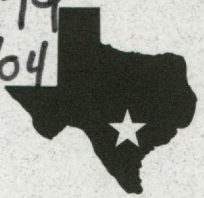


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# Relay Texas Newsletter



Government Publications  
Texas State Documents

## Relay Texas Advisory Committee

JAN 29 1998

### November and December meeting highlights

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The Relay Texas Advisory Committee (RTAC) met at the Deaf Community Center in Austin on November 14, 1997 and January 9, 1998.

#### Highlights of the November meeting:

- Four subcommittees helped the Texas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TCDHH) define basic telecommunications devices for the Specialized Telecommunications Device Assistance Program (STDAP). Three of the subcommittees - Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and Deaf-Blind - proposed recommendations. All three subcommittee recommendations were approved by the RTAC.
- Members discussed how to handle complaints about harassing calls made through Relay Texas.
- TCDHH reported on the Specialized Telecommunications Device Assistance Program, including prevention of fraud, follow-up, and outreach training. TCDHH staff attended the first conference of the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association in Tampa, Florida. At this conference, they received invaluable information from other states regarding their equipment distribution programs.
- The president of the Texas Deaf Caucus (TDC) informed the members that one of the top legislative issues for TDC will be to change the time limit for STDAP equipment replacement from seven to five years. Note: TDC introduced the concept of equipment distribution to legislators, and had been very active in getting the bill passed.

#### Motion:



A motion was made to accept the recommendations from three sub-committees of the definition of what basic telecommunications equipment should be for three categories: Deaf, Hard-Of-Hearing, and Deaf-Blind. The motion was passed.

#### Highlights of the January meeting:

- Voice Carry Over Video. A video tape on using Voice

Carry Over produced by the Texas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TCDHH) was shown at the meeting. The video tape was a result of an FY 97 Relay Ambassador Project contract with Sprint. TCDHH operated on a shoestring budget (\$2,000), yet was able to produce a very high quality video tape. Similar projects in other states often cost much more to produce.

- Relay Texas Emergency Protocol. There is an ongoing project between Sprint, the Advisory Commission on State Emergency Communications, and PUC staff to come up with a policy regarding emergency calls received at Relay Texas. At issue is how much information a relay agent can pass on to emergency services if they receive a call where the relay user says that the call is an emergency. If a relay call becomes an emergency call rather than a relay call, then the proprietary rules of the relay service may no longer apply. This may invoke "implied consent" and allow relay agents to share whatever information Relay Texas has (ANI) with emergency dispatchers.
- RTAC Ethics. Two RTAC members worked with Susan Durso, PUC administrative counsel, on developing ethical guidelines for RTAC members. A motion was made, and passed, which included language that members could accept meals, gifts, etc., totaling a maximum of \$10.00.
- Review of Specialized Telecommunications Device Assistant Program (STDAP) Voucher and Application. TCDHH presented drafts of the STDAP voucher and application for review. These were discussed at length, with a great deal of input by RTAC members.

#### Motions:



A motion was made that Sprint provide a Level of Effort (LOE) for a separate 800 number for VCO calls. The motion passed.



A motion was made to establish an appeals committee to handle problems and concerns regarding the STDAP applications. The motion passed.

A motion was made to create ethical guidelines for RTAC members. The motion passed.

SKSK



# The Sprint 5K

Over 500 ran for TTYs for Kids



The Second Annual Sprint 5K was a cold and rainy success! Kids from the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD), Meghan Rainone (Miss Deaf America), and more than 500 local Austin runners ran the three-mile race on Nov. 15, 1997, and raised more than \$14,000 for TTYs for Kids. The money collected will purchase TTYs for hearing-impaired kids and families from all over Texas.

The overall male winner was Karzsev Sergei who is a famous Russian runner who trains in Austin. Overall female winner was Christy Shea.

The freezing weather with a chill factor of less than zero did not dampen the team of Sprint employees who were on the track at the TSD blowing up balloons, cutting oranges, collecting money, and hanging banners. TTYs for Kids was established by the employees of Sprint (Relay Texas provider) located in Austin, Texas. For six years, Sprint and Travis County Council for the Deaf have worked together to raise money to buy TTYs for kids in Texas. In 1996, and again in 1997, they were joined by the Texas School for the Deaf as host of the first and second annual Sprint 5K.

Texas Association for the Deaf sponsored Miss Deaf America's visit to Austin. Ms. Rainone was the highlight of the awards presentation. It was so cold that her hands were freezing, but she still gave a great speech about how important relay service has been to her. She presented awards to the winners of the race, including a medal to third place winner, TSD student, Carlos Stennet, who also ran in the Deaf World Olympics this year. Austin residents Ruth Seeger and Debbie White were among the winners of the door prizes, and they both won a year's subscription to the Silent News.

The seventh annual TTYs for Kids presentation will be held in Austin sometime in February. One hundred and four TTYs will be given to kids and families this year! For more information on TTYs for Kids or The Sprint 5K, please contact Maggie Schoolar (512) 873-1020, or Naomi McCown (512) 873-1022.



**BETTER JOB - BETTER PRINT TEAM!**

**SKSK**

## New Human Resources Manager

*Phillip Darce Joins Sprint*



Austin Relay Center has a new human resources manager, Phillip Darce. Phillip ("Flip") joins Sprint from the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD) where he worked for many years. Phillip is proficient in sign language. He replaces Scott Atkins who have moved on to South Dakota. Phillip brings rich experiences to the Austin Relay Center, as he had varied responsibilities while at



TSD. There he served as human resource director, employee supervisor, coordinated various activities, and has extensive training in state and federal labor laws. Currently, he is a member of the Texas Association of

State Personnel Administrators and the Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators.

Note: The human resources manager in Austin Relay Center is very important, as the position impacts the quality of relay service. The position includes recruiting and interviewing persons for relay agent work. Austin is experiencing an employment boom, thus the unemployment rate has been very low, meaning that it will be difficult to find qualified persons to work as relay agents. Phillip has a challenge, and, in view of his rich experience, Sprint is confident he will be able to recruit high quality workers for relay agent positions, thus maintaining a high quality relay service.

*Congratulations and Good Luck, Phillip!*

**SKSK**



# TRS Historical Perspective

(First in a four part series.) by Ed Bosson



As the year 2000 approaches, we will be entering a new century. It makes one pause a bit and mull over telecommunications issues, mainly, on what has been accomplished for “communicatively challenged” Texans. In addition, one wonders what is in store for these Texans in the distant, but visible future. Does telecommunications access increase independence and freedom for hearing-impaired people? We’ll explore these as we go through a brief history of telecommunications as it relates to hearing impaired persons.

## 1875 - 1950.

Since 1875, when the telephone was first invented, the network had been inaccessible for hearing-impaired people. Walking, driving, or asking hearing neighbors to make calls were just about the only way for hearing-impaired persons to contact others.

## 1940

Fastforward the time to the 1940’s. When a deaf person wants to see another deaf friend, he or she had to drive over and hope their friend was at home, since the telephone network was inaccessible. An idiosyncratic pattern was established where a deaf person would arrive at a friend’s house during dinner time, as this was the best time to catch them at home. And, more often than not, the uninvited friend was invited to partake of the dinner. It proved to be a pleasant, and, hoped for, event. (Of course, there were a few deaf persons who abused this

privilege and went to different houses nearly every day to get free dinners.)

During World War II, gas rations became scarce, so deaf people began to schedule meetings and meet in one place, so they could all meet together. It was during WWII that more than 50 percent of existing deaf clubs in US were formed. One wonders if the telephone network were available for deaf persons at that time, would the formation of all those clubs have happened?

Another scenario that happened as well: if a deaf person really needed to contact someone, he or she would go to a hearing neighbor to make the call. If the call was to be to another deaf person what usually happened was: the deaf person would ask a hearing neighbor to call the hearing neighbor of the deaf person; a lot of note writing ensued. This was such a hassle that this phone interchange system was used only for the most important or emergency issues.

Telephone access for the hearing-impaired community at that time was non-existent. The second part will look at how the hearing-impaired community took advantage of “outdated” technology to make telephones a bit more accessible

SKSK

## 3-1-1 or 9-1-1: Is there a Difference?

By Toni D. Dunne



As all know and recognize 9-1-1 as the number for reporting an emergency and to request emergency assistance. This telephone service was first established 30 years ago to give the public an easy-to-remember number for fast access to police departments, sheriff’s departments or other Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in times of crisis. Since then, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires telephone emergency services, including 9-1-1, to provide direct access to people who use TTYs. In 1987, the Texas Legislature established the Advisory Commission on State Emergency Communications (ACSEC) to implement statewide 9-1-1 services. Currently, Texas has complete statewide 9-1-1 service with TTY access in each center but only ONE 3-1-1 service.

What is the story behind 3-1-1? Some people believe that the 9-1-1 system has become “overburdened” with too many calls that are not true emergencies, thus they felt a different set of numbers are needed for non-emergency situation. Comments made by President Clinton opened the door for the development of new numbers and, with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approval, the new number, 3-1-1, was set aside for non-emergency usage. Each state was given authority to review and approve requests to implement 3-1-1 services within each respective state. The Public Utility Commission (PUC) in Texas has received such a request.

In December of ‘97, the City of Dallas became the third city in the nation to implement a 3-1-1 system. City

*continued on page 4*



# 3-1-1 or 9-1-1:

## Is there a Difference?

By Toni D. Dunne

*continued from page 3*

officials believe implementation of 3-1-1 is a way of dealing with the misuse of emergency lines. Dallas reports, in the last five years, seven out of ten 9-1-1 calls were not emergencies. The opposite was reflected in Baltimore, the first location to implement 3-1-1 in the nation. They reported that after 3-1-1 was implemented, approximately 45% of the 3-1-1 calls were actually emergencies requiring police dispatch. Although the FCC regulations do not require TTY access, both cities are providing TTY response to 3-1-1 and 9-1-1 callers.

Officials at the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) are worried about potential confusion between 9-1-1 and 3-1-1. The above information demonstrates the reality of this concern. Some people are calling 9-1-1 with non-emergencies and others call 3-1-1 with true emergencies. The confusion could result in delays in appropriate response. We want to emphasize that 9-1-1 is still the number to call for emergencies. Please be aware that within Texas, 3-1-1 is currently only available in Dallas.

For more information, contact:

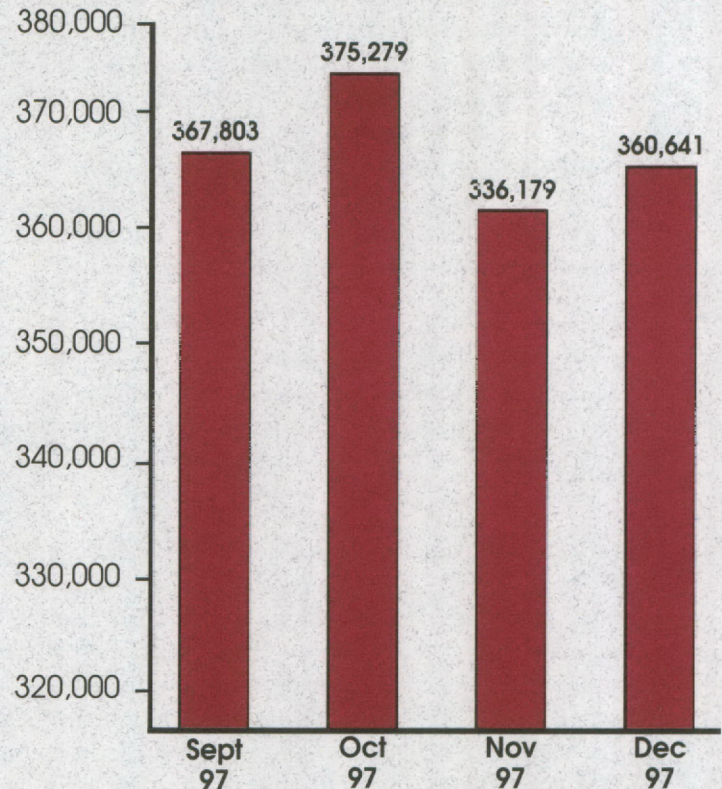
Toni Dunne at 512-305-6918 v/tty or

e-mail to: [toni.dunne@mail.capnet.state.tx.us](mailto:toni.dunne@mail.capnet.state.tx.us).

SKSK

# Relay Texas Call Volumes

September 97 to December 97



## STDAP Vendor Guidelines

*Program to start soon.*



The Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the Texas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TCDHH) have been working together on guidelines, rules, applications and vendor registration for the Specialized Telecommunications Device Assistance Program (STDAP). (Some people refer to this as the "TTY distribution program".)

As of this writing, TCDHH has completed most of their responsibilities for the program, including the application and voucher forms. The PUC Commissioners recently (February 25, 1998) approved vendor registration guidelines for the program. The program should officially start within the next few weeks after you receive the RT newsletter.

Vendors will need to follow certain procedures to become

a registered vendor for the STDAP. (See related article below).

Under the current program, those who qualify for the specialized telecommunication equipment (such as TTY, telebraille, amplifier, etc.) may buy their approved equipment from any registered STDAP vendor, regardless of their location. **There will be more than one vendor** and some vendors may sell various equipment from different manufacturers.

For a copy of "Vendor Registration Guidelines" for the STDAP, you may contact Lisa Kriger at 512-936-7148 (V or TTY), Ed Bosson at 936-7147 (TTY), or check the PUC website at [www.puc.state.tx.us](http://www.puc.state.tx.us).

SKSK



# Slamming vs. Cramming

*Unauthorized changes on phone bills increase.*



If you have not already, start reading your monthly telephone bill VERY carefully. The Public Utility Commission (PUC) has been receiving numerous complaints from telephone customers about "slamming" and "cramming".

**Slamming:** You have been "slammed" if your telephone provider - local or long distance - is switched without your knowledge or consent.

**Cramming:** You have been "crammed" if you have been billed for a service that you have not ordered or received.

For instance, suppose you have had XYZ as your long distance provider, then suddenly see another long distance phone company on your bill, and you did not ask for the change; you have been slammed. Suppose you see a charge for "voice mail" - and you do not have voice mail - on your bill; you have been crammed.

How does slamming or cramming happen? Sometimes you may sign up for a contest promising big prizes - a car or a vacation - but the fine print mentions that you are also

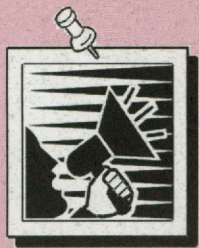
agreeing to change your long distance company. Slammers may also make promises to children or housekeepers, or other unauthorized persons who answer your phone, regarding lower rates and better service. Sometimes service is changed without any customer contact.

## What can you do if slamming or cramming happens to you?

- If you live in Texas call the PUC customer hotline at 1-888-PUC-TIPS (V).
- Call your local phone company and tell them that you do not request a change in your long distance service (slamming) or the specific service (cramming). Ask the company to reconnect you to your previous carrier and/or have the unauthorized charges removed from your bill.
- Call your preferred long distance carrier and ask to be reconnected.
- Make copies of phone bills to send to phone companies and the PUC.

In addition, you may call the PUC Office of Customer Protection TTY number at (512) 936-7136, or eMail to: [customer@puc.state.tx.us](mailto:customer@puc.state.tx.us).

**SKSK**



## FYI

### When you call 9-1-1, Be Ready!

- Stay calm
- Tell what help you need (police, fire or medical help)
- Give your name, telephone number and location where help is needed
- Answer all questions
- Don't hang up until the dispatcher tells you to hang up.

### The Next Relay Texas Advisory Committee Meeting...

will be on Friday, May 15 at 1 p.m.  
at the Deaf Community Center  
425 Woodward Street, Austin, Texas

To confirm meeting dates, please contact  
Lisa Kriger 512/936-7148 (V/TTY)

### Be Poison Smart!

Questions about poisoning?  
Call the Poison Experts at Texas Poison  
Center Network's toll-free hotline  
**1-800-POISON-1 (1-800-764-7661)**,  
or call **9-1-1** in an emergency.  
All poison control centers have TTY access!

To Subscribe to the  
Relay Texas Newsletter,  
send your name and address  
to the attention of Lisa Kriger:

1701 N. Congress Avenue  
PO Box 13326  
Austin, Texas 78711-23326  
or  
[RELAYTX@PUC.STATE.TX.US](mailto:RELAYTX@PUC.STATE.TX.US)



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Judy Walsh, Commissioner  
Patricia Curran, Commissioner

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David Coco (TCDHH)                      Rand Metcalf (CTD)  
Jack Earwood (TDBA)                      James Northcutt (TAD)  
Larry Evans (AARP)                      Mike Stremel (TTA)  
Herman Harrison (TTA)                      Larry Umberger (TCDHH)  
Paula Hernandez (SHHH)                      Larry Whitworth (TDC)

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

*Percent of Originated Calls  
By Device*

	TTY	ASCII	Voice	VCO
Sept. 97	76.78%	1.68%	15.93%	5.57%
Oct. 97	77.55%	1.76%	15.25%	5.43%
Nov. 97	77.24%	1.82%	16.06%	4.87%
Dec. 97	77.37%	1.82%	15.69%	4.92%

**Hearing Carry Over (HCO) Calls  
are .06% per month or less**

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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 X1  
1 800 735 2991 (ASCII)

1 900 320 2303  
(To Make a 900 Call)

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