

# CONNECTION

FALL 2024



Telecommunications  
Access of Maryland

PROGRAMS:



**Maryland Relay**

*Dial 7-1-1*

*A service for Marylanders who have difficulty using a standard telephone.*

**MDRelay.org**



**Maryland Accessible  
Telecommunications**

*Equipment Distribution Program*

*This program provides accessible telecommunications equipment for Maryland residents ages three and older who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or are living with limited speech, mobility, or cognitive abilities. MAT also oversees the Communication Facilitator (CF) service for individuals who are DeafBlind.*

**MDMAT.org**



**Introducing  
TAM's Newest  
Hire: Robert  
"Bob" Foster**

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) is thrilled to introduce our newest team member, Robert "Bob" Foster, who joined us on August 1, 2024, and is currently serving as our finance manager. In this position, Bob is responsible for overseeing the TAM budget, invoices, and inventory, as well as managing financial submissions on TAM's behalf. As the finance

manager, Bob works closely with TAM's leadership to help with revenue and expenditure management. With a long career in the mortgage industry and experience in retail banking, Bob is excited to use his financial background to serve the State of Maryland and its citizens who use Maryland Relay and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program to stay connected.



In his free time, Bob enjoys coaching and refereeing soccer games in his community, volunteering through his church, and spending time with his granddaughter. We're so excited to have Bob as part of our team!

**Help us celebrate our  
longtime MAT evaluator,  
Brenda Bush!**

*Visit page 4 to learn more!*

**Could you benefit  
from a Maryland Relay  
service?**

*Check out page 8 for  
more information.*



## Follow the Latest Updates from the TAM Team

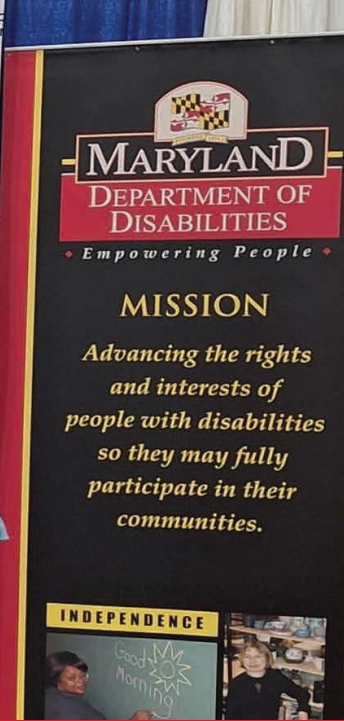
It's been a busy but exciting past few months for the TAM team, and we're here to share some important updates with you!

**July 23** – On this day, Governor Wes Moore signed an executive order creating the Maryland Plain Language Initiative in honor of the 34th Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Anniversary (*picture A*). The Maryland Plain Language Initiative ensures that government communications, programs, and resources are shared with Maryland citizens in a way that is accessible, understandable, and easy to follow for anyone who wishes to use them. This means that all information in these materials will be in plain language instead of government jargon or technical phrasing, which helps Marylanders benefit from programs and resources and feel in tune with what happens within our State government system.

Visit [Governor.Maryland.gov/News/Press/Pages/Governor-Moore-Signs-Executive-Order-Creating-Maryland-Plain-Language-Initiative.aspx](https://www.Governor.Maryland.gov/News/Press/Pages/Governor-Moore-Signs-Executive-Order-Creating-Maryland-Plain-Language-Initiative.aspx) to learn more.

**July 25** – This summer, the MAT program had the opportunity to host and participate in an Inclusion Showcase in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDoD), the Maryland State Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), and the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (LBPD). The showcase informed the public about the programs and services available for Maryland citizens who are Blind, low vision, print disabled, or have other disability needs, and introduced attendees to the organizations that offer programs and resources to support them.

**August 21** – Members of the TAM team had the opportunity to once again attend the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Conference in Ocean City (*picture B*). It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with other organizations in our state that support Marylanders with disabilities and learn more about how we can work together to better serve these communities.



**Interested in hosting an event with TAM or having a Maryland Relay outreach coordinator attend your upcoming community event? Contact Maryland Relay Outreach Manager Donna Broadway-Callaman at [Donna.Broadway-Callaman1@Maryland.gov](mailto:Donna.Broadway-Callaman1@Maryland.gov) today.**

**August 21 and September 2** – Our Maryland Relay outreach coordinators had the chance to cheer on the Frederick Keys at two of their baseball games this summer (*pictures C and D*). We were able to host an informational table, through our sponsorship for the MLB Draft League team, for fans to visit before and during the game so they could learn more about Maryland Relay and MAT.

**September 9** – It was an honor to celebrate MDoD's 20th anniversary this year. With a mission that ensures no Marylander is left behind, MDoD promotes "equality of opportunity, access, and choice for Marylanders with disabilities," and the department has made an indescribable difference in so many Marylanders' lives over the past two decades.

**September 24** – TAM joined Towson University in hosting a Maryland Deaf Awareness Day on campus. The event celebrated Deaf history, culture, and community and had exhibitors from the MAT program, Maryland DORS, the Maryland Health Department, and the Maryland Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.



## Celebrating MAT Evaluator, Brenda Bush



If you connected with the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program at any point between 2010 and 2024 for an evaluation, then there's a good chance you may have had Brenda Bush as your MAT evaluator. Brenda has proudly served MAT clients in many areas during her time as an evaluator, including Washington, Frederick, Montgomery, and St. Mary's counties in western and southern Maryland. Though her time as a MAT evaluator is coming to a close, Brenda has made an incredible impact in our state.

When asked about her role as a MAT evaluator, Brenda had the following to say: "It has taught me that everyone has a story and being able to hear those stories from clients has been my favorite part of my job. I have met so many nice people, and they're always so grateful to receive a device that allows them to communicate independently."

The MAT program is honored to have had such a dedicated, talented team member as part of our evaluator staff for over 14 years! Though we are sad to see Brenda go, we are so happy to have had the opportunity to work with her and witness her help so many Marylanders communicate independently using their assistive devices through MAT.

On behalf of Brenda's MAT peers and the entire TAM team, we would like to thank her for her many years of committed service and wish her all the best during this new chapter of retirement. May it be filled with all of the things she loves best—including traveling in search of live music, spending time with her grandchildren, repurposing old furniture to give it new life, and painting.



**Interested in connecting with a  
MAT evaluator to find the  
communication device that  
meets your needs?**

Visit [MDMAT.org](https://MDMAT.org) today to learn more.

# The Latest Equipment Available Through MAT

The MAT program offers Marylanders who find it difficult to use a standard telephone the opportunity to apply for a no-cost loan of specialized telecommunications equipment to help them stay connected to those who matter most. While MAT has a wide variety of easy-to-use solutions, we'd like to share some of the newest technology and who it can help the most.

## For Marylanders with **Mobility Difficulties**



- Panasonic KX TGM430 (Bluetooth Phone)
- Amazon - Echo Dot - Smart Speaker with Alexa (Speakerphone Capabilities)
- Logicmark Guardian Alert 911 (Wireless Emergency Alert Device)

## For Marylanders Who are **Blind or Have Low Vision**



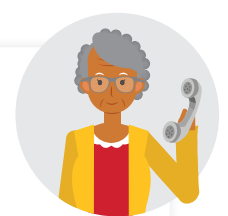
- RealSAM and BlindShell (Talking Phones)
- Hable One (Bluetooth Assistive Accessory)
- ClearSounds CSC600 (Landline Phone with Large Buttons)

## For Marylanders with **Speech Difficulties**



- Lingraphica TouchTalk™ (Tablet)
- Clarity P300-HCO Hearing Carry-Over Kit (Hearing Carry-Over Phone)
- Electrolarynx (Phone-Connected Device)

## For Marylanders with **Cognitive Difficulties**



- Clarity-P300 (Landline Photo Phone)
- RAZ Memory Cell Phone (Memory Cell Phone with Photos)

## For Marylanders Who are **Deaf**



- SquareGlow (Signaling Alert Lights for Phones)

## For Marylanders Who are **DeafBlind**



- Hable One (Bluetooth Braille Display)
- SquareGlow (Signaling Alert Lights for Phones)

Head on over to [MDMAT.org](https://MDMAT.org) to explore more equipment solutions and learn how to apply for your own no-cost, loaned device.



## Your Connections Matter—and Here's How You Can Strengthen Them

Everyone deserves to stay connected with those who matter most to them. In honor of October 10 being **World Mental Health Day**, we wanted to spotlight the importance of social connections and their role as diverse relationships that can impact your well-being.

There are many benefits to prioritizing your social connections, such as improved stress management, better quality of sleep, and lower mental health risks. Whether you join some coworkers for coffee, attend a community event, or meet up with family, you're experiencing—and growing—your social connections! Here are four tips to help you stay connected to those you love this upcoming holiday season:

### 1 Reach Out First

Initiating plans is often the hardest part of social connections but once you start, the ball will keep rolling. If you don't know where to begin, try writing a card to a family member, messaging an old friend via social media, or calling a close peer!

### 2 Be a Good (and Fair) Communicator

As much as your feelings need to be validated during conversations, you also need to return the favor to those around you. How would you want someone to react to the things you share? Keep that in mind the next time someone confides in you. You can try encouraging further conversation by reassuring their feelings or offering open-ended questions that show you want to learn more about them.



## We want to strengthen our connection with you!

Follow us on social media for the latest updates from our team.

 [Facebook.com/MarylandRelay711](https://www.facebook.com/MarylandRelay711)

 [@MDRelay711](https://www.instagram.com/MDRelay711)  [@MDRelay711](https://twitter.com/MDRelay711)

### 3 Make the Most of Your Time Together

Whether it's catching up with your aunt over a video call or volunteering at a soup kitchen with your friend from work, make sure to make the most of every moment you have with your loved ones. Some of the best memories and strongest connections can be made while enjoying the simple things in life, like running last minute holiday errands with your brother or taking a walk around your neighborhood with your next-door neighbor and their dog. Nothing boosts your well-being like finding joy in different parts of your day-to-day life.

### 4 Schedule in Advance

Between work, personal commitments, and holiday events, your day-to-day schedule can get overwhelming—that's why planning out your social connections in advance can help. Coordinating your group's availability ahead of time allows you to plan it around your other obligations, while also avoiding last-minute cancellations.

# Maryland Relay Service Spotlights

If you have difficulty using a standard telephone, then we advise you to consider using Maryland Relay's free calling services. With assistance from Maryland Relay, you can make and receive calls with confidence and clarity.

**Let's explore two of our many calling options, Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) and Hearing Carry-Over (HCO).**

## Shining the Spotlight on RCC

Do you find it hard to participate and stay in engaged during conference calls, virtual meetings, or webinars due to difficulty hearing? If so, RCC can help! RCC is a free service offered through Maryland Relay to approved individuals that provides real-time streaming text on an Internet-connected device. Using RCC, you can read text of a conversation during a conference call, virtual meeting, or webinar.

No special software is required to use RCC. All you need is an Internet-connected device—such as a computer, tablet, or smartphone—and you must submit a RCC Scheduling Request Form 48 hours before the service is needed.

**Visit [MarylandRCC.com](https://MarylandRCC.com) to learn more about RCC and access the to RCC Scheduling Request Form today.**



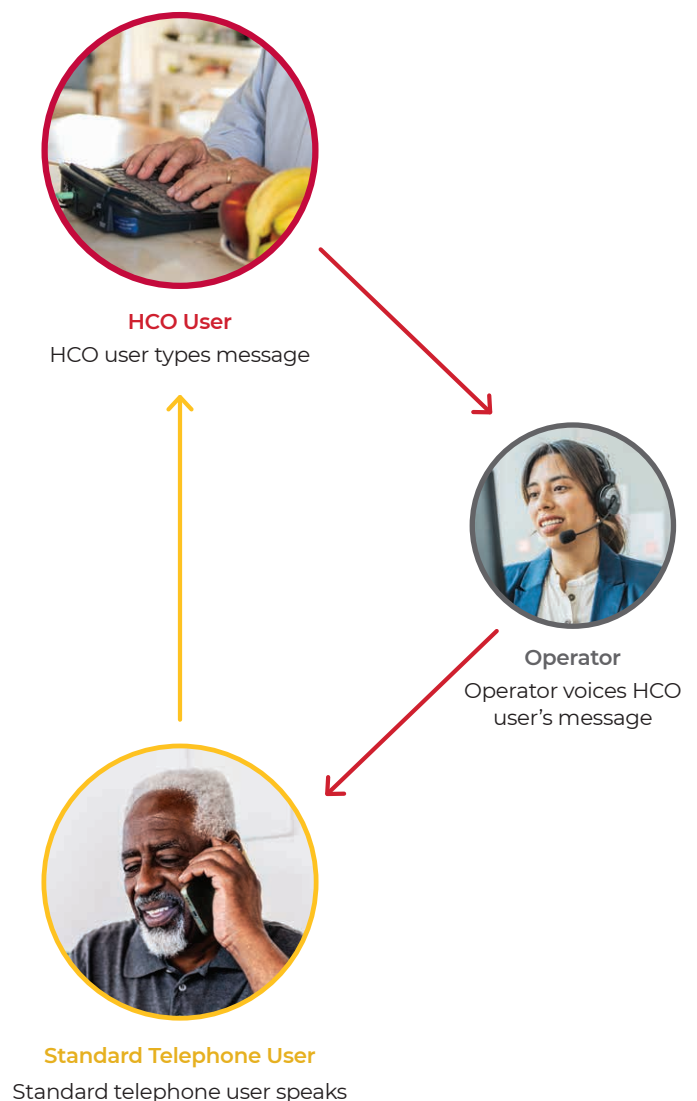


## Shining the Spotlight on HCO

If you can hear clearly but have difficulty speaking or often have trouble being understood over the phone, then HCO might be the calling option for you. Using HCO, you type your side of the phone conversation on a special HCO phone and a Maryland Relay Operator voices your typed words to the other person on the call. When the other person speaks, you listen directly to what is said—and the conversation continues naturally that way until the end of the call.

### To Make an HCO Call...

1. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-735-2258.
2. A Maryland Relay Operator's greeting, including the Operator's identification number, will display on your HCO phone.
3. Type "HCO PLS GA" (HCO Please. Go Ahead.) to indicate an HCO call. (You can also set up a Customer Profile, which automatically connects you to the appropriate Operator and lets them know your calling preferences.)
4. At the prompt, enter the number you wish to call. The Maryland Relay Operator will type "HCO on GA," indicating that the HCO feature is on.
5. When the person you are calling answers, you can listen directly to them.
6. When it is your turn to respond, type your message for the Operator to voice to the other person. Remember to type "GA" (Go Ahead.) when you are ready to hear that person's response.
7. If you would like to make another call, do not hang up. The Operator will remain on the line, ready to assist you.

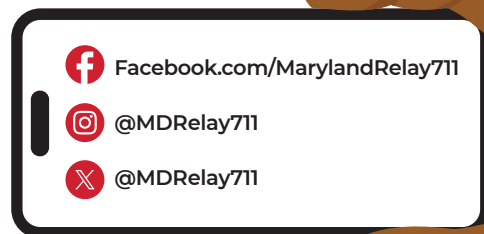


Visit [DoIT.Maryland.gov/MDRelay/Pages/HCO-Hearing-Carry-Over.aspx](https://DoIT.Maryland.gov/MDRelay/Pages/HCO-Hearing-Carry-Over.aspx) to learn more.



## Mark Your Calendars for the Next GABTR Meeting

The next Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 23 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Make sure you're following Maryland Relay on social media for more information about the upcoming gathering.



### Featuring updates from the GABTR board and:

- David Bahar, Director of TAM
- Bob Foster, Finance Manager
- Travis Dougherty, Maryland Relay Manager
- Kevin Steffy, MAT Manager
- Donna Broadway-Callaman, Community Outreach Manager
- Hamilton Relay's Report and others!

### Benefits of attending the upcoming GABTR meeting include:

- Receiving reporting updates from TAM, Maryland Relay, and MAT.
- Being the first to know what's happening with Relay services, technology, and community outreach.
- Having your important questions answered during the open forum.
- And more!

# Telecommunications Connect the Dots

Find the first dot or shape and draw a line to the next one in sequence. Keep moving within each section and watch as an image forms. As you connect each dot or shape, think about the incredible role telecommunications plays in keeping us connected.





# Telecommunications Access of Maryland

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 [Instagram.com/MDRelay711](https://www.instagram.com/MDRelay711)

## Apply Now for the Hamilton Relay Scholarship

Maryland high schoolers who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or have difficulty speaking are invited to apply for the 2024 – 2025 Hamilton Relay Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to one student from each state where Hamilton Relay is the contracted Telecommunications Relay and/or Captioned Telephone Service Provider in an effort to support the recipient's post-secondary education. **Best of all, the scholarship amount has increased this year to \$1,000—offering even more assistance to the awarded individual.**

All students who are interested in applying must meet eligibility requirements and submit all application materials by **January 31, 2025**. For questions, please contact Hamilton Relay Customer Care at 800-618-4781 or [Scholarship@HamiltonRelay.com](mailto:Scholarship@HamiltonRelay.com).



The Hamilton Relay Scholarship guidelines and application can be found by visiting [HamiltonRelay.com/Scholarship](https://www.HamiltonRelay.com/Scholarship) today. Best of luck to all applicants!