

THE MARYLAND RELAY *Connection*

SPRING 2018



Maryland to Implement Text-to-911 Statewide

Maryland is among the states leading the way to make 911 emergency service more accessible for everyone. In February, the Maryland Board of Public Works voted to approve a \$2.4 million contract to give all Marylanders the ability to contact 911 emergency responders via text message. This service was previously only available through a pilot program in Frederick County, but all counties in Maryland now have the option to join the system and could offer 911 texts as soon as this fall.

“This new technology is a vital public safety tool that could potentially help save the lives of citizens who find themselves in an emergency situation.”

Larry Hogan, Maryland Governor



Voice/TTY: 800-552-7724 or 410-767-6960

Video Phone: 443-453-5970

Fax: 410-767-4276

mdrelay.org

CHANGING
Maryland
for the Better



You may notice that in our contact information, we include a Video Phone (VP) number. Persons using American Sign Language can contact us via Video Phone at 443-453-5970.

The ability to send text messages to communicate with emergency responders is invaluable to anyone who is Deaf, hard of hearing, or has difficulty speaking—or anyone who may be in a situation where they must remain silent for their safety.

“This new technology is a vital public safety tool that could potentially help save the lives of citizens who find themselves in an emergency situation,” said Maryland Governor Larry Hogan.

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) has been working with the Department of Safety and Correctional Services for many years to expand the Text-to-911 pilot program to the entire state.

continued on page 2

Pictured above: TAM Director Brenda Kelly-Frey with Governor Hogan

Maryland to Implement Text-to-911 Statewide, continued

“Approving this upgrade to Maryland’s emergency response system is momentous, as it moves our state closer to providing everyone with equal opportunity to communicate their need for help in a critical situation,” says Brenda Kelly-Frey, director of TAM. “We would like to thank the Board of Public Works, as well as Governor Hogan, for supporting this effort.”

Before sending a text message to request 911 services, please be sure to verify that Text-to-911 is available in your county. Also, with the current technology, 911 responders may not be able to determine your exact location from a text message, so should you need emergency support, be sure to include your location in the message.



Stephanie Summers honored as Maryland’s 2017 Deaf Community Leader

Congratulations to Stephanie Summers of Frederick, who was selected as the winner of the 2017 Hamilton Relay® Deaf Community Leader Award for the state of Maryland. Stephanie serves on the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and is a member of the Maryland Association of the Deaf as well as the Delta Epsilon Sorority. In 2017, she played an instrumental role in planning the Maryland Association of the Deaf Conference, facilitating presentations from State agencies to help educate the Deaf community about public services and how to access them.

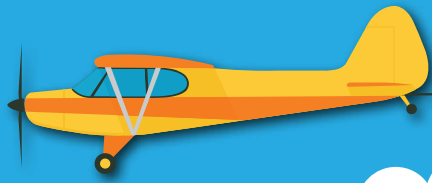
Stephanie Summers with Bobby Harris, Maryland Relay outreach coordinator

Stephanie is a financial advisor at Kramer Wealth Managers and is the first Deaf woman to hold a Series 7 General Securities Representative License.

She is a past president of Deaf Women United and has a personal interest in empowering Deaf women to broaden their financial literacy and take charge of their personal finances.

We commend Stephanie on her commitment to serving Maryland’s Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing communities and congratulate her on this well-deserved recognition!

Hamilton Relay is a registered trademark of Nedelco, Inc. dba Hamilton Telecommunications.



WELCOME



Veronica Miller

Welcome to the Team!

We are happy to have four new faces on the Maryland Relay team! Our interns, Veronica and Andrea, have been working in our office this spring to learn more about Maryland Relay’s telecommunication services and how we work to keep Maryland connected.

Veronica Miller has an associate’s degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology in Liberal Arts. She is currently studying at Towson University, pursuing her bachelor’s degree in Deaf Studies. She also happens to be Deaf. Veronica is interning with Maryland Relay’s outreach team to promote TRS and Captioned Telephone throughout the state.



Andrea Manzano

Andrea Manzano is also a student at Towson University pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Deaf Studies. She is trilingual—she can speak English and Spanish and knows American Sign Language! Andrea is helping to schedule appointments for evaluations for the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program.

Thank you to Veronica and Andrea for all their hard work this semester, and best of luck to them both!

Tarita Turner is a new administrative assistant at the TAM office. Born and raised in Annapolis, Maryland, Tarita is a recent graduate of Towson University with a bachelor’s degree in Deaf Studies. She also has an associate’s degree in Business from Howard Community College.



Tarita Turner

Tarita’s experience includes working in residential settings with people who have disabilities. For Maryland Relay, she is responsible for ordering equipment for the MAT program and supporting our MAT program evaluators throughout the state.

Katherine Lee is also a new administrative assistant in the TAM office, joining us through the State’s QUEST internship program. She will be assisting with filing, incoming and outgoing mail, scanning, and answering Video Phone (VP) calls.



Katherine Lee

Welcome Tarita and Katherine, we are excited to have you!

FCC Corner

The FCC recently ruled to restore the classification of broadband Internet access service as an information service, and reinstate the classification of mobile broadband Internet access service as a private mobile service.

Stay tuned to mdrelay.org and our Facebook page for more important updates from the FCC, including an order regarding Internet Protocol (IP) Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) expected soon.

We're Ready for Our Close-Up!

Did you catch Maryland Relay on TV recently? We've been taking to the small screen to spread the word about our services to as many Marylanders as we can.

Since the beginning of November, two television commercials have been airing on cable and network television. You'll recognize the star of one: our very own Public Relations Officer Asia Johnson! Asia did a great job of explaining the effect she has seen Maryland Relay have on people all over the state through outreach events. Our second spot tugged at our heart strings, with mother-daughter duo Martha and Meira Goodman sharing their story of Meira using Maryland Relay's Speech-to-Speech service to talk to her Girl Scout leader. Meira was a joy to work with on set—and she persuaded our team to buy lots of Girl Scout cookies!



"Watching Meira achieve independence was really awesome and it's really what every mother hopes for."

Martha Goodman

Watch the commercials at mdrelay.org!



A Q&A with Kevin Steffy: Lead Evaluator for the MAT Program

What is the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program?

The MAT program provides specialized equipment for people who don't have access to the appropriate technology to meet their telecommunication needs. Applicants must meet the State's requirements to qualify for the program.

What happens during a MAT evaluation?

Once approved, every applicant meets with a local MAT evaluator in their region. The evaluator will ask about the extent of the client's hearing loss or any difficulty with speech, cognition, or mobility he or she may have in order to determine what equipment will best meet their needs. The evaluator will also have the person practice making calls on the equipment to make sure it is the right device for him or her.

Why is the evaluation important?

It is important that each client receives the proper equipment. We don't want someone to pick a piece of equipment just because of its value or how it looks. Often, people come into the evaluation assuming a certain device will be perfect for them, but the evaluator will know of another option that is better suited for their needs.

Why is it important to have evaluation centers?

Right now we have five evaluation centers across the state. If an applicant lives in Salisbury, we don't want him or her to have to drive all the way to my office in Baltimore City for the evaluation. Having an evaluation center closer to the client's home eliminates the need to travel, which is especially important for those who do not have access to reliable transportation. Under some circumstances, an evaluator may even be able to go to a client's home.

How do people tend to react when they receive their equipment?

Most people are thrilled because many of them have gone a long time without using a telephone. But now



they can better understand what the person on the other end of the line is saying, and it lessens their frustration. Some clients will cry because they are so excited to talk to their family members again. When people can have personal and private conversations over the phone, without needing someone else's help, they regain their independence.

What are some examples of the equipment available through MAT?

We have many different options to meet various needs. There are amplified phones, Captioned Telephones, TTYs, picture phones, hands-free phones, and more. Tablets are the newest devices we offer. Tablets are available with video software for those who use ASL and Captioned Telephone software for individuals who need captions. And for those who are unable to move their arms and hands to use a phone, we even have tablets with software that can be controlled just by head movements. It's really awesome!

I love that I am never solving the same problem. It's a challenge to figure out which equipment will work best for each client. Seeing how happy my clients are when they can communicate over the phone without depending on someone else is why I do this job.

Baltimore County Department of Health Becomes a Maryland Relay Partner!

The Baltimore County Department of Health has made strides to become fully accessible by offering cultural competency training to all staff. As part of the planning and development of the curriculum, the department opted to become a Maryland Relay Partner so that its staff could better assist more citizens of Baltimore County.

“Maryland Relay Partner is a great resource to help us connect with the community and share information with clients who may not be aware of the services we offer.”

Amy Beaumier of the Baltimore County Department of Health

The Department of Health offered its first Maryland Relay Partner training session for employees last October and continues to schedule training sessions for all its departments. This spring, 150 employees will be fully trained to place and receive calls through Maryland Relay!

“Maryland Relay Partner is a great resource to help us connect with the community and share information with clients who may not be aware of the services we offer,” says Amy Beaumier of the Baltimore County Department of Health. “Maryland Relay Partner training sessions are very informative, interactive, and engaging. Feedback from our staff has been very positive and we have scheduled additional training sessions as a result of staff requests. Many of our staff members expressed a lack of awareness of the services available through Maryland Relay to assist individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing and were not aware that individuals with difficulty speaking could also benefit from Relay, so it has truly been an eye-opening, educational experience for us.”



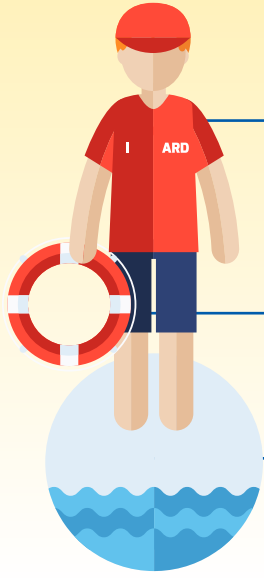
OFFICIAL PARTNER

Schedule a Maryland Relay Partner training session for your own organization at mdrelay.org.

Maryland Relay outreach coordinators Jenny Curran and Bobby Harris giving a Maryland Relay Partner presentation at the Baltimore County Department of Health.

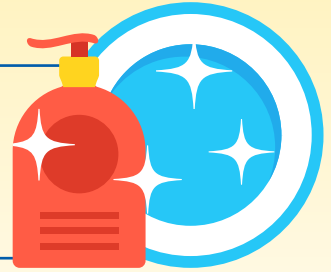
Staying Safe this Summer

Summer is right around the corner! Here are some tips for having fun and staying safe this season:



Talk to your community about providing interpreters at swimming lessons and **make lifeguards aware** if your child is Deaf or hard of hearing.

Don't have a pool? A tarp, hose, and **eco-friendly dish soap** make for a fun and easy backyard slip and slide—just be sure to check for rocks before laying down the tarp!



Most hearing aids and cochlear implants **are not waterproof**. Talk to your children about properly caring for these devices this season.

Mosquitoes can carry harmful diseases. Be sure to **wear bug repellent spray** when going outside or try a homemade repellent such as lavender oil or stashing dryer sheets in your pockets.



Maryland Relay in the News

In January, Public Relations Officer Asia Johnson and TAM Director Brenda Kelly-Frey headed to Salisbury to pay a visit to WBOC-TV. They appeared on the station's evening program, DelmarvaLife, to discuss the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program and show examples of some of the equipment it offers.

If you weren't able to watch it live, the interview is still available on our Facebook page and at delmarvalife.com. And be sure to follow us on Facebook to stay informed about all our appearances in the news!



Telecommunications Access of Maryland
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 facebook.com/MarylandRelay711

 twitter.com/MDRelay711

UPCOMING EVENTS

Look for Maryland Relay's Outreach Coordinators at these upcoming events.
To see a complete list, visit mdrelay.org.

May 23

Senior Health and Fitness Day
Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex
Hyattsville

May 24

HABC Community Power Day
Pleasant Views Gardens, Baltimore

June 3

Foundation Fighting Blindness VisionWalk
Latrobe Park, Baltimore

June 8

The Arc Maryland 2018 State Convention
Turf Valley Resort, Ellicott City

June 11-12

Maryland Municipal League Summer Conference
Ocean City Convention Center, Ocean City

June 13

Prince Georges County Government Day
1400 McCormick Dr., Largo

June 13

Waxter Wisdom Series
1000 Cathedral St., Baltimore

June 18-20

Maryland State Fireman's Association
Annual Conference & Convention
Ocean City Convention Center, Ocean City

August 9

55+ Healthy Lifestyle Expo
Elkton High School, Elkton