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For Immediate Release

**FCC GIVES VIDEO RELAY SERVICE PROVIDERS FLEXIBILITY TO
HIRE ADDITIONAL ASL INTERPRETERS DURING PANDEMIC**

***Temporary Waiver of Staffing Rule Will Allow Service Providers to Tap Available
American Sign Language Contractors to Meet Increased Demand***

WASHINGTON, April 3, 2020— To ensure the uninterrupted availability of video relay service (VRS) during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Communications Commission today announced it is temporarily waiving specific restrictions on hiring contractors for American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services.

The temporary waiver applies to the Commission’s rule restricting VRS providers from contracting for video interpretation services with an entity that is not itself an eligible provider.

With increased VRS traffic levels and employee absences due to health concerns, school closures, and other restrictions imposed by state and local authorities, VRS providers continue to face a shortage of interpreters able to work as communications assistants. Allowing VRS providers additional flexibility to contract for ASL interpreting from other entities, such as providers of video remote interpreting, will help alleviate this shortage.

“It’s our duty to help ensure that VRS providers can continue to serve Americans with disabilities who rely on relay services to communicate,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “These extraordinary circumstances present unique challenges, and today’s temporary waiver gives providers flexibility to hire additional ASL interpreters to meet current service needs.”

The waiver, available [here](#), went into effective immediately and will extend until May 15, along with [an FCC order on emergency services for TRS](#) that went into effect on March 16.

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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. Cir. 1974).