



DeafHope

Video Relay Service (VRS)

The Deaf community has embraced new videophone technology. This technology allows Deaf people to use their home computer or TV (depending on the system they use), a camera and a high speed internet connection to communicate using ASL. Deaf users contact each other directly from one videophone to another. They see each other on their screen and can sign smoothly.

Deaf people can also use their videophone to access Video Relay Service (VRS). This is a free service provided by the government so that Deaf people have equal access to calling hearing people and companies. The Deaf caller connects to a Video Relay Service company, and a sign language interpreter from a call center somewhere in the United States appears on their screen. The Deaf person gives the interpreter the number of the hearing person they want to call. The interpreter uses a telephone to connect the call and explains to the hearing person that they will be interpreting for a Deaf caller. The Deaf person and the interpreter see each other and use sign language, while the interpreter and the hearing person use a phone connection to talk. The Deaf and hearing person continue their call as usual (using first person language) while the interpreter is a bridge to facilitate communication.

This mode of communication is highly preferable to using a TTY to make calls, since Deaf people can use their natural language (ASL) instead of written English. Written English is often very difficult for Deaf people to use, especially if they were born in another country, have developmental delays, or did not receive equal access to education. Using written English on a TTY also means all intonation and "personality" in the conversation is lost. Using an interpreter to make calls means that communication proceeds much more smoothly.

For more information about VRS contact the following providers:

Sprint VRS	www.sprintvrs.com
Hands On VRS	www.hovrs.com
Hawk Relay	www.hawkrelay.com
Sorenson VRS	www.sorensonvrs.com