



January 1, 2009

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President
Senate of Maryland
H-107, State House
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Michael E. Busch, Speaker
House of Delegates
H-101, State House
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Dear President Miller and Speaker Busch:

In accordance with § 3A-503(d) of the State Finance and Procurement Article, I am pleased to submit the annual Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) report for calendar year 2008.

GABTR meets with the Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) staff three times a year and stays in contact through our liaison, the TAM Director and outreach staff on a regular basis. The Board is consulted regarding TAM programs and outreach provided to the citizens of Maryland. In addition to receiving reports and attending meetings, the members also dedicate personal time to the performance of their duties.

Examples of GABTR member involvement over the past year are: outreach to various Speech Disability Groups, working with the TAM Outreach Team to gain access to the Johns Hopkins Listening Center for persons with cochlear implants, working with veterans with hearing loss, working with social organizations to spread awareness of the various Maryland Relay features and services, involvement with E911 list serve, and attending presentations of Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) by the TAM outreach team at senior centers in Alleghany County. The Board is also working on a pilot project to create public service announcements about Maryland Relay's programs and services.

The following are some of the highlights from the past year as reported to the Board by the TAM office.

The TAM office works closely with the State Department of Aging as well as the various county Offices on Aging in a cooperative effort to educate Maryland's senior population that, with CTS, loss of hearing does not have to equate to loss of telephone use.

The Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program continues to meet the needs of qualified citizens who require specialized consumer equipment to make telephone calls. The distribution program provides free amplified phones, ring signalers, captioned telephones, text telephones, and other assistive devices to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, speech or mobility disabled. MAT customers receive free assessments at any of six independent evaluation centers throughout the State to ensure that the appropriate equipment is provided. During calendar year 2008, TAM hired a full time evaluator to work in the Baltimore office. Having our newest evaluation center conveniently located near the metro, light rail, and other mass transit services, allows an ever increasing number of Maryland citizens to be served.

Outreach for the various TAM programs is not limited to older or disabled audiences. The TAM staff reaches out to Maryland's younger citizens by providing classroom education programs, participation in dAP (disAbility Programs), and by introducing students K-12 and beyond to persons with disabilities. These programs teach ways to communicate and can provide a comfort level with others who are not "just like me." TAM's outreach team, with its multi-pronged approach, strives to keep Maryland Citizens connected and independent; even if using the telephone has become a problem due to hearing, speech, sight, cognitive, or mobility loss.

TAM staff continues to participate in emergency preparedness drills and workshops, educate the public on safety issues related to Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS), and stay in contact with State and local emergency preparedness teams. Ongoing training and information sessions are conducted by TAM to assist 9-1-1 Centers with compliance issues related to 9-1-1 services for Relay users in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In an ongoing effort to ensure that the Relay Center service provider meets or exceeds the goals of the TRS contract, independent contractors conduct quarterly quality assurance audits. The results indicate that Maryland Relay answered 96 percent of all calls within 10 seconds. This exceeds the federal requirement of answering 85 percent of all incoming calls within 10 seconds.

GABTR looks forward to working with the TAM office to continue to provide exemplary services to the citizens of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Mitchell D. Travers
Chair

cc: The Honorable Elliot H. Schlanger, Secretary, DoIT
Dr. Simon Powell, Policy Analyst, DLS