



Special Celebration Event

CRS will host a special event early in 2005 to celebrate the new relay choices and to promote “the power to connect us all.” The festivities are expected to feature celebrity participants to help spread the word about CRS to as many people as possible.

Watch for more information!

*Key to Acronyms	
ASL: American Sign Language	HCO: Hearing Carry Over
CAs: Communication Assistants	PDF: Portable Document Format
CPUC: California Public Utilities Commission	STS relay service: Speech To Speech relay service
CRS: California Relay Service	TADDAC: Telecommunications Access for the Deaf & Disabled Administrative Committee
CRSAC: California Relay Service Advisory Committee	TTY: Teletypewriter
DDTP: Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program	VCO: Voice Carry Over
	VRS: Video Relay Service



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The 711 Choice

A special edition of the DDTP newsletter introducing the new California Relay Service
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Letter from the CPUC and the CRS Manager:

Hello!

Welcome to The 711 Choice, a special edition introducing the new California Relay Service (CRS).

Comprehensive new contracts with current relay service providers MCI and Sprint, and new provider, Nordia, will go into effect on December 2, 2004. We believe that the competition among the providers will lead to improved services and a wider range of functions and features. It should also make voice and speech relay services easier and more effective to use.

We're very excited about the new 711 Choice feature, which allows consumers to designate their preferred provider in advance. Read about this and additional new features right now!

California has always been a leader in relay service. With the launch of the new CRS, we intend to better meet — and even exceed — your expectations.

INTRODUCING – THE NEW CRS Choice of Providers Promises Quicker Access and Improved Services

There's a lot that's new about CRS! Now, consumers who use relay services can choose among three different providers. You can also register your choice in advance so you can then just dial 711 to quickly connect with your chosen relay company to communicate with friends, family and businesses by phone.

Three Service Providers

The transition of contracts to MCI, Nordia and Sprint was completed with the input of a CRS work group made up of representatives of the deaf, late-deafened, and speech-disabled communities.

Cecilia Hartley, Chair of the CRSAC* notes that having multiple service providers should lead to ongoing improvements. “If consumers become unhappy with one company, they'll switch to another,” she said.

Easy Registration for “711 Choice”

Consumers will be able to register which relay company they prefer by completing a “711 Choice” form. This form is available on line at www.ddtp.org or from any of the three relay providers. Consumers who do not fill out a 711 Choice form will be connected with any relay provider when 711 is dialed.

The 711 Choice form is simple. It only needs your phone number, your choice of relay company, and how you use relay: TTY, VCO, HCO, Voice, or STS.

After you choose a relay company, you can change to another at any time by filling out a new 711 Choice form. Each company can also give you a longer form that will let you choose options for how you want your calls to be handled.

Valerie Stern, who is late-deafened, serves on the CRSAC and participated in the CRS work group. “The new CRS truly gives people power and control over how they communicate with the hearing public,” she says.

Connect with 711

Using the 711 access code will make relay service calls quick. These three digits will automatically connect you with a relay service operator — instead of needing to dial the full number. Since the 711 access code works throughout the US, it is especially convenient for those who travel from state to state.

The 711 access code is for everyone, not just those who have difficulty using the phone. Friends, family and business contacts can use 711 for relay calls, too.



*Acronyms are identified on the back of this newsletter.

New Technologies Assist Callers

Over the years, new technology has led to additional relay services including STS service, which provides specially trained relay operators to assist people who have trouble being understood on the phone, by “re-voicing” their words. VCO* and HCO services make phone calls more spontaneous and natural for people with varying degrees of speech or hearing loss.

CRS currently provides access to computer-based services including Video Relay Service (VRS) and Internet Relay which are both federally funded.

VRS allows ASL users to communicate using ASL through a relay operator who voices or types their signed conversation to the other party. Internet Relay, also known as Webchat Relay, allows users to place calls through their own computers via internet access. As with standard relay services, there are no relay charges, but consumers need to have their own computer, and in the case of VRS, high speed Internet access such as DSL, cable modem, or ISDN.

“Their demands help us be responsive to future needs.”

Kathleen Barrett, who represents the disabled community on TADDAC is particularly enthusiastic about the future of computer and internet-based services. “Of course, it’s the younger people who have embraced these services. Their demands help us (DDTP and the CRS) be responsive to future needs,” she says.

**Acronyms are identified on the back of this newsletter.*

“STELLAR PERFORMANCE” FOR SPEECH TO SPEECH (STS) USERS, TOO!

STS relay simplifies and improves telephone communications for consumers who have difficulty being understood on the phone. Now, they too can choose between service providers.

All three CRS providers will supply CAs with advanced language recognition skills, familiar with many different speech patterns to “re-voice” conversations.

Helping to advertise the new STS service: Dr. Bob Segalman, founder of STS.



Exciting New Services Streamline Phone Contacts

1. True Caller ID enables consumers with speech or hearing disabilities to enjoy the same privacy and security others experience with Caller ID. When the telephone has Caller ID equipment and service, users will see the name and phone number of incoming callers and not just the relay service.

2. Message Retrieval allows consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing to retrieve voice-activated answering machine messages. Consumers simply call CRS and the CA listens to the message, and then relays it back to the consumer.

3. Call Release makes it possible for TTY users to call through hotel and hospital switchboards to TTY-users in guest and hospital rooms. The relay operator relays the call to the switchboard operator and remains on line until connected to a TTY. The operator ‘releases’ the call so the conversation continues, TTY to TTY.

4. Relay Operators make use of a ‘hot key’ that lets them record automated voice messages and menus, and then relay all information without interruption. This improvement reduces the need to make additional calls to get the full message.

Marketing Plan Created to Increase Visibility and Usage

CRS has an updated logo to show its efforts to encourage more lines of communication between people who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, or speech disabled and the general public.



**California
Relay
Service**

The power to connect us all.

Advertising Efforts

The marketing campaign rolls out with “Experience the Magic” print ads in English and Spanish. The ads highlight the benefits of registering for a 711 Choice account.

In December there will be an informative new brochure with a simple mail-back form to sign up for 711 Choice. Eye-catching posters and other materials are being developed in English and Spanish, and educational videos are being produced in English, Spanish and ASL. Outreach materials will also be available for wider distribution.

INTRODUCING The New Relay Providers

MCI Global Relay has provided relay services since 1992, and has been a key provider of CRS in California since 1996. For more information go to globalrelay.mci.com/contracts.htm

Nordia Relay has provided relay services since 1999 and was certified by Canada’s demanding Customer Operations Performance Center in 2004 for its service. You’ll find more information at www.myrelay.com

Sprint Relay has provided relay services since 1990, and currently services 31 states and the federal government, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and New Zealand. To find out more go to www.sprint-crs.com