

Media Contact:

Mike Snyder, (202) 418-0997
michael.snyder@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release**FCC ACTS TO IMPROVE THE VIDEO RELAY SERVICE PROGRAM
& EXPAND OPTIONS FOR USERS**

WASHINGTON, May 9, 2019—The Federal Communications Commission today adopted new rules to improve Video Relay Service (VRS), which enables people with hearing and speech disabilities who use sign language to make telephone calls over broadband with a videophone. The Commission also takes steps to safeguard the program from waste, fraud, and abuse.

Today's action will expand VRS users' access to direct video communications with people who know sign language by enabling direct video calling between VRS users and customer support call centers in appropriate circumstances. Specifically, it permits qualified entities to enter video-capable customer support telephone numbers in the Telecommunications Relay Service Numbering Directory. This will make it possible for VRS users to make direct point-to-point video calls to customer support call centers and to speak directly with a sign-language-fluent customer support agent, without the need for an interpreter and at no cost to the program.

To protect against waste, fraud, and abuse in the Telecommunications Relay Service Fund, a fund that supports numerous relay services using contributions collected from telecom carriers and VoIP service providers, the Commission today voted to require validation of each caller's registration via the TRS Numbering Directory querying system.

Additionally, the new rules require VRS providers to register public and enterprise videophones in the TRS User Registration Database. Public videophones are available in places such as schools, hospitals, libraries, or airports. Enterprise videophones are maintained by businesses, organizations, government agencies, or other entities for use by employees.

Finally, the rules prohibit VRS providers from offering non-service-related inducements to encourage consumers to sign up for or use a VRS provider's service. Such inducements could be used to encourage unlawful or unnecessary participation and thus waste money better utilized elsewhere in the program.

In addition to the new rules, the FCC asked about possible improvements to the program through a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. For example, the Commission is seeking comment on a proposal to make permanent the Commission's pilot program that permits some VRS calls to be handled by interpreters working at home.

The agency is also taking public comment on whether to allow VRS providers to provide service to new users and users who are changing default service providers for up to two weeks

pending identity verification by the User Database, with compensation paid to the provider after verification is completed.

Lastly, the FCC is proposing requiring log-in procedures for individuals using enterprise and public videophones for VRS calls.

The FCC is committed to continuously reviewing the relay services program to improve access and quality of service for consumers as well as to improve the program's overall efficiency.

Action by the Commission May 9, 2019 by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 19-39). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O'Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks approving and issuing separate statements.

CG Docket Nos. 10-51, 03-123

###

Media Relations: (202) 418-0500 / ASL: (844) 432-2275 / TTY: (888) 835-5322 / Twitter: @FCC / www.fcc.gov

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. Cir. 1974).