which could provide about \$15 million to Maryland schools after-school programs.

Susan Miller

Susan Miller congratulated Gilbert Becker and Brenda Kelly-Frey on their recent promotions.

Rebecca Ladew

Rebecca Ladew expressed appreciation to Randy Murbach, Cynthia Harris and other contacts at the Baltimore Center for helping make Maryland Relay the best in the country. She said she attended the recent exposition and forum hosted by the FCC. She also attended the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) conference on May 7th and participated as a panelist in a discussion of how consumers with disabilities use telecommunications technology.

NEW BUSINESS**Multi-vendoring/Consumer Choice**

Mitch Travers noted that telecommunications relay technology has been moving at a faster pace very recently, especially since our last GABTR meeting, citing advancements in IP relay and video relay. Dramatic new ways of delivering TRS services directly to consumers are being introduced into the marketplace. The most important aspect of these new ways of delivering relay services directly to consumers is that they are being introduced independently of any state agreement or contract. He said these changes have important implications for how service quality will be assured for consumers since there are no contracts to penalize for failure to deliver the agreed upon quality of service. A case in point is the availability of making relay calls through four separate IP-relay services provided by AT&T, MCI, Sprint, and soon Hamilton, all of which are being provided directly to consumers. Another example is Video Relay Services (VRS) that is now being provided directly to consumers by CSD/Sprint. Mitch suggested that GABTR should wait for about a year, observing and analyzing the changing relay telecommunications landscape and learning how quality can be assured, before undertaking more formalized and more labor-intensive efforts towards implementing multi-vendoring/consumer choice in Maryland, such as hiring a consultant as was previously discussed

In the GABTR discussions that followed, the GABTR members voted to allow a period of time, one year, to study the changing telecommunications landscape before undertaking more concrete steps towards creating a multi-vendoring/consumer choice system in Maryland. The GABTR subcommittee on multi-vendoring would remain active for the time being, working with TAM to observe and analyze the changing telecommunications relay environment.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the GABTR is scheduled for September 21, 2002 at the new Relay Center in Baltimore.

The meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

