



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC AUTHORIZES RECOVERY OF COSTS FOR NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR TRS USERS *Seeks Comment on Methods for Allocating Calls as Interstate or Intrastate*

Washington, DC – Providers of Internet Protocol (IP) relay service are eligible for reimbursement from the interstate Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) fund, according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The decision paves the way for increased use of TRS by all Americans who will now be only a mouse click away from this important disability access service.

Persons using Internet-based TRS access can initiate calls on their computers and do not have to purchase TTY (teletypewriter/text telephone) devices.

Congress mandated the creation of TRS in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. All 50 states, U.S. Territories, and the District of Columbia have implemented TRS. Intrastate TRS calls are provided by contractors who are paid by the state. Interstate TRS calls are provided by service providers who recover their costs from the Interstate TRS Fund, which is financed by fees levied upon common carriers.

Unlike traditional TRS, in which a TTY user contacts a TRS center via telephone lines, and the communications assistant (CA) at the TRS center calls the receiving party via voice telephone, the first leg of an IP Relay call goes from the caller's personal computer or other Web-capable device to the IP Relay center via the Internet. The relay site is usually accessed via a Web-page. The second leg of the call, as with traditional TRS, is from the CA to the receiving party via voice through the public switched telephone network.

The Commission authorized the recovery of all IP Relay costs from the Interstate TRS Fund and has also asked for comment on whether the FCC should attempt to devise a method for allocating calls as intrastate or interstate, and, if so, how to accomplish this goal.

How TRS works:

TRS provides a means for people who have hearing or speech disabilities to communicate with people who do not have such disabilities. Typically, a person with a speech or hearing disability calls a TRS center using a TTY or computer keyboard and is connected with

a communications assistant (CA) who completes the call by reading the typed message to the called party.

The CA can also accept voice calls from persons with hard-to-understand speech and reiterate them in an easily understandable form for the called party.

These procedures work in reverse when the person with the disability is the called party.

Action by the Commission April 18, 2002, by Declaratory Ruling and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 02-121). Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps and Martin with Commissioners Abernathy and Copps issuing separate statements.

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CC Docket No. 98-67

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