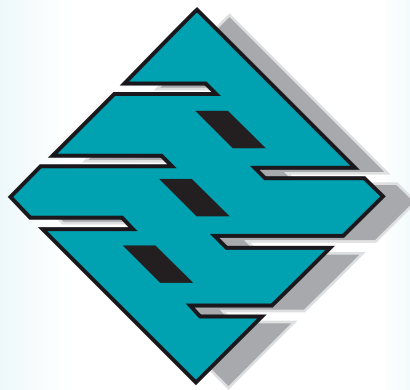


Michigan Relay Center



Advisory Board Annual Report

2008

Michigan Relay Center Advisory Board

This is the eighteenth Annual Report of the Michigan Relay Center (MRC) Advisory Board. The Advisory Board was established by Order of the Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) on May 21, 1990 in Case No. U-9117. Our on-going purpose is to assist and advise in the operation of the telecommunications relay service (TRS) for the State of Michigan. This service allows deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-impaired people to communicate with hearing people through the assistance of a third party or relay representative.

This report provides a synopsis of the MRC activities in 2008. Michigan TRS began on May 29, 1991 allowing deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-impaired individuals to call anyone, anywhere, at anytime. Expanded outreach programs presented to numerous groups and individuals have provided information on relay center activities and issues, and have aided in the development TRS has experienced over the years.

Costs of providing Michigan's TRS are included in this report.

On November 22, 2005, Governor Granholm signed Michigan's new Telecommunication Act, PA 235, which amended PA179 of 1991. The revised Section 315 on TRS expands the Advisory Board from three members to nine.

This past year, several new appointments were made on the Advisory Board. Twyla Niedfeldt now represents the Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DODHH). Dr. William Hampstead became the representative for Persons with Speech Impairment. In addition, Stacy Parker became our newest member replacing Rick Wolfe as a representative for Telecom Providers. The Board welcomes all of its new appointees.

The Michigan Relay Center Advisory Board met on four occasions in 2008: March 10th, June 9th, September 8th, and December 8th.

Congratulations to the MRC team on their eighteenth successful year of operation.

The MRC Advisory Board Members are as follows:

David Piasecki, Chairman – AT&T Michigan

Diana McKittrick, Vice Chairman – Michigan Deaf Association (MDA)

Robin Ancona – Commission

Twyla Niedfeldt – DODHH

Brenda Stimson Neubeck – Hearing Loss Association of Michigan

Paul Fuglie – Verizon

Stacy Parker – Comcast

Scott Stevenson – Telecommunications Association of Michigan (TAM)

Dr. William Hampstead – Persons with Speech Impairment

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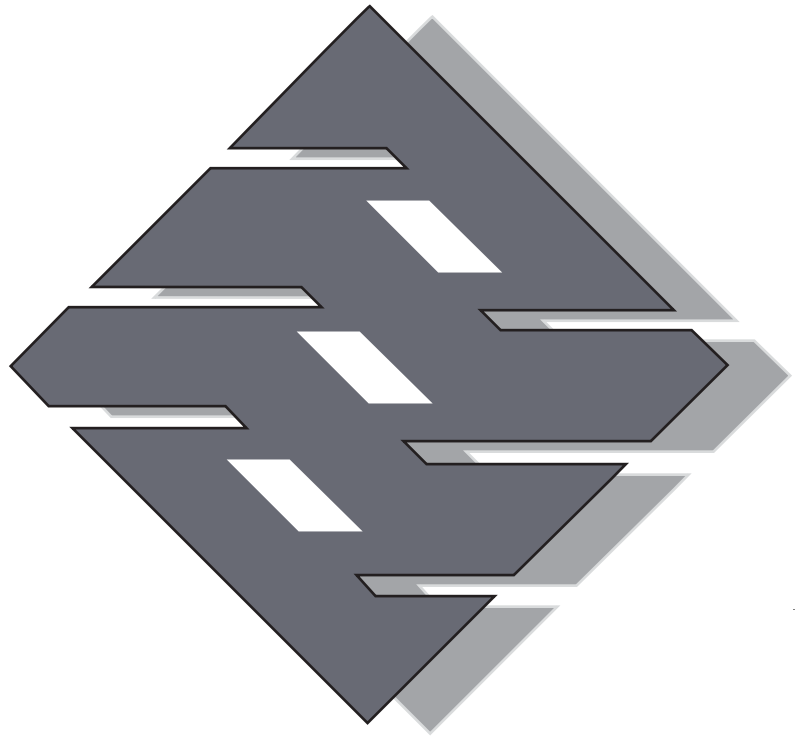
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Michigan Local Exchange Providers

AT&T Michigan provides Telecommunications Relay Service, (TRS) on behalf of all basic local exchange service (BLES) providers in the state of Michigan. As mandated by the Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission), all providers of BLES must share in the cost of providing TRS at the Michigan Relay Center.

The number of licensed BLES providers is steadily growing in Michigan. You can access the list of BLES providers at the Commission's web site, which can be found on the internet at: <http://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/0,1607,7-159-16372---,00.html>.

History of the MRC

The Michigan Relay Center (MRC) was established by Order of the Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) on March 13, 1990. The Commission ordered the local exchange carriers in Michigan to design and implement a Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) to provide communications for deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-impaired people in the State of Michigan. This system was to be operational by September 13, 1991. AT&T Michigan, with the concurrence of all other local exchange providers in the state, undertook the development and operation of the relay service.

The MRC design proceeded with the objective of providing the highest quality service possible. Input for the design of the system was gathered via the needs of the Deaf Community, visits to other relay centers, and experience from other vendors.

On May 29, 1991 the MRC began operation, marking the beginning of a new telecommunications era in Michigan. Individuals who had to rely on others to make a phone call for something as important as a call to their doctor, or as simple as ordering a pizza, are now able to be as independent as those who formerly made their calls.

On December 8, 1991 after approval by the MPSC, the first calls to points outside of the State of Michigan were completed through the MRC. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), MRC users can now call anywhere in the United States as well as anywhere in the world.

On November 6, 1992 the MPSC issued an Order adopting the MRC Advisory Board's recommendation to implement a program which requires each provider of basic local exchange service to provide a text telephone (TTY) device at cost to certified deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons. This Order specified that TTYs provided at cost meet certain minimum requirements. On November 26, 1996 the MPSC issued another Order adopting the MRC Advisory Board's recommendation for a "new" TTY order which supports advanced technology and enhanced telephone services for TTY users. Additional information can be found within the Order in MPSC Case No. U-10210.

On March 6, 2000 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) amended the Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) rules in Docket CC 98-67 to expand the kinds of relay services available to consumers with hearing and speech disabilities and to improve the quality of TRS. In particular, the Order required that Speech to Speech and Interstate Spanish Relay be made available by March 1, 2001. Other improvements and requirements of the Order included: ability to make pay per call calls, minimum typing speed of 60 words-per-minute (wpm) by the relay representative, faster answer performance, extended outreach to all callers for all forms of TRS, automatic transfer of emergency calls to 911, etc. In addition, 711 access to the state's relay center was mandated by the FCC to be made available by October 1, 2001.

History of the MRC - continued

On March 17, 2005, the MRC Advisory Board submitted an application to the MPSC requesting the current TRS provider, AT&T Michigan, be allowed to offer enhanced access to switched telecommunications networks through the use of Captioned Telephone Service (CapTel™) for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. The MPSC issued an order on June 30, 2005, granting the Advisory Board's application to allow the use of CapTel. CapTel is an advanced form of TRS targeted towards the needs of the hard-of-hearing customer that may want to see and hear what the other party is saying. The conversation of the other party is shown on the display window of the CapTel telephone device.

On November 22, 2005, Governor Granholm signed Michigan's new Telecommunication Act, PA 235, which amended PA179 of 1991. The revised Section 315 expands the Advisory Members from a three-member board to nine members. The representatives are as follows: One member shall be the chair of the commission or his or her designated representative. One member shall be the director of the division on deaf and hard of hearing within the department or his or her designated representative. One member shall be a deaf consumer appointed by the director of the department upon the recommendation of the Michigan deaf association. One member shall be a hard of hearing consumer appointed by the department upon the recommendation of Michigan self-help for hard of hearing¹. One member shall be a speech-impaired consumer appointed by the director of the department. Four members shall be appointed by the director of the department to represent telecommunication providers.

Further, the revised Section 315 requires that by no later than January 1, 2008, the board shall conduct a study and report to the governor and the house and senate standing committees with oversight of telecommunication issues on the ability for deaf, hard of hearing, and speech-impaired customers to access telecommunication services. The report shall include, but is not limited to, activities by the commission to ensure reasonable access, impediments to access, identification of activities in other states to improve access, and recommendations for legislation, if any. Pursuant to Section 315(13), the Michigan Telecommunications Relay Center Advisory Board submitted its report to the Governor and Legislature on December 28, 2007. You can view the report at http://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/0,1607,7-159-16372_17098---,00.html under Reports/Publications. Select Michigan Relay Center Advisory Board Report to the Legislature.

On July 1, 2006, AT&T Michigan began providing CapTel service to 100 users in Michigan, and is allowed to add up to 25 new users a month. By year end 2008, Michigan had 781 CapTel subscribers. It is expected that CapTel users will continue to grow. As described at <http://captionedtelephone.com>, CapTel is ideal for people with some degree of hearing loss. The CapTel telephone device works like any other telephone device with one important addition: It displays every word the caller says throughout the conversation. CapTel users can listen to the caller, and can also read the written captions in the CapTel's bright display window. For more information, visit the CapTel website.

¹ Self-Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH) is now Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Michigan's affiliation is HLA-MI.

How Relay Service Works

To use the relay system, a person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech-impaired uses a device called a TTY. The TTY user calls the MRC by either dialing 711² or 800-649-3777 to reach a relay representative. The representative calls the person with whom the TTY caller wishes to talk with. The caller types a message into the TTY, which the relay representative receives and "voices" to the person called. The representative then types the called party's response back to the caller.

Hearing persons or non-TTY users may also use the service to reach a TTY user by dialing 711 or the statewide 800 number. The caller tells the representative the area code, telephone number, and the name of the person they are calling. As the conversation is being relayed, the non-TTY user talks as though speaking directly to the TTY user. Relay representatives do not edit calls made through the relay. Center employees are forbidden to disclose any information from the calls, and no records of conversations are kept.

In addition to direct-dial local calls, users can make international calls, interstate and intrastate long distance calls, collect calls, calling card calls, calls billed to a third number, person-to-person calls, and calls from a hotel room. Some telephone service providers may provide toll discounts to those individuals who use a TTY.

Effective November 1995, local calls from a coin telephone made through a TRS center are provided at no cost to the person making the call. The ability to use coins at pay telephones for TRS users is still not technologically feasible. Toll and long distance calls made through the MRC from a pay phone can be charged to a calling card or can be collect and will cost no more than the same call using coins. Brochures with instructions are routinely distributed through MRC outreach efforts and are available upon request.

In 1997, the MRC implemented Customer Profile Service (CPS). CPS is a software upgrade that enables relay representatives to create personalized customer profiles that speed-up call processing. With the CPS enhancement, MRC customers can create their own speed dial list of frequently called numbers, establish a billing preference, pre-select a telephone carrier of their choice, as well as a host of other time saving services. If you are a customer of the MRC and would like to have your own CPS, please contact the MRC supervisor desk on 800-432-0762 for more information.

Beginning December 18, 2000, 900 pay-per-use calling became available. In addition, the MRC implemented Speech to Speech English/Spanish Relay and Spanish to Spanish Relay on February 6, 2001. Customers can dial 711 and be connected to these enhanced TRS services. Or, to obtain the toll free numbers for these additional relay services and to find out more about the MRC, you can access the MRC web site at www.michiganrelay.com. An array of information is provided on use of the MRC, TTY equipment, etc. Also, for information, requests, or to provide comment regarding the MRC, you may reach them through their email address at mrc@michiganrelay.com.

²Beginning October 1, 2001, 7-1-1 Access to TRS centers nationwide was made available per a federal mandate.

Outreach and Other Efforts of the MRC – 2008

The goal of the Michigan Relay Center (MRC) is not only to provide ongoing educational and informative Outreach Programs on Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) to users of the MRC, but also to inform all consumers of its purpose and usefulness in everyday life. The MRC, through their outreach efforts, took great strides in targeting a variety of people who are not only Deaf, but who may be Hard-of-Hearing or Speech-Impaired. Many vehicles of communication are utilized in outreach efforts. Through the distribution of brochures, business cards, VCO/HCO/Speech-to-Speech instructions, etc., the MRC made contact with approximately 1,075 people in 2008. Also, community participation and contacts were made by AT&T Michigan Outreach Manager, Kenya Lowe, at the following locations and events:

Michigan Coalition for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Deaf C.A.N. Board meetings; Michigan Deaf Association Board meetings; United Way 2-1-1; Participation with the Miss Deaf Michigan Pageant Association; Blue Cross Blue Shield-Southfield; Home visits to assist with VCO phones and Captel phones in Detroit Bloomfield Hills, and Grand Rapids; Oakland Community College at Orchard Ridge Campus; Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Rules Promulgation Committee meetings; Dort Elementary School in Roseville, Michigan; CW 50's Street Beat; National Association of the Deaf in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Customer Input – 2008

Customer input continues to be a very important element in determining the quality of service the Michigan Relay Center (MRC) provides to its customers. Customer input helps the MRC measure customer satisfaction and is carefully considered when developing methods and training within the MRC.

The MRC has a formal process to receive input directly from customers. MRC customers can call the supervisor desk at 800-432-0762 (24-hour line). The toll free numbers are accessible for both TTY and Voice Callers. Calls are taken from customers who wish to give a commendation to the relay center as well as to discuss any particular relay issues. Immediate action is taken to address any concerns.

The MRC received over 2,000 customer contacts in 2008. Of these, 99.9% were satisfied with their service from the MRC or service had exceeded their expectations.

Below are some commendations the MRC received in 2008 from customers regarding their service:

The Rep did a very good job! She was so kind and pleasant!

The Voice customer wanted to say that the Rep really overdid herself- patient, understanding, and really really GREAT!

The Rep had a very good pacing of her sentences which made the call run smoothly.

The Rep was patient, kind and helpful!

The Rep was the Best!

The Rep was Helpful!

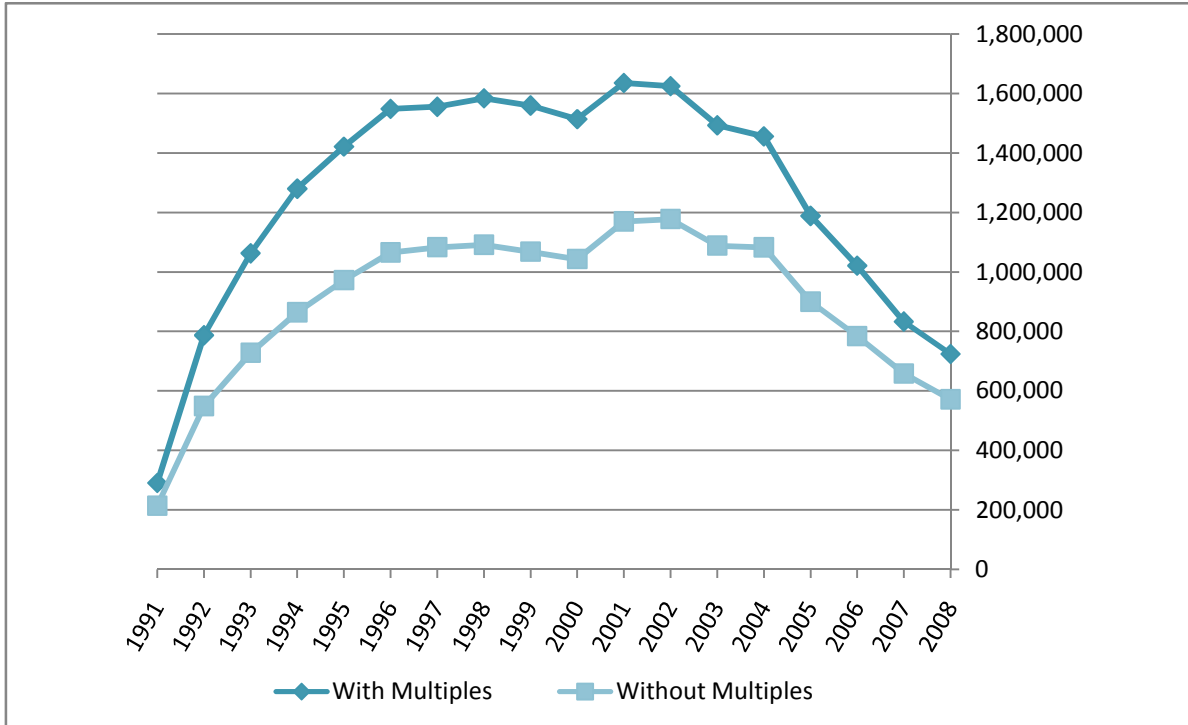
The Rep was very helpful and polite!

The Rep was very competent when handling my call!

The Rep did a tremendous job and really helped me out a lot!

The Rep was so sweet to me on the call- Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

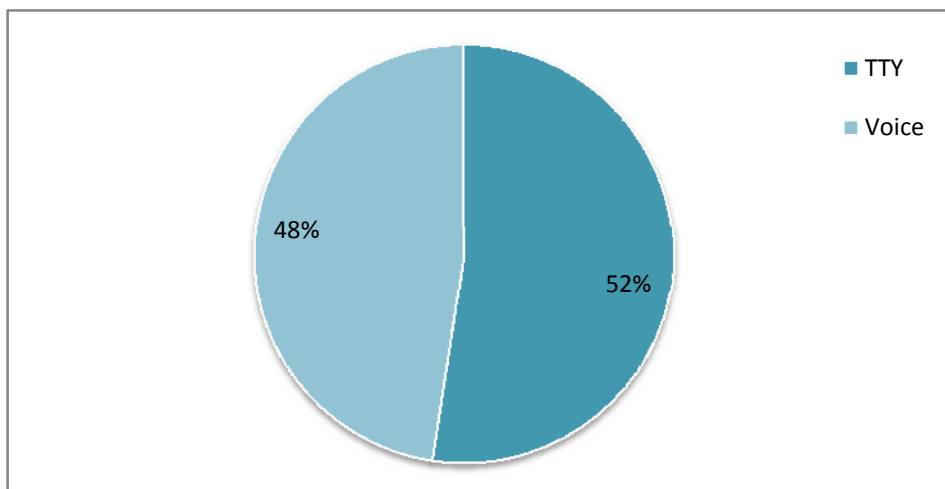
MRC 2008 Incoming Call Volumes With and Without Multiples



The MRC began operation in May, 1991 and ended the year with incoming calls reaching over 200,000. Although traditional TRS continues to experience a decline in volumes, the MRC concluded another successful year of operation in 2008 and handled nearly 725,000 incoming calls with multiples. To date, almost 22.6 million incoming call requests have been handled by the MRC. Traditional Relay is trending down as other TRS services, such as, IP Relay, CapTel and VRS are being used.

Note: Multiples are a single incoming call requiring more than one outgoing call.

MRC 2008 CALL ORIGINATION



In 2008, MRC Calls originating from TTY customers represented 52% and Voice customers represented 48%.

FINANCIAL STATISTICS

2008 Michigan Relay Center Provider Expenses:	Expense	Expense
1-800-Reconex, Inc.	\$454	
Ace Telephone Company of Michigan, Inc.	9,845	
ACN Communication Services, Inc.	10,166	
Allendale Telephone Company	10,735	
AT&T Communications of Michigan	192,751	
AT&T Michigan (formerly SBC Michigan)	4,904,906	
Baraga Telephone Company	8,771	
Barry County Telephone Company	13,036	
Blanchard Telephone Association	2,446	
Bloomington Telephone Company	3,468	
Carr Telephone Company	3,247	
Century Telephone Midwest, Inc.	47,485	
Century Telephone of MI, Inc.	100,729	
Century Telephone of Northern MI, Inc.	5,335	
Chapin Telephone Company	1,234	
Chatham Telephone Company	5,295	
Chippewa County Telephone Company	2,874	
CIMCO Communications, Inc.	1,295	
Cinergy Communications Company	33	
Climax Telephone Company	2,497	
CMC Telecom	14,818	
Comcast Phone of Michigan, LLC	217,504	
Communication Corporation of Michigan	8,309	
Contel of the South, Inc.	81,458	
Deerfield Farmers' Telephone Company	4,266	
Drenthe Telephone Company	1,435	
Easton Telecom, Inc.	1,487	
Excel Telecommunications, Inc.	1,244	
Focal Communications Corporation	40,130	
Frontier Communications of MI, Inc.	41,900	
Global Connection Inc. of America	3,005	
Granite Telecommunications, Inc.	26,858	
Hiawatha Telephone Company	10,778	
2008 Michigan Relay Center Expense:		
Island Telephone Company		\$2,390
Kaleva Telephone Company		4,339
Lennon Telephone Company		2,342
Lightyear Network Solutions, LLC		590
MCImetro (MCI)		222,208
McLeodUSA (Phone MI)		61,392
Midway Telephone Company		1,485
Midwestern Telecommunications, Inc.		327
New Access Communications, Inc.		6,173
Nexus Communications, Inc.		14,772
Ogden Telephone Company		744
Ontonagon County Telephone Company		7,156
Peninsula Telephone Company		2,556
Pigeon Telephone Company		6,221
Planet Access		314
Sage Telecom, Inc.		153,152
Sand Creek Telephone Company		2,085
Shiawassee Telephone Company		10,767
Springport Telephone Company		3,197
Sprint Communications Company		208
Talk America		318,399
TCG Detroit		31,547
TDS Metrocom LLC		192,299
Trinsic Communications, Inc.		16,661
Upper Peninsula Telephone Company		11,552
VarTec Telecom, Inc.		2,600
Verizon North		1,054,150
Waldron Telephone Company		972
Westphalia Telephone Company		1,941
Winn Telephone Company		1,378
Wolverine Telephone Company		17,393
XO Communications Service, Inc.		101,552
Total:		\$8,032,658