

CONNECTION

FALL 2021



Telecommunications
Access of Maryland

PROGRAMS:



Maryland Relay

Dial 7-1-1

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



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.

MDRelay.org

Meet the newest member of the MAT team.

Check out page 4 to learn more!

Get the latest updates on Maryland's RCC regulations.

Learn more on page 7.



Maryland Relay Celebrates 30 Years!

On December 1, 1991, the very first Maryland Relay call was made. Now, thirty years later, we had the privilege of honoring the public service that helps Marylanders—including those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, DeafBlind, or have difficulty speaking—stay connected to what matters most.

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) and Maryland Relay celebrated this milestone on December 1, 2021, at the TAM office with a hybrid 30th anniversary celebration. The 60-minute program brought people together both virtually and in person, and honored individuals who have been a significant part of Maryland Relay's journey. Speakers shared memories from the past, as well as plans for Maryland Relay's future. It was a wonderful event that celebrated all that we've accomplished in the last 30 years.

Take a Walk Down Memory Lane with Maryland Relay

Turn to page 2 in our newsletter to find a timeline of significant events in Maryland Relay's cherished history.

MARYLAND RELAY TIME



Photo courtesy of Stephen Brenner

1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed on July 26 by President George H.W. Bush, requiring every state to establish Relay services.



1997

The Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program is implemented, allowing Marylanders who have difficulty using a telephone to obtain assistive equipment from the state.

1990

1992

Maryland Relay's Call Center officially opens on April 14 in the Seton Industrial Park in Baltimore.



2000



2002

Brenda Kelly-Frey (pictured above) becomes the new director of TAM—overseeing Maryland Relay and the MAT program as well.



1991

On December 1, 1991, Maryland Relay answers its first call. Stacey Hill (pictured left) was the operator who handled the first call. At this time, the Maryland Relay Director is Gil Becker (pictured right).





2008
TAM and Maryland Relay are moved from the Department of General Services to the Department of Information Technology (DoIT).



2013
DoIT awards Hamilton Relay as the Telecommunications Relay and Captioned Telephone Services provider for the State of Maryland.



2019
Maryland Relay announces 10 new MAT evaluation centers across Maryland.
TAM hires David Bahar (pictured above), the first director who is Deaf.

2010



2015
The Relay-Friendly Business initiative is rebranded as the Maryland Relay Partner program. The program is introduced to educate Maryland businesses and organizations about Maryland Relay.

The new MAT Evaluation Center and Maryland Relay/TAM offices are unveiled at State Center in Baltimore.



2020



2020
TAM, Maryland Relay, and MAT move to the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

2016
Governor Hogan announces that the MAT program is accepting applications for no-cost tablets at the start of "Telecommunications for All Week" in Maryland.



Our Museum Collection is Growing

Telecommunications Access of Maryland would like to extend a thank you to all the individuals who have donated old telecommunications equipment to help us expand our collection. With these donations, we hope to share the valuable history of telecommunications relay, as well as the assistive equipment that has helped to keep people connected throughout the decades.

Ready to Donate?

Contact MoreInfo@MDRelay.org with your name, location, and information about the device you'd like to donate. We appreciate your help in educating the community about these historical devices.



An original TTY



The Maryland Accessible Telecommunications Program Welcomes A New Hire

This past summer, the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program welcomed Jane Hager to the team as the new MAT Specialist. Jane's past experience includes working at the Bay Area Center for Independent Living & Wicomico County Resource Coordination. She also was a rehab counselor and evaluator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Jane helps oversee this program while working with skilled evaluators to provide one-on-one support to applicants so they may find an equipment solution that meets their needs. Congratulations, Jane!



Jane Hager, MAT Specialist



Follow us for the latest updates at

[Facebook.com/MarylandRelay711](https://www.facebook.com/MarylandRelay711) [@MDRelay711](https://twitter.com/MDRelay711)

Catching Up with Maryland Relay's Outreach Team

Our outreach team is getting back into the swing of attending in-person events—and it's been exciting! See what's been keeping them busy these past few months:

Rebecca Miller, our Real-Time Text outreach coordinator, traveled to San Antonio to attend the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials-International Annual Conference in August. She has also been hard at work presenting to Public Safety Answering Points and 9-1-1 Call Centers about RTT services and how it directly benefits the industry.

Tarita Turner, our Telecommunication Relay Services outreach coordinator, attended conferences with the TAM staff in Ocean City, including the Maryland Municipal League (MML) Conference and the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Conference. Both conferences allowed the team to connect with more people and share the value of Maryland Relay and its services. In addition to attending conferences, Tarita also conducted a Maryland Relay Partner training for Montage Marketing Group, LLC.

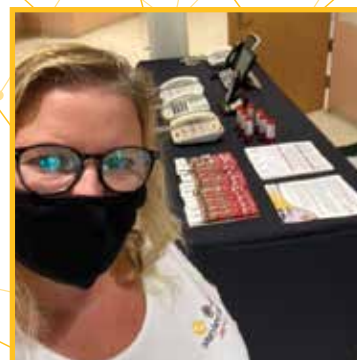
Jenny Pearson, Captioned Telephone outreach coordinator, traveled for the first time since March 2020 to Charles and Queen Anne's County, and while she was there, she was able to present to seven senior centers. Some of the highlights of her travels include attending the Seniors on the Go Expo in Carroll County and the Harford Senior Expo. She also traveled throughout the state in October for the Shore Living Expo, the HomePorts Health Fair, and D.C.'s Walk4Hearing. In addition to her travels, Jenny gave a presentation to Maryland Access Point counselors to educate them about Maryland Relay's services.

To learn more about Maryland Relay, contact any of our outreach coordinators! Their emails are:

Jenny.Pearson@HamiltonRelay.com

Rebecca.Miller@HamiltonRelay.com

Tarita.Turner@HamiltonRelay.com



TAM Continues Its Partnership with the National Association for State Relay Administration (NASRA)

TAM is proud to be a partner of NASRA—helping to make Telecommunications Relay Service a reality for everyone in the United States. Recently, Maryland Relay Manager Travis Dougherty was elected as Member at Large for the association. In this position, Travis will support all efforts of NASRA and its Board, while representing the voice of all members of the association.

In addition to Travis' new role for NASRA, the Maryland Relay manager will be leading the Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) Taskforce with NASRA, alongside TAM Director David Bahar.



You can learn more about NASRA and its mission at NASRATRS.org.

Introducing the Communication Facilitator Service

The MAT program is introducing a valuable new service for people living with combined hearing and vision loss. The Communication Facilitator (CF) service enables Marylanders who are DeafBlind, and use American Sign Language, access to video communication platforms, such as videophone (VP), Video Relay Services, FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, and more.

During the video call, the communications facilitator, who is a skilled signer, copies sign language from the other video caller and provides visual information to the individual who is DeafBlind through close vision or tactile sign language.

MAT's goal for introducing and overseeing the CF service is to provide more accessible communication services to Marylanders who are DeafBlind, while also training more facilitators, and educating the community about what it means to be DeafBlind. These calls can be conducted on a computer, iPad, iPhone, TV monitor, or other video-displaying device. With

the assistance of the facilitator, individuals who are DeafBlind can have natural, easy conversations with friends, family, coworkers, and more if the service is requested. CF service can be initiated in a person's home or other public space.



For more information about the CF program, please contact MAT Manager Kevin Steffy at Kevin.Steffy@Maryland.gov or MAT Specialist Jane Hager at Jane.Hager@Maryland.gov.



Meet GABTR Member, Glenn Lockhart

Meet Glenn Lockhart, one of our newest GABTR members, representing the Deaf community. With almost a decade of work experience in Telecommunications Relay Service—which includes interacting with TRS users at consumer, industry, and Deaf community events—Glenn hopes to continue to build on consumer education and engagement and bring his unique perspective to the Board.

“Serving on GABTR has allowed my professional and personal experiences to intersect,” he shares. “I come from a multi-generational Deaf family, and we have diverse communication preferences. Because of that, consumer education and engagement remain extremely important to me.”

In addition to GABTR, Glenn is involved with organizations such as Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc (TDI), the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). In his free time, he enjoys reading (especially science fiction), doing puzzles, and exercising.

What's Next for Maryland's Remote Conference Captioning (RCC) Regulations

After several rounds of RCC focus group gatherings in April 2021, a finalized draft of the RCC regulations are now being reviewed by the TAM team, GABTR, and the members of the RCC focus group. We hope to have the new RCC regulations available to the public in early 2022.



To learn more about RCC, or to schedule the service for your next conference call, visit MarylandRCC.com





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Congratulations to the 2021 Deaf Community Leader Award Winner, Kirsten Poston

Congratulations are in order for Marylander Kirsten Poston—the 2021 Deaf Community Leader Award winner! Kirsten was nominated by her peers for her involvement in the Maryland Association of the Deaf, where she serves as the first Black president. In addition to her leadership role with the Maryland Association of the Deaf, Kirsten sits on the Board of Trustees for the Maryland School for the Deaf. She is also an active member of the Howard County Association of the Deaf, serves on the National Association of the Deaf's Board and leads diversity initiatives, acts as the Director of Career Advancement for Deaf in Government and was the past vice-executive director, and served the Federal Employees with Disabilities as a previous vice president. Kirsten will be presented with her award at the Maryland Association of the Deaf Gala in the spring of 2022. Congratulations, Kirsten!

