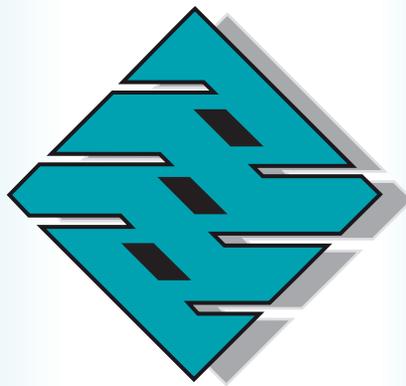


# **Michigan Relay Center**



**Advisory Board Annual Report**

**2007**

# Michigan Relay Center Advisory Board

This is the seventeenth 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 2007. 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 growth 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.

The Michigan Relay Center Advisory Board met on four occasions in 2007: March 13th, June 13th, September 20th, December 10th.

On August 29, 2007, Mr. Orjiakor Isiogu was appointed Chairman of the Commission. Ms. Robin Ancona has since replaced Mr. Isiogu on this Board. Further, Mr. Chris Hunter retired from the Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHOH). A successor for the DDHOH Board Member has not yet been appointed. The Board would like to take this time to thank Chairman Isiogu and Mr. Hunter for their valued contribution to MRC initiatives and to wish them well in their new endeavors. The Board welcomes Ms. Ancona and looks forward to her participation.

Congratulations to the MRC team on their seventeenth 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

Vacant – DDHOH

Brenda Stimpson Neubeck – Hard of Hearing Community

Paul Fuglie – Verizon

Rick Wolfe - Comcast

Scott Stevenson, Telecommunications Association of Michigan (TAM)

Vacant - Speech Impaired Representative

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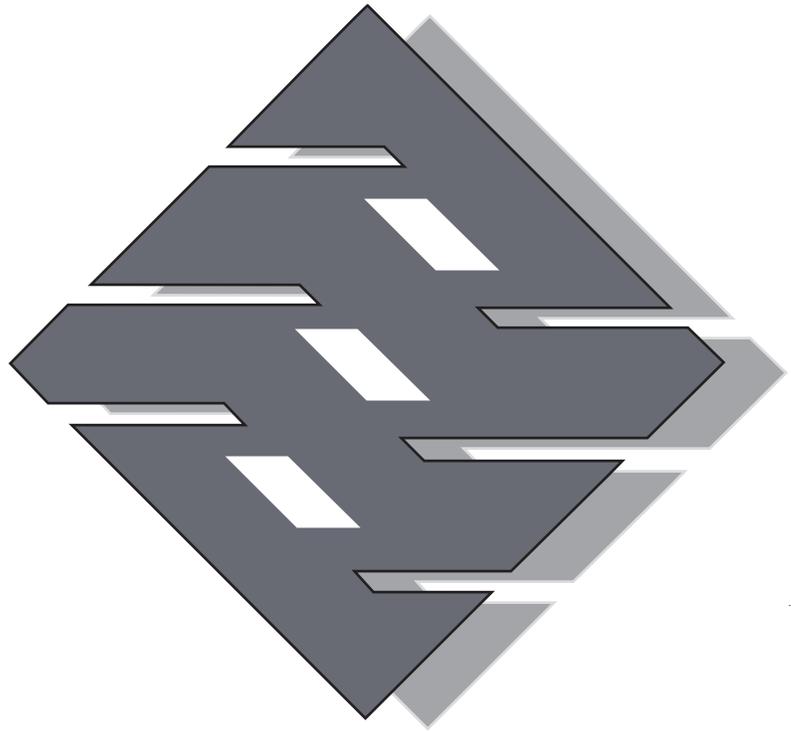
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## Michigan Local Exchange Providers

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/0,1607,7-159-16372-123542--,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 June 17, 2003, the FCC issued another order in the same docket, requiring further enhancements to TRS, such as: Two-line Voice Carry Over (VCO) and Hearing Carry Over (HCO), HCO to TTY, VCO to TTY, and VCO to VCO. These along with Answering Machine Message Retrieval, Call Release (TTY to TTY), Speed Dialing, and Three-way Calling, had a required implementation date of February 24, 2004. The MRC has complied with the above listed FCC initiatives.

On March 17, 2005, the majority of 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 hearing. 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.

On July 1, 2006, AT&T Michigan began providing CapTel service to 100 users in Michigan. By year end 2007, Michigan had over 450 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.

# 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 711<sup>1</sup> 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](http://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](mailto:mrc@michiganrelay.com).

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<sup>1</sup>Beginning 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 – 2007

The goal of the MRC is not only to provide ongoing educational and informative Outreach Programs on 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 and Speech-to-Speech instructions, etc., the MRC made contact with approximately 470 people in 2007.

In addition, community participation and contacts were made by AT&T Michigan's 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; Mercy Hospital; Michigan Department of Public Health- Lansing; Captel Presentation at Hearing Loss Association of Kalamazoo; Outreach in Burton, Michigan; Outreach in Brighton, Michigan; Plymouth Police Department; St. Joseph Hospital; Participation with the Miss Deaf Michigan Pageant Association and Michigan Deaf Association Conference; Partnership Blue Cross Blue Shield-Southfield; Home visits to assist with VCO phones and Captel phones in Detroit, and Bloomfield Hills; "Day at the Capitol for Deaf and HH Michiganders"-Lansing; Oakland Community College at Orchard Ridge Campus*

## Customer Input – 2007

Customer input continues to be a very important element in determining the quality of service the 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 1,400 customer contacts in 2007. Of these, 99.3% were satisfied with their service from the MRC or service had exceeded their expectations.

Below are some commendations the MRC received in 2007 from customers regarding their service:

*All the Reps did a Good Job! I am so glad we have this service!*

*The Rep was extremely friendly and helpful.*

*The Rep was very patient, and she provided an outstanding service.*

*The Rep was very kind.*

*The Rep gave very good service.*

*The Rep was very professional.*

*The Rep was cooperative.*

*The Rep had wonderful voice inflection.*

*The Rep did a lot of hard work, she is an excellent Rep.*

*All the Reps do a Super job!*

*The Rep was very nice while making all my calls.*

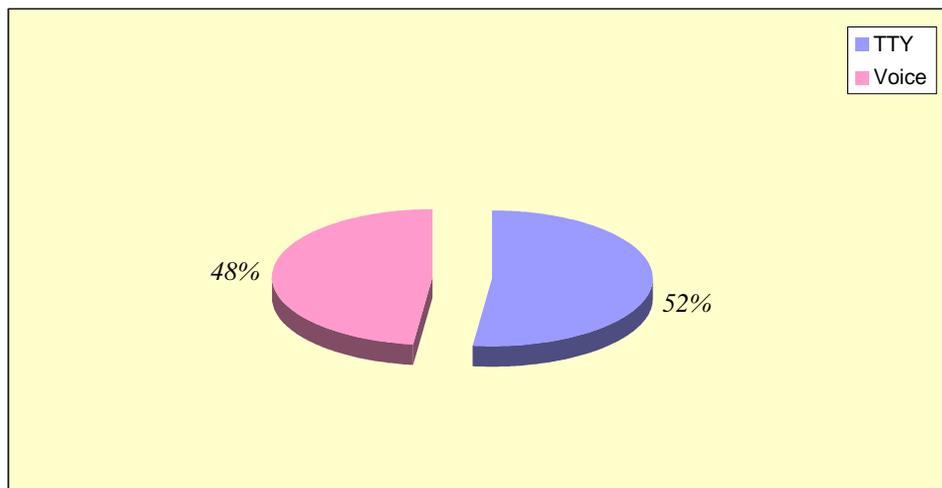
## MRC 2007 Incoming Call Volumes With and Without Multiples



The MRC began operation in May, 1991 and ended the year with incoming calls reaching over 200,000. Though traditional TRS continues to experience a decline in volumes, the MRC concluded another successful year of operation in 2007 and handled nearly 834,000 incoming calls with multiples. To date, almost 22 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 2007 CALL ORIGINATION



In 2007, MRC Calls originating from TTY customers represented 52%, while Voice customers represented about 48%.

## FINANCIAL STATISTICS

2007 Michigan Relay Center Provider Expenses:	Expense	2007 Michigan Relay Center Expense:	Expense
1-800-Reconex, Inc.	\$481	Island Telephone Company	\$2,313
Ace Telephone Company of Michigan, Inc.	10,109	Kaleva Telephone Company	4,424
ACN Communication Services, Inc.	12,611	Lennon Telephone Company	2,448
Allendale Telephone Company	10,863	Lightyear Network Solutions, LLC	869
AT&T Communications of Michigan	367,932	MCImetro (MCI)	274,819
AT&T Michigan (formerly SBC Michigan)	5,042,626	McLeodUSA (Phone MI)	119,781
Baraga Telephone Company	8,700	Midway Telephone Company	1,430
Barry County Telephone Company	12,595	Midwestern Telecommunications, Inc.	500
Blanchard Telephone Association	2,387	New Access Communications, Inc.	4,262
Bloomington Telephone Company	3,696	Nexus Communications, Inc.	10,295
Carr Telephone Company	3,278	Ogden Telephone Company	798
Century Telephone Midwest, Inc.	48,535	Ontonagon County Telephone Company	6,999
Century Telephone of MI, Inc.	103,892	Peninsula Telephone Company	2,579
Century Telephone of Northern MI, Inc.	5,492	Pigeon Telephone Company	6,370
Chapin Telephone Company	1,231	Planet Access	305
Chatham Telephone Company	5,355	Sage Telecom, Inc.	179,990
Chippewa County Telephone Company	2,787	Sand Creek Telephone Company	2,059
CIMCO Communications, Inc.	2,156	Shiawassee Telephone Company	12,049
Cinergy Communications Company	95	Springport Telephone Company	3,314
Climax Telephone Company	2,532	Sprint Communications Company	6,724
CMC Telecom	9,586	Talk America	401,234
Coast-to-Coast Telecom, Inc.	779	TCG Detroit	33,046
Communication Corporation of Michigan	9,114	TDS Metrocom LLC	196,999
Contel of the South, Inc.	86,217	Trinsic Communications, Inc.	18,436
Deerfield Farmers' Telephone Company	4,328	Upper Peninsula Telephone Company	12,628
Drenthe Telephone Company	1,360	VarTec Telecom, Inc.	4,405
Easton Telecom, Inc.	2,223	Verizon North	1,110,796
Excel Telecommunications, Inc.	2,407	Waldron Telephone Company	980
Focal Communications Corporation	28,586	Westphalia Telephone Company	1,945
Frontier Communications of MI, Inc.	42,520	Winn Telephone Company	1,398
Global Connection Inc. of America	5,195	Wolverine Telephone Company	19,240
Granite Telecommunications, Inc.	21,099	XO Communications Service, Inc.	100,650
Hiawatha Telephone Company	11,475	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$8,416,321</b>