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# Relay Texas Newsletter

2001

## The Relay Texas Advisory Committee

Highlights of the May meeting



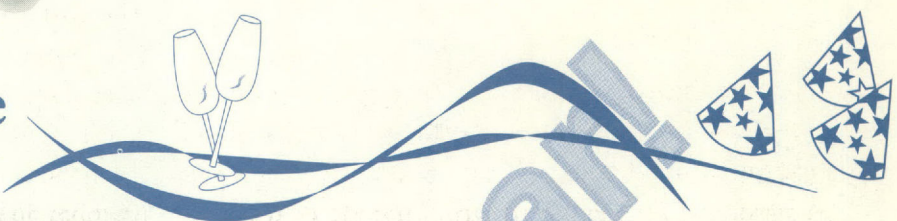
The Relay Texas Advisory Committee (RTAC) met on September 7, 2001 at the Relay Texas center in Austin. The newer committee members attended an orientation on the morning of the 7th. Below are highlights of the meeting.

### STAP Program Update

Due to recent legislative changes, there were several changes to the Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program. The \$35 STAP application fee is no longer required and the wait period to get a second voucher is now five years instead of seven. The required reference to a telephone line to be eligible for voucher is gone. Only one person per household may get a voucher, no matter how many telephone lines they have. However, if the applicants have different disabilities and need different equipment or if they can prove financial independence (such as roommate, etc), they may apply for a separate voucher. STAP information must also be provided in local telephone directories.

### TVIS Hours

After much discussion about altering the hours for TVIS, it was suggested that the hours for Monday through Thursday would be changed to 8 AM to 10PM, Fridays 8 AM to 6 PM, and Sundays, from 1 PM to 5 PM. Sprint would review call volumes and remain flexible in case the hours need to be changed to better serve users.



### RAP

The PUC, Sprint, and an RTAC member reviewed the nine RAP proposals and picked two for outreach - the Deaf Action Center in Dallas and The Better Business Bureau. DAC will provide outreach on 711 to hard-of-hearing people in the Dallas area and the BBB will provide outreach on 711 and TVIS to businesses across the state.

### Speech-to-Speech (STS)

The PUC Commissioners approved the release of a Speech to Speech outreach request for proposals (RFP). The RFP will be similar to the Request for Information that was released earlier this year, except it should be more detailed. The RFP should be out sometime later this year.

### 7-1-1 Update

Due to the hundreds of thousands of misdials to the relay center from callers attempting to dial the Houston 713 area as well as the problems with the way 711 calls from a PBX are answered at Relay Texas, Sprint and the PUC agreed to use a Voice Response Unit (VRU) to answer all 711 calls to Relay Texas.

The next RTAC meeting will be held some time in January 2002.

SKSK



## Sprint Walk a Success!

*Annual fundraiser earns over \$14K for Texas agencies.*

In Saturday, November 10 the Sprint/Relay Texas and the Austin Interpreters for the Deaf presented the annual Sprint Walk to raise funds for several Austin/Travis County Deaf Service Organizations.

The Texas School for the Deaf in Austin hosted the walk, which is now in its second year. Other Sprint divisions in Central Texas participated in the activities, including Sprint Government (Austin), Sprint Local (Killeen, Texas) and Sprint PCS (Austin). Through the efforts of Sprint employees, several local Deaf groups, and American Sign Language (ASL) students from three Round Rock, Texas High Schools approximately \$14,800 was raised.

“This money was raised successfully due to the efforts of these individuals and groups taking a vital interest in

People of all ages take part in the Sprint Walk.

supporting their community.” Stated Lisa Fragoso, Relay Texas Interpreter, who directed the event.

The money will benefit Camp Sign (a Texas based summer camp for Deaf children), Travis County Services For the Deaf and The American Foundation of Elderly Deaf. Also supporting the event with generous donations were The Sprint Foundation and Communication Services for the Deaf.

“This is our eleventh year to produce a fund raising event for Deaf organizations in Austin. It is our second year for The Sprint Walk and each year it just seems to get better”, explained Maggie Schooler, supervisor at the Austin TRS center. “We are already looking forward to planning next year.

SKSK

# RELAYS



*Tips to make your calls go smoother.*

We asked Sprint for some basic calling tips for RT users. Here's what they have to offer:

- If you know who you want, but you've reached the main number of the place, you can type: GET ME JOHN AT EXT. 123, THE NBR IS 512 345 6789 GA

- If you are calling an 800 number, it is likely you will get a menu recording, you can type: GET ME A LIVE REP, DO NOT RELAY OPTION MSGS, PLS CALL 800-123-4567 GA. If you already know the menu selections, tell the relay agent the option you want prior to making the call.

Hint: If you find yourself doing this often, you can add this in your Customer Database permanently! Just inform the agent you want to add this request in your Customer Database\*

- For Voice Mail users: If you are using Customer Database with complex Voice mail instructions, it's a good idea to check with the agent to make sure he/she understand the instructions before the call is made. There are many different voice mail systems and the agents need to be comfortable before making these calls.

- TTY Users: It is faster to get an agent if you dial 800-735-2989 than 711. Why? Because 711 is always answered voice first.

- All 711 calls are answered with a voice recording: "To make a Relay Call, Press one." If 1 is not pressed, then it will switch over to TTY.

- If you use Voice Carry Over (VCO), Relay Texas has a dedicated line 1-877-826-1789. This will be answered by VCO first.

- You can use your own greeting. Tell the agent not to announce relay, but to instead say something like "THIS IS JOHN CALLING YOU THRU RELAY. GA" instead of the default greeting "This is Relay Texas calling....Have you received a relay call before...."

- If you get a busy signal but you want to continue, type: CONTINUE REDIAL UNTIL ANSWERED GA

- Having problems dialing 711? Checklist:

- Are you behind a PBX system? Contact your PBX Administrator to reprogram it to allow 711 dial outs. (PBX Systems are where you press 8 or 9 before the number you call out, usually at work, hospitals, hotels, etc.)
- Some phones are restricted from the use of 3 number calling. Contact your PBX administrator or your phone company to release this restriction.
- Your local phone company may not have 711 set up correctly. Contact your local phone company or call Sprint at 1-800-676-3777.
- Some cell phones are not programmed with 711 calls. Contact your provider about this or find one that recognizes 711.
- Contact Sprint Customer Service at 800-676-3777 if you continue to have problems with 711.

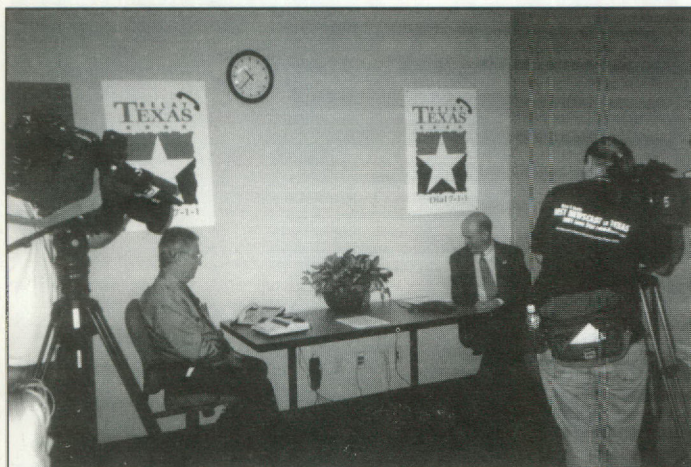
- If you are using ASCII (Computer) you can use the Function Keys to create macros. Some examples: Press F1 for YOU'VE REACHED JOHN AT ABC CO. HOW MAY I HELP YOU? GA

- Press F2 for THANK YOU FOR YOUR CALL HAVE A GOOD DAY BYE GA OR SK
- Press F3 for MY ADDRESS IS 123 ANYTOWN, USA, 12345

If you have great tips, please share it with us! We will send you a complimentary Relay Texas kit consisting of brochures, magnets, pens and a key chain! Contact Paul Rutowski at 1-800-578-6275 TTY.

\*For more information on Customer Database, call Relay Texas Customer Service at 1-800-676-3777/ open 24 hours daily.

SKSK



*Left Photo:*

Austin news stations tape the 711 call from Ed Bosson, Relay Texas Administrator (left) to Max Yzaguirre, PUC Chairman (right).

*Photo Below:*

Several people involved with the 711 demonstration (from left) Brandi Rarus (Sprint Relay), Mark Seeger (Sprint), Ed Bosson (PUC), Max Yzaguirre (PUC), Claudia Morgan (TTA), Scott Demarest (Sprint), and Barbara Narviez (Sprint).



## 711 in the News



*Media attends Relay Texas center*

On October 4th, the local Austin media filmed Max Yzaguirre, the Public Utility Commission Chairman, making a 7-1-1 relay call to Ed Bosson, the PUC Relay Texas Administrator at the Relay Texas center. Relay conversation focused on the benefits of 7-1-1 and acknowledgement of Texas Telephone Association (TTA) of making 7-1-1 a success story in Texas.

Two local TV stations attended and later broadcast the event on Austin newscasts.

During the event, Chairman Yzaguirre and other attendees also learned how a relay call was made by sitting with a relay agent at her computer during a mock call. Chairman Yzaguirre was recently selected by Governor Perry to head PUC. A native of Brownsville, Texas, Max is past president of Enron de Mexico.

Also attending the event was Claudia Morgan, from the TTA. Ms. Morgan was invaluable in making sure that all local phone companies in Texas made their networks ready for 711, beginning in September 2000. Without her hard work and the support of TTA, Texas would not

have been one of the few states to provide 711 access to Relay Texas almost a year before the FCC requirement.

SKSK

## New TVIS Hours



*More accessible for home video users*

Based on the feedback from existing video users and potential video users, the Relay Texas Advisory Committee voted to recommend the change of TVIS hours to Sprint and the PUC. The members believe these hours will especially accommodate those who want to make video calls from home.

The new hours:

8 am to 10 pm - Monday through Thursday

8 am to 5 pm - Friday

1 pm to 5 pm - Sunday

The new hours started on December 2, 2001.

SKSK

## Speech to Speech Outreach

*New 7-1-1 Platform*



Since the inception of Speech to Speech (STS) services at Relay Texas, the call volumes remain low. While there has been a steady increase, there are still only about 40 calls made to the center. STS provides specialized trained relay agents who listen to the voice of speech-disabled persons and revoice the message to the hearing person. Hearing person can then speak directly to the person with speech disability. Many persons with speech-disabilities have never used the telephone and do not easily accept the usefulness of the telephone or STS. Unlike persons with hearing loss who have used text telephones long before relay services became available, people with speech-disabilities have no "role models" for telephone use. Some persons with speech-disabilities have used Hearing Carry Over (HCO), but that service requires a phone and a TTY or computer where the caller types their message. Many persons with speech-disabilities also have other physical limitations and don't have adequate - or any - use of their hands or arms to do so. STS doesn't require anything except a phone, since the caller will use their own voice and the specially trained agent repeats what they say, if necessary, to the called party.

According to Dr. Bob Segalman, the "founder" of STS, the only way to have adequate use of the service is to provide effective and intensive outreach to potential users - persons with speech disabilities. The PUC has/will release a request for proposals (RFP) to provide STS outreach for Texas, to cover a three-year period. If you, or someone you know might be interested in this very important outreach, you will find the RFP on the PUC website in the near future. Or for more information, you may contact Lisa Kriger Anderson of the PUC at 512 936-7148 V/TTY.

SKS

## TVIS Announcing Your Call

*Taking control of TVIS call*



One of the main reasons why standard relay calls are announced ("This is Relay Texas calling...") to the (hearing) called party is to prevent a "breakdown" of the call process. Since there is a lag time with TTY and other types of calls, someone receiving a relay call for the first time will not understand the pauses during the call and become confused about the process.

Video calls are processed much more quickly, much like those that hearing persons enjoy, and very often to the called party it seems like a "regular" telephone call. Therefore, some TVIS users choose not to have the Video Interpreters announce TVIS calls to the called party. Instead, some TVIS users announce the call in their own way, such as "This is John calling using an interpreter", or something of their own choosing. In certain situations where you need not give your name (such as calling for information only), users are not even giving their name or announcing the service. Very often the hearing person does not even realize that the call is from a Deaf person.

With standard relay, callers have the option to announce calls in their own way (or not announce calls) by putting their preferences in their Customer Database so they do not have to tell the agent every time they call. TVIS does not have a Customer Database, and video callers would have to repeat the request with each call.

If you use TVIS and wish to comment on this please feel free to send email to [relaytx@puc.state.tx.us](mailto:relaytx@puc.state.tx.us) or use the regular physical address listed in back of this newsletter.

SKSK

Relay Texas Newsletter

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS**

Max Yazguirre, Chairman  
 Brett A. Perlman, Commissioner  
 Rebecca Klein, Commissioner

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 Lane Lanford, Executive Director  
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 1701 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78711

**RELAY TEXAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Eileen Alter, Chairperson

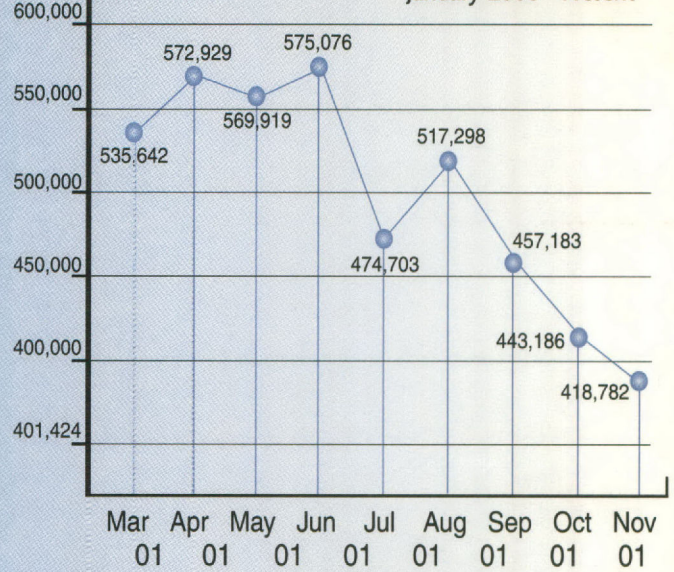
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David Coco (TCDHH)	Kathy Westberry (CTD)
Jack Earwood (TDBA)	Karen Greebon (CTD)
Larry Evans (AARP)	Herman Harrison (TTA)
Jack Clifton (TCDHH)	Lynn Stroud (SHHH)
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Joseph Acosta (STAP)	Matt Martinez (TAD)

**SPRINT**

Paul Rutowski, Account Manager  
 1 (800) 578-6275 (TTY)

**RELAY TEXAS CALL VOLUMES**

January 2000 - Present



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- 1-800 Relay Tx
- 1 800 735 2989 (TTY)
- 1-800 Relay VV
- 1 800 735 2988 (Voice)
- 1-800 Relay xi
- 1 800 735 2991 (ASCII)
- 1 TRS VCO 1RTX
- 1 877 826 1789 (VCO)
- 1-900-230-2303  
(To Make a 900 Call)
- 1-877-826-6607
- Speech to Speech
- 1-877-826-6608
- Speech-to-Speech/VCO

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 Email: [relaytx@puc.state.tx.us](mailto:relaytx@puc.state.tx.us)

1-800-662-4954  
 Spanish Translation

ISDN: 1-866-786-3681 or 1-866-786-3682  
 Texas Video Interpreting Service

Voice: 1-866--786-3684  
 IP: [ils.deafonline.com](http://ils.deafonline.com)

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