



New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing

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Video Relay Service and Video Remote Interpreting

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505.383.6530 Voice/TTY

505.435.9319 Videophone for Sign Language Users

Video Relay Service (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) are often confused. While their names and acronyms are similar and they both involve the use of video technology, their applications and the rules surrounding their use have significant differences.

Video Relay Service (VRS)

Video Relay Service is a service that allows Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals to place phone calls to individuals who can hear, similar to the TTY relay service. In the case of VRS, the Deaf or Hard of Hearing person uses a videophone to call a signed language interpreter in a call center who then interprets the call between the Deaf or Hard of Hearing person and the hearing person. There is no charge to the users of this service, and the goal is to provide functional equivalence to those who could otherwise not use the telephone. The Deaf or Hard of Hearing community is now primarily using VRS instead of the traditional TTY relay because it allows them to communicate in American Sign Language rather than in typed English. Calls are completed faster, and communication is more natural for everyone involved in the call. VRS is available on stationary videophones, computers with cameras, and on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Several companies are VRS providers, and the service is funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with surcharges applied to all telephone lines. An important limitation regarding VRS is that it cannot be used by two people in the same room – it is only for telephone communications. For more information on VRS, see the FCC website: www.fcc.gov/guides/video-relay-services.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

Video Remote Interpreting is an alternative to having an interpreter physically present. The meeting participants connect with an interpreter in a remote location using video conferencing technology and an internet connection. VRI is not appropriate for all situations, but can be very useful and more cost effective in some circumstances, such as brief meetings. Several companies provide VRI services using a broad range of technology platforms. Charges for the interpreting services are by the minute or portion of the hour. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Standard Practice Paper is available here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3DKvZMfFLdTk4QnM3T1JRR1U/view>, and more information can also be obtained on the National Association of the Deaf website: <https://nad.org/issues/technology/vri>