

Welcome to GEORGIA RELAY PARTNER. This guide is designed for employers and includes an overview of Georgia Relay and detailed calling instructions. For your employees, we have created a separate Employee's Guide, which you can duplicate and distribute to new and existing employees as part of your employee-training program. By reading their Employee's Guide, your employees will learn how to use Georgia Relay to meet the needs of your deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-disabled customers.

### Background information

In 1990, Title IV of the Americans With Disabilities Act was passed, requiring all states to implement a Telecommunications Relay Service to meet the needs of their deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-disabled citizens. The Georgia Public Service Commission is responsible for the establishment, implementation, administration and promotion of Georgia Relay, which satisfies this mandate by ensuring all Georgians have access to useful, reliable options and features that enable them to communicate by phone. To offer these features, Georgia Relay works closely with its service provider, Hamilton Relay. (Hamilton Relay was selected through a competitive bidding process and is under contract to the commission.)

Since Georgia Relay is a public service, users pay no setup charges or fees for local calls—even for calls made from public and text telephone pay phones—and there is no limit on the number or length of calls a user may make or receive. What's more, anyone can initiate a Georgia Relay call, simply by dialing 7-1-1.

Georgia Relay makes your business easily accessible to anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled. The service also gives you the opportunity to re-establish contact with customers who may have developed hearing loss or a speech disability.

### Who uses Georgia Relay?

Georgia Relay is traditionally thought of as a phone system for the deaf, but that is not completely true. There are many factors that prevent people from using a standard telephone, and Georgia Relay has a variety of features in place to meet these telecommunication needs. By learning how to use Georgia Relay, your business will be able to connect with ALL consumers in Georgia by telephone.

### Georgia Relay features

Georgia Relay offers a range of calling options to meet the needs of its users:

- A. **Traditional Relay:** Designed for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled and prefer to type and read their phone conversations.
- B. **VCO (Voice Carry-Over):** An option for people who can speak clearly, yet have hearing loss significant enough to keep them from understanding what is being said over a standard telephone.
- C. **HCO (Hearing Carry-Over):** For people with significant speech disabilities who can hear what is being said over the phone.

- D. Speech-To-Speech Service (STS):** Created for people with mild-to-moderate speech disabilities who can hear what is being said over the phone.
- E. Businesses, Families and Friends:** To reach a Georgia Relay user, just dial 7-1-1 or 1-800-255-0135 (Voice) on your standard phone. (See “Making a Georgia Relay Call”)

## Receiving a Georgia Relay call

You may answer the phone sometime at work and hear a Georgia Relay CA (Communications Assistant) on the line. When this happens, just follow the steps below:

1. If you want the call to begin with no explanation of Relay, say “Go Ahead.” If you want an explanation of Relay before the call begins, say “What is a Relay call?”. The CA will respond with something like, “The caller is using our service to contact you. I’ll be voicing what they type and I’ll be typing what you say and anything else I hear.”
2. The call will proceed with the CA voicing everything the text user types and typing everything you say back to the text user. Remember to speak slowly and directly to the other person, not to the CA.
3. When you are finished speaking, say “Go Ahead.” The CA will then voice the typed words of the text telephone user back to you.
4. To ensure smooth call handling, see the “Tips” section of this guide.

## Making a Georgia Relay call

1. Dial 7-1-1\* or 1-800-255-0135 (Voice) to reach Georgia Relay.
2. Give the CA the telephone number of the customer you want to call.
3. Once the CA has connected you to the person you are calling, begin speaking as you would during a regular telephone conversation. The CA will type everything you say to the text telephone user. (Remember to speak slowly and clearly to the person you are calling, not to the CA.)
4. When you are finished speaking, say “Go Ahead.” The CA will then voice the typed words of the text telephone user back to you.
5. To ensure smooth call handling, see the “Tips” section of this guide.

\*see “PBX systems and 7-1-1”

## Tips

- ✓ **Dial 7-1-1.**  
To make a Georgia Relay call, just dial 7-1-1 from anywhere in Georgia.
- ✓ **When Georgia Relay calls, don’t hang up.**  
The person calling you is a deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-disabled customer and is using Georgia Relay to contact your business.
- ✓ **Say “Go Ahead” after each thought.**  
Remember that the CA must type everything you say, so try to speak slowly and clearly. It is not necessary to speak loud. When the CA says “Go Ahead” to you, it’s your turn to respond.

✓ **Speak directly to your customer, not to the CA.**

The CA is not a part of the conversation and will not acknowledge you if you try to speak to him or her. Talk in first person and pretend the CA is not there.

✓ **The CA will type everything that is heard.**

To ensure equal access, CAs will type everything they hear, including background noises and voice intonations. Your words will be typed exactly as you say them.

✓ **Be patient.**

Georgia Relay calls take a few minutes longer than regular calls, so please be patient.

✓ **It's easy to return a Georgia Relay call.**

If you need to return a call from a Georgia Relay user, just dial 7-1-1 or 1-800-255-0135 (Voice) and give the CA the phone number you wish to call. If you need help, ask the CA for assistance.

## **Language differences**

Many people who are deaf use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. This is a visual language that is not based on standard English, so ASL users often have difficulty communicating in typed English via a text telephone. If you are having trouble understanding the content of a Relay conversation, ask the CA for an ASL translator, who will translate the ASL user's typed words into standard English for you. He or she also will translate your words back into ASL for the Relay user.

## **You have control of the call**

As a Georgia Relay user, you have control of the call. This means that if you are not satisfied with the CA for any reason, you may request another CA or ask to speak to a supervisor. You do not have to offer any explanations for this request. When placing or receiving a Relay call, it's a good idea to write down the CA's number (this is given to you at the beginning and end of each call), along with the date and time of the call. Providing us with this information will enable us to better address your concerns. In order to maintain complete confidentiality and transparency, CAs will not divulge their names. We recommend that you take care of any concerns you may have while you are connected to Georgia Relay.

## **\*PBX systems and 7-1-1**

Many office buildings use a centralized phone system called a Private Branch Exchange (PBX). PBX systems typically need to be reprogrammed to permit 7-1-1 dialing—a simple procedure that can be performed by the telecommunications coordinator of your office building. If you have any questions about this procedure, contact the Georgia Public Service Commission at 1-866-787-6710 (Voice).

## **Long-distance charges**

Long-distance calls between Georgia and other U.S. locations will be placed by the CA and billed to the caller's designated phone service carrier according to his or her selected rate plan. International calls (English-to-English, Spanish-to-Spanish only) will be handled in a similar manner.

## Frequently asked questions about deafness and Georgia Relay

**1. How did people who are deaf communicate with businesses before Relay services were mandated by law?**

Before Relay services were established in 1991, deaf and hard-of-hearing persons had to rely on friends or family members to make phone calls for them. The implementation of nationwide Relay services was an important first step toward equal telecommunications access for all people.

**2. How does a deaf person know when the telephone is ringing?**

A deaf person is alerted to a ringing telephone via a flashing-light system installed in his or her home or office.

**3. My business has a dedicated text telephone access number. Why do I still receive Relay calls on my business' voice line?**

TTY users often report that when calling a business' dedicated text telephone line, the phone is answered by a machine or by a person who does not know how to converse with the caller. For this reason, a TTY user may choose to call your business' voice line.

**4. I forgot to get the phone number of a customer who called my business through Georgia Relay. Can I call the Communications Assistant back and ask for the customer's number?**

No. By law, to assure confidentiality of all calls, no records are kept. Once a call has ended, there is no way to retrieve any information that was exchanged during the call.

### Learn more

To learn more about making or receiving Georgia Relay calls, contact the Georgia Public Service Commission at 1-866-787-6710 (Voice) or visit [www.GeorgiaRelay.org](http://www.GeorgiaRelay.org). If you have a specific question or concern regarding Georgia Relay service, call Hamilton Relay Customer Service at 1-866-694-5824 (Voice/TTY).



The Georgia Public Service Commission is responsible for the establishment, implementation, administration and promotion of Georgia Relay. Georgia Relay is funded by a monthly surcharge on the state's residential and business access lines.