

What is VRS and IP Relay?

Video Relay Service (VRS) is a variation of traditional TRS (telecommunication relay service). TRS users call or receive calls on ttys (text telephones) and Communication Assistants (CA) relay back and forth between the tty user and the speaking caller.



In a VRS Call, the CA is a skilled sign language interpreter referred to as a VI (Video Interpreter) who can see the video caller via a video device and an internet connection. The VI interprets and relays between the ASL (American Sign Language) user and the speaking person.



VRS is a lot faster and free-flowing than traditional TRS because there is no need to wait for a person to finish typing and give the GA (go ahead) before you can clarify or comment. VRS also enables smooth communication regardless of signing style. Voice Carry Over (VCO) a feature that allows a person who wants to speak for themselves but still receive visual communication to do so is also possible with VRS. The snag for E911 calls made through VRS, though, is the possibility of a disconnection somewhere in the communication chain due to the instability of the internet and the number of connections in place.

IP Relay (internet protocol relay) is very similar to traditional relay with the exception of the type of device being used (any computer, personal digital assistant (PDA), web-capable telephone or other internet capable device) and the connection mode (not PSTN, but the internet). VCO is also available to IP Relay users who wish to speak directly to and be heard by the other party. Because IP Relay is text based (like traditional TRS) the process can be more time consuming and less spontaneous. The connection via the internet however, poses the same issues as it does with a VRS call.