



The Evolution of Telecommunications for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

By Clarke Christianson

It is truly amazing to see the trends in telecommunication services for the deaf and hard of hearing evolving at such a rapid pace over the last few decades. It seems that every year technology is gaining speed and we are striving to keep up with it. Don't get me wrong — this is a positive thing since it is narrowing the communication barrier for the deaf and hard of hearing significantly. Functional equivalency continues to be a technical challenge still after all these years.



Model 28 Teletype machine

Starting with the introduction of old model 28 teletype machines back in the late '60s and early '70s, we were so thrilled to be able to communicate by phone. The teletype machine was connected with an acoustic coupler and attached to the telephone system. The drawback was that there had to be one of those machines at both ends to set up communication in between. Later on, during the '70s, lighter and more portable TDDs came on the market, thus dealing a death blow on the model 28 "dinosaur" machines. Those smaller TDDs appeared in more places, noticeably the businesses frequented by deaf/hard of hearing customers. For the majority of businesses and organizations not having TDDs, deaf/hard of hearing people relied on their hearing counterparts to make calls for them, and that was the early version of the "relay service."

The late '80s and early '90s heralded the new industry which is known as "Telecommunications Relay Services" and they were back then and still are today the relay provider giants (CSD, Sprint, ATT, MCI, Hamilton and such) pro-



Telecommunication Relay Services

viding the traditional relay services for those using TTYs/TDDs. They, also, provided other services (Voice Carryover, Hearing Carryover and Speech to Speech) for over a decade. Then by 2000, there was a significant drop in this trend due to the introduction of the newer wireless technology and video technology, both of which the majority of the deaf embraces.

Independence and mobility has increased significantly for deaf/hard of hearing people with the availability of wireless technology such as pagers, PDAs, computers, and now videophones. The more compact TTYs/TTDs have wireless capability and can be used anywhere, even in vehicles. Point-to-point communication has gotten easier. There are more, newer video relay service and internet protocol (IP) providers, along with the telecommunications relay service providers.



Pager

Real-time instant messaging and real-time texting are currently done through computers, PDAs or pagers and

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these capabilities are now available in cell phones here in America (they have already been in use in some European countries for some time). Mobile video phones are currently available in the size of a notebook computer offered by VRS providers (CSDVRS, HOVRS and Viable). Also, there is beta testing of video capability in cell phones but what is preventing this from becoming available is the low data transmission rates on the U.S. cellular network combined with limited processing



Mobile videophone on wrist



Videophone

power. Communication rates on the U.S. cellular networks only allow about 1/10 of the data common in Europe and Asia.

According to news sources, the

“Dick Tracy” type of watch is being unveiled by a South Korean technology firm. It is also a mobile video phone that can be worn on the wrist like a watch. What makes it interesting is that it has a touch-screen dialing system with a camera and speaker built in to enable users to make video calls. Even more attractive, it also recognizes voices, transforms text to speech, has a Bluetooth function and works as a MP3 player. It will be launched in Europe later next year, but there is a question of when it will be available in America.

As mentioned in the beginning of this article, technology is evolving rapidly. There are talks of the possibility that the hologram technology (like in Star Trek or Star Wars movies) will

become a reality in the near future. If so, that will affect video usage the same way video affected traditional TTY/TDD usage. It is mind-boggling to imagine how this hologram thing will work. Good or bad? We will find out, and hopefully this technology will create more independence and functional equivalency for all people with hearing loss.



Hologram

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Spread the Word!

By Katie Peterson, CSD of Rapid City

Every day people come to us to receive telephone equipment and the most common comment is, "I've never heard about this program before!" That is something we would like to change, but we can't do it alone. Using the telephone independently is an amazing gift and our phones really do make a difference. Please share this gift by giving our newsletter to your friends, family, co-workers, social organizations and fellow church members—we'll take it from there. For those of you who know the difference our phones have made in your lives, spread the word!

What's the catch? Crazy as it seems, there is no fee to apply, test demo phones, receive equipment and have a representative train you in how to use it. Thanks to a 15¢ TRS surcharge on each phone line in South Dakota, we are able to provide this program at no charge and allow you the user to relax and enjoy. The funds are also used to provide the Relay South Dakota, or 711 service.

About us S.D. Relay and the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program are managed by the S.D. Department of Human Services with services provided by Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD). CSD is a nonprofit organization that has been serving the deaf and hard of hearing community for over 30 years. Contact one of our re-

gional offices or visit our web site at www.sdrelay.com/TEDP for more information.

Share your story! How has the TEDP helped you? If you have a heartwarming story you would like share about your amplified phone, send in your testimonial! Select testimonials will be published in the Fall newsletter. Include your experience, kind of phone you received, name, address and phone number so we can contact you for more information if necessary.

Anyone who is Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Speech-disabled and needs to receive telephone services can contact the nearest CSD branch office or the State office through voice or TTY at:

CSD of Sioux Falls
100 N. Krohn Place
Sioux Falls, SD 57106
(605) 367-5759
(866) 246-5759

CSD of Rapid City
150 Knollwood Drive
Rapid City, SD 57701
(605) 394-6864
(888) 304-2311

CSD of Aberdeen
(new address TBD)
Aberdeen, SD 57401
(605) 626-2668
(866) 246-5759

SD Department of
Human Services
3800 Hwy 34, 500 E Capitol
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 773-5301
(800) 265-9864

Relay South Dakota **Tips & Hints**

Caller ID

Many states have Caller ID, which means that the person you're calling has purchased this service from their local phone company and can see your phone number and, in most cases, your name on a small screen. But perhaps, for a variety of reasons, you don't want the person you're calling to see your phone number or name; the Relay service can block that Caller ID from going through.

All that is necessary is for you to let the agent know that you want your Caller ID blocked and it will be taken care of for you. You can say something like, "Please block ID," "Block Caller ID" or "Don't show number." Anything similar to that phrasing will let the agent know how to proceed with the call. Once the Caller ID is blocked, the agent will send you

a message stating, "your caller ID has been blocked."

Unfortunately, relay only has the ability to block local numbers. If you want to block your number on a long distance call, it is necessary to block the Caller ID from your home phone, **prior** to calling into relay. There are three ways this can be done:

***67 – Selective Blocking** – This is a procedure you would do from your own phone prior to calling the relay service. Pressing ***67 (1167 on a rotary phone)** from your home phone allows you to block a specific call. When the call comes into the relay service, the agent will not know you have blocked your number. When the call has ended, your Caller ID will once again be seen.

Per Line Block - This is also known as Total Block or Global Block, and is an enhanced feature that you can

purchase from your local phone carrier; so if you have purchased the Total Block or Global Block, your Caller ID will never be sent on ANY calls.

***82 – Selective Unblocking** – Maybe you have complete blocking on your phone line, but then decide for one call you want the person to see your Caller ID. This can be done by pressing ***82 (1182 on a rotary phone)** on your phone, **prior** to connecting with relay. Again, the agent will not know that you have unblocked your Caller ID from your home phone and once the call has ended, your phone number will be blocked for all future calls.

If you want further information on Caller ID features available in your state, the relay agent would be happy to transfer you to Customer Service, or provide the direct number to customer service.



Communication Service for the Deaf
102 N. Krohn Place
Sioux Falls, SD 57103

Your feedback is important to us!

Did you just have a successful relay call and the CA did a fabulous job?

Did you have some challenges during a relay call and you feel that the CA might benefit from your feedback?

Your feedback, comments, and suggestions are extremely valuable to us, as they help ensure the quality of the relay services we offer to you. Not only that, positive feedback means the whole world to a CA and brightens up their day! Even your feedback to help a CA improve for the next relay calls will be greatly appreciated. By providing specific infor-



mation using the example below, you will help us provide continuous training and specific feedback to our CAs.

Date of Relay Call: April 9, 2009

Time of Relay Call: 9:15 a.m. (Central time)

CA ID Number: CA 1234(F)

Comments: (be specific). This CA did a wonderful job relaying my call. She typed with no spelling errors, and typed efficiently and smoothly with a great positive attitude. My hearing friend felt like she was talking directly to me. Keep up the great work!

Please send your comments to:

Clarke Christianson
South Dakota TRS Outreach Manager
102 N. Krohn Place
Sioux Falls, SD 57103

or email:

cchristianson@c-s-d.org

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www.sdrelay.com