

THE MARYLAND RELAY Connection

FALL 2019



TAM Welcomes New Director David Bahar

We are excited to share that the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT) has selected David Bahar as the new Director of Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM)!

In this role, David will oversee and lead the planning, strategic direction, and facilitation of all TAM programs, including Maryland Relay and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program.



"I am looking forward to working closely with Maryland's Deaf community and carrying TAM and Maryland Relay's legacy of equal telecommunications access into the next generation."

David Bahar, Telecommunications Access of Maryland Director



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

Video Phone: 443-453-5970

Fax: 410-767-4276

mdrelay.org



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.

David comes to Maryland from Virginia, where he was most recently the Relay Manager for the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He possesses 15 years of experience working in government, legislative and regulatory affairs to advance telecommunications access. He was previously the Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs for Communication Service for the Deaf, where he founded the non-profit organization's Office of Public Safety. He also served as the Vice President of Regulatory Affairs for Convo Communications, where he secured the company's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) certification as a Video Relay Service (VRS) provider and spearheaded development of the industry's first interoperable Web-based videophone.

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TAM Welcomes New Director David Bahar, continued

David also spent six years as a legislative assistant on Capitol Hill, working to improve communications access for people who are Deaf. During his tenure, he pushed to advance the timeline for giving VRS users 10-digit telephone numbers, replacing IP addresses for dialing. David was also involved in developing the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, an accessibility law for the modern age.

In addition to his professional roles, David has served on numerous federal committees and boards pertaining to telecommunications and disability issues. He is a founding board member of the MITRE Telecommunications Relay Services Center of Expertise and a two-term member and workgroup facilitator for the FCC's Disability Advisory Committee. He currently serves on the board of the Lexington School and Center for the Deaf in East Elmhurst, New York.

David holds a master's degree in Legislative Affairs from The George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in Politics and Government from the University of Puget Sound.

"Mr. Bahar's extensive experience and commitment to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities will be a huge asset to the State of Maryland and to ensuring access to all of its citizens," said Secretary Michael G. Leahy. "DoIT is excited to have Mr. Bahar continue to expand on Governor Hogan's commitment to ensure that all citizens of Maryland have the telecommunications access they deserve."

David currently resides in Bowie with his wife and two sons.

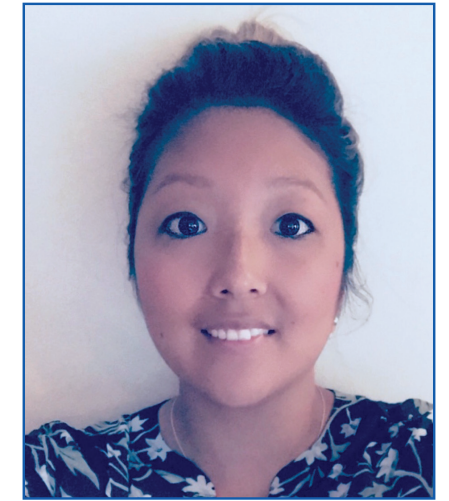
Meet Elizabeth Barnes, MAT Evaluator

Elizabeth is one of our newest evaluators working with MAT program customers through Easterseals. As an evaluator, she receives approved MAT program applications and, through an in-person evaluation, matches each qualified customer with the telecommunications device that is best suited to meet his or her needs.

"This program is invaluable," says Elizabeth. "There are so many people that can benefit from the MAT program, and I enjoy being able to help the communities that we serve and connect them to the services that will benefit them in their daily lives."

Elizabeth underwent extensive training to prepare for this role. She is now ready to serve clients in Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, and Washington Counties.

Outside of work, Elizabeth spends time with her six dogs and enjoys fishing.



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Elizabeth Barnes, MAT Evaluator

Out & About

It's been a busy season out in the community for our outreach team! Thanks to everyone who has visited with us to learn more about our services.



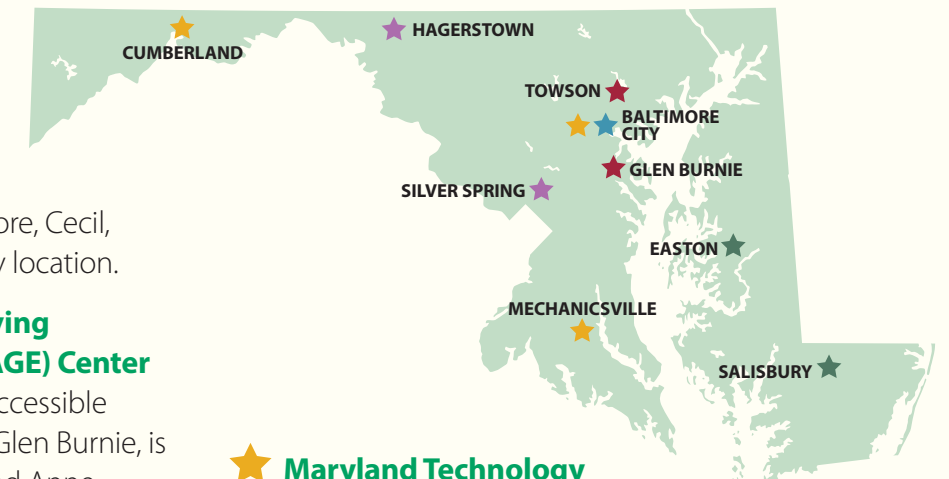
MAT Program Evaluation Centers Across the State

★ **Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM)** oversees the MAT program and is serving applicants from Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, and Harford Counties at its Baltimore City location.

★ **Independent Marylanders Achieving Growth through Empowerment (IMAGE) Center of Maryland**, located in Towson, with Accessible Resources for Independence, located in Glen Burnie, is serving applicants from Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, and Howard Counties.

★ **Easterseals** is serving applicants in Carroll, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Washington Counties at its Hagerstown and Silver Spring locations.

★ **MAC, Inc.** is serving applicants on Maryland's Eastern Shore at its Salisbury and Easton locations.



★ **Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP)** is serving applicants in Baltimore City and Alleghany, Baltimore, Calvert, Charles, Garrett, and St. Mary's Counties at its Baltimore City, Cumberland and Mechanicsville locations.

To apply for the MAT program or for more information, visit www.mdrelay.org or contact Maryland Relay at 800-552-7724 (Voice/TTY).

Q&A

A Day in the Life of a TAM Intern

We are proud to help local college students learn more about what it's like to serve Maryland's Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities by offering internships here at the TAM office. This year, we have been fortunate to have two great interns, both of whom are majoring in Deaf Studies at Towson University. Mary Pat Albrecht joined us for the Spring semester, and Sydney Amoroso is with us for the Fall. We asked them both a few questions to learn more about what it's like to intern here.

Why did you choose to major in Deaf Studies?

Mary Pat: I wasn't sure what I wanted to study at first, but in my second year at Towson I took a Deaf Culture class. I loved the class so much and what I learned was really interesting, so I declared a Deaf Studies major and never looked back.

Sydney: I was interested in studying Deaf Studies after interning for a year at my high school in the special education classroom. We had several students with disabilities, some of whom were Deaf. After working with a child who is Deaf, and not knowing American Sign Language, it inspired me to want to learn the language, so that I could better communicate with the student.

Why did you want to intern at TAM?

Mary Pat: I learn about the issues within the Deaf community in class, but I really wanted to see how they affect the people around me here in Baltimore.

Sydney: I wanted to learn about the services the organization provides for the Deaf community. I wanted to learn how to use the various phones and other devices so that I could continue communicating with my former student, even when not with them in person.



Mary Pat Albrecht



Sydney Amoroso

What is a typical day like at TAM?

Mary Pat: I get to work with the individuals who are applying for the MAT program and help them with their questions, make sure they understand their options, and even connect them with an evaluator so they can get their equipment. It's rewarding to see the process of the MAT program from start to finish and how happy the applicants are once they've received their device. I've learned that no two people have the exact same need and being part of helping them find their perfect solution is a great experience.

Sydney: I scan MAT applications into the system, prepare application packets to be sent out to clients, and answer voicemails that clients have left. I also helped prepare the minutes from our most recent GABTR meeting and created charts that indicate how clients are learning about Maryland Relay and the MAT program.

Do you have a favorite memory from the semester?

Mary Pat: Getting the power to use the phone again is a big deal for people, and sometimes they'll write thank you notes or call to express their gratitude. That's always my favorite thing to see.

Sydney: I have enjoyed my time working here because everyone has been very welcoming and nice to me. I also enjoy working with our two Deaf supervisors, because I can put my signing skills to practice every day that I am at my internship.

Interested in interning with TAM? Contact us at info@mdrelay.org for more information.



GABTR Member Spotlight: Shannon Minnick

The Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) provides Maryland Relay with vital feedback and insight on the issues that affect Relay users, including quality and trends in Relay services, technology, and community outreach. The members who serve on GABTR are helping us make strides in improving telecommunications accessibility, and we want you to meet them!

Shannon Minnick is GABTR's limited mobility representative and works as the Director of Independent Living Services at Independence Now. After a car accident left her in a wheelchair 28 years ago, she was faced with the decision to either let her new disability define her or break through the barriers and learn to love her life again.

She has now become a passionate advocate for all people living with disabilities and strives to help them overcome challenges through her work with multiple organizations including Ms. Wheelchair Maryland, Ms. Wheelchair D.C., United Spinal Board, Maryland Youth Leadership Forum, and the Governor's Interagency Transition Council for Youth with Disabilities.

With a focus on educating youth, Shannon is helping individuals with disabilities learn how to be more independent at a younger age, physically and financially. When Shannon isn't at work or volunteering, she loves to travel, waterski, and continuously help others.

Congratulations to Jenna Usilton, 2019 Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship Winner!

Jenna Usilton, a graduate of North Dorchester High School, is Maryland's recipient of the 2019 Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship! Jenna was presented with \$500 to use towards her higher education at Wesley College, where she plans to study education or medicine.

This scholarship is provided each year to a high school senior who is Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or has difficulty speaking. Hamilton Relay is currently accepting applications for 2020 High School Scholarships, so if you know a deserving senior, please refer them to HamiltonRelay.com to apply! Applications are due January 31, 2020.





FCC Improves Access to 911 and Timely Assistance from First Responders

In August 2019, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Report and Order implementing two new laws that will help ensure people who call 911 from multi-line telephone systems – which commonly serve hotels, office buildings, and campuses – can reach 911 and be quickly located by first responders.

The first, Kari's Law, requires multi-line telephone systems to enable users to dial 911 directly, without having to dial a prefix (such as a "9") to reach an outside line. Kari's Law also requires multi-line telephone systems to provide notification, such as to a front desk or security office, when a 911 call is made in order to facilitate building entry by first responders.

The second, Section 506 of RAY BAUM'S Act, requires the FCC to consider adopting rules to ensure that "dispatchable location" information, such as the street address, floor level, and room number of a 911 caller, is conveyed with 911 calls, regardless of the technological platform used, so that first responders can be quickly dispatched to the caller's location. The

new rules apply dispatchable location requirements to multi-line telephone systems, fixed telephone service, interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services, Telecommunications Relay Services, and mobile texting services.



Veronica Davila Steele Selected for Hamilton Relay 2019 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award

Congratulations to Veronica Davila Steele of Oxon Hill, who is Maryland's recipient of the Hamilton Relay 2019 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award!

With the support of multiple chapters of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and members of the Hard of Hearing community, Veronica successfully pushed for HB 1192 to be passed in both the Maryland House and Senate. This bill requires any recipient of state funds to install an assistive listening system in any assembly area that uses a public address system. This is an enormous victory for individuals who have

difficulty hearing in meetings or performances without the use of an assistive listening system, like a hearing loop system. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan signed this bill into law on April 30, 2019.

Veronica is the founder and president of the Prince George's County chapter of HLAA and dedicates much of her time to advocating for people who are Hard of Hearing. She is an active member of many community associations, including the Barnaby Manor Citizens Association, the Citizens' Advisory Boards for Police District IV and the P.G. County Police Chief, and the P.G. County Maryland Commission on Disabilities.

NASRA & TEDPA Annual Conferences Focus on New Technologies

The 2019 annual conferences for the National Association for State Relay Administration (NASRA) and Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) were held in September in Phoenix, Arizona. These meetings bring state Relay and equipment distribution program administrators from across the country together to learn about the newest trends in the industry and share their ideas and experiences.

The discussions at this year's conferences focused on new technologies that are likely to have a great impact on telecommunications in the next few years, including Real-Time Text (RTT) and Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR). Both RTT and ASR have the potential to greatly benefit people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or who have difficulty speaking. We look forward to telling you more about these services as they become more widely available!



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Hosting Holidays for Better Hearing

Follow these tips to make understanding conversations and joining in on the fun easy for everyone.

- Use a round or oval table to give guests a better view of one another over dinner.
- Be sure rooms are properly lighted. (Faces should be easy to see with no glare.)
- Keep background music and other sounds to a minimum.
- Seat guests with hearing loss in front of a wall for better acoustics.
- Seat supportive people next to individuals with hearing loss to fill in parts of the conversation that get missed.
- Have a few board games on hand that don't rely heavily on hearing, such as:
 - Monopoly
 - Jenga
 - Telestrations
 - Charades
 - Scrabble
 - Apples to Apples
 - Double Ditto

