

CONNECTION

FALL 2025



Telecommunications
Access of Maryland

PROGRAMS:



Maryland Relay

Dial 7-1-1

A service for Marylanders who have
difficulty using a standard telephone.

MDRelay.org



**Maryland Accessible
Telecommunications**

Equipment Distribution Program

This program provides accessible
telecommunications equipment for
Maryland residents ages three
and older who are Deaf, hard of
hearing, DeafBlind, or are living
with limited speech, mobility,
or cognitive abilities. MAT also
oversees the Communication
Facilitator (CF) service for
individuals who are DeafBlind.

MDMAT.org

Communication Accessibility Summit Recap

Learn more about the successful
event on page 4.

Your Go-To Fall Relay Service

Take the flow-chart quiz
on page 9!

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) Staff News



Jane Hager



One of Jane's favorite memories,
Deaf Community Surf Day

Celebrating Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) Specialist Jane Hager's Time at TAM

Join the TAM team in congratulating Jane Hager on her recent retirement! After eight years as a MAT specialist, Jane is set to retire from TAM this fall. Her love for assisting customers has been apparent since her start in 2017 and will be missed. Let's take a look back on Jane's time at TAM and relive her favorite memories during her career as a MAT specialist.

*"It was a wonderful opportunity to come together as a
community to cheer each other on and share a passion
that's fun and builds relationships."*

Jane Hager, MAT Specialist,
sharing her favorite TAM memory, Deaf Community Surf Day

Out of all of Jane's favorite memories working as a MAT specialist, two stand out from the rest. In 2022, Jane collaborated with MAT Manager Kevin Steffy and Laurel Harrington to brainstorm an event dedicated to socializing, accessibility, and surfing—and from that, Deaf Community Surf Day in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, was born. The event was fun and memorable for Jane, as surf instructors, ASL interpreters, and surfers with different severities of hearing loss all gathered on the beach to do what they love.

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Celebrating MAT Specialist Jane Hager's Time at TAM, continued

"It was a wonderful opportunity to come together as a community to cheer each other on and share a passion that's fun and builds relationships," says Jane.

Another collaboration that turned out to be a stand-out moment in Jane's career was when the University of Maryland Extension Marylanders Online worked with MAT in 2023 to better meet the digital needs of the Low Vision and Blind Community. This led to the development of the Talk, Text, and Train Program, which was a multi-month project that facilitated bi-weekly technology training sessions for individuals with low vision and blindness. "To have worked with such a dedicated group of passionate and talented trainers was a definite highlight of my time with MAT," she shares.



Following her retirement, Jane plans to travel and develop a consulting service on navigating hearing loss, specifically as it intersects with vision loss. Best of luck to you, Jane, in your post-retirement plans!

Brandie Callender Becomes TAM's Program Coordinator

After being TAM's office coordinator since 2023, we're pleased to announce Brandie Callender's promotion to TAM program coordinator. In Brandie's new role, she will primarily be overseeing Maryland Relay and supporting the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) as a liaison between GABTR members and arranging meetings, as well as coordinating the Communication Facilitator (CF) service scheduling.

"I'm excited to be given this promotion opportunity with more responsibilities and work alongside the other program managers here at TAM," shares Brandie. "Ensuring we connect with every Maryland resident who can benefit from these essential services is my top priority."






Meet Our New Part-Time MAT Trainer

TAM extends a warm welcome to our newest addition to the MAT team, Tiffany Green! Tiffany holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Development from Howard University. Her expertise spans over 15 years in the instruction of diverse assistive technologies, delivered across various modalities, including individualized and group sessions, as well as both in-person and virtual environments. Her role as a part-time MAT trainer involves educating individuals on the accessibility features of five phones and their associated peripherals.

Introducing Abigail “Abi” Turner, Maryland Outreach Coordinator Intern



Abi Turner has been a wonderful addition to our Maryland Relay outreach team as our fall 2025 outreach coordinator intern. In her role, she's experiencing the ins and outs of effective outreach efforts, from accessible technology events to educational presentations. With her experience as a MAT communication facilitator and her current pursuit of an ASL interpreting degree from the Community College of Baltimore County, Abi has a true passion for accessibility and helping others.



You Could Be the Next TAM Intern

Interested in interning with TAM? Contact us at Info@MDRelay.org for more information.



Local Organizations Host 2025 Communication Accessibility Summit in Conjunction with Deaf Awareness Month

TAM, in conjunction with the Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library, hosted the 2025 Communication Accessibility Summit on September 20, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Maryland School for the Deaf, Columbia Campus. The event, held during Deaf Awareness Month, brought together the Deaf Community and its allies to discover how everyone can work together to create powerful change in Maryland and beyond.

The day-long summit fostered inclusivity and promoted awareness for all things Deaf culture

by highlighting the importance of accessible communication for individuals across the state who are Deaf. Sessions covered several topics, including updates on a licensing and regulatory system for sign language interpreters under the State Board of Sign Language Interpreters (SBSLI) in the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Communication Facilitator (CF) service administered by MAT, an overview of the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) initiative, the history of telecommunications, and a discussion on Deaf studies and interpreting.

“Our collective mission is to ensure that no Marylander is left behind by promoting equality of opportunity, access, and choice.”

Carol Beatty, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities



A pre-recorded closing message from Carol Beatty, secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, was shared after the event.

“Our collective mission is to ensure that no Marylander is left behind by promoting equality of opportunity, access, and choice,” said Carol Beatty, secretary of Maryland Department of Disabilities, during the video recording. “Whether it is by providing accessible telecommunications equipment, Relay or captioning services, or community outreach grants, our drive each day is to create a Maryland without barriers for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind. I’m confident that together, we can make Maryland the most accessible state in the nation.”

To learn more about future events or how to get involved, visit MDRelay.org or email TAM.Outreach@Maryland.gov.



2025 COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY SUMMIT

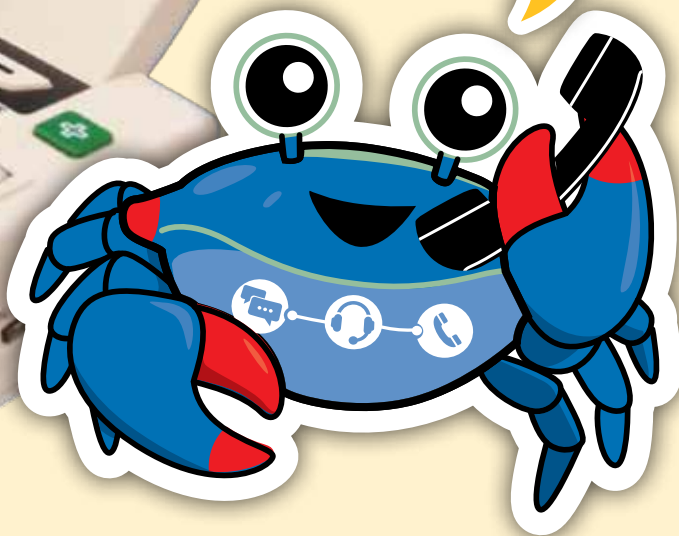
HOSTED BY:



Crabbie's MAT Equipment Highlight



Say Hello to
the Contrast
Phone



If you're following Maryland Relay on Facebook or Instagram, you might be familiar with a small but mighty blue crab named Crabbie, who introduces different equipment available through the MAT program. He's been so popular on our social media channels that we're letting him introduce a specialized piece of equipment right here in our newsletter.

Apply to the MAT Program

Get started on your online or paper application at **MAT-Apply.org** today. We offer applications in English, Spanish, and for individuals with low vision.



A **contrast phone** is all about making communication easier for everyone, thanks to its dialing functionalities. With large, high-contrast buttons that increase the difference between colors, this piece of equipment is designed for individuals who have low vision, visual impairments, or dexterity challenges.

Feast on More Crabbie Content

Follow Maryland Relay on Facebook and Instagram for educational and fun weekly content from your favorite state crustacean!

 [Facebook.com/MarylandRelay711](https://www.facebook.com/MarylandRelay711)

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Congratulations to Thomas Andrews, Recipient of the Hamilton Relay Scholarship

SCHOLARSHIP



Hamilton Relay, Telecommunications Relay and Captioned Telephone Service provider for the state of Maryland, has awarded a \$1,000 college scholarship to Thomas Andrews, a student at Easton High School in Easton, Maryland.

The scholarship opportunity is available to high school seniors who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or have difficulty speaking. A recipient is selected within each of the states where Hamilton Relay is the contracted service provider; this is one of several ways the company gives back to the communities it serves.

“Hamilton Relay takes pride in recognizing outstanding leadership and promoting education,” says Connor Fitzsimmons, Maryland Relay outreach coordinator. “We are excited to have the opportunity to contribute to furthering Thomas’s education, and we wish him success in reaching his personal and professional goals.”

Thomas was awarded the Hamilton Relay Scholarship after completing the application process, including writing an essay on the topic of communication technology. Thomas plans to attend Rochester Institute of Technology, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, this fall to study mechanical engineering.

That’s what I’m talking about



Learn More About Hamilton Relay

Hamilton Relay provides contracted Traditional Relay and Captioned Telephone services in 36 states, the District of Columbia, and the Island of Saipan, and is a provider of Internet-based Captioned Telephone services nationwide. Go to **HamiltonRelay.com** for more information.





Looking Back on Disability Employment Month

Each year, October marks Disability Employment Month, a time to celebrate the valuable contributions of people with disabilities in the workforce and to advocate for inclusive employment practices. For the Deaf and hard of hearing communities, meaningful employment is not just about earning a living; it's about fostering independence, building skills, and contributing diverse perspectives to workplaces. By prioritizing accessibility and understanding, we can break down barriers and empower more individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing to thrive in the workplace. Employers who recognize and embrace all employees and their talents enrich their teams and create a more equitable and innovative environment for everyone.

Effective accommodations are crucial to the successful employment of Deaf or hard of hearing professionals. These can range from sign language interpreters and CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation)

services for meetings and training, to visual alerts for alarms and phone calls, and accessible communication platforms. Providing these accommodations ensures that employees who are Deaf or hard of hearing have equal access to information and opportunities, allowing them to fully participate and excel in their roles.

In April 2025, Governor Moore signed the Maryland as a Model Employer (MME) Initiative into law, which focuses on improving state government employment for individuals with disabilities. The initiative establishes the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy (ODEAP) within the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDoD) to lead the effort. The MME Initiative is designed to enhance the recruitment, hiring, retention, and career advancement of people with disabilities within the state government workforce, demonstrating to all that business thrives when everyone is included.



Visit MDoD.Maryland.gov/Employment/Pages/MME to learn more about the MME Initiative.

Find Out Your Go-To Relay Service This Fall

Which of These Do You Relate to Most?

My preferred language to use is Spanish.

I have difficulty hearing people on the phone.

I have a hard time being understood on the phone.

Are you more likely to be on a personal phone call or on a work conference call?

I have a conference call coming up for my job!

I'm always calling my loved ones!

YOU GOT...

Spanish Relay

Spanish Relay makes it easy for Spanish-speaking Relay users and standard telephone users to schedule fall plans by phone! This service includes both Spanish-to-Spanish and Spanish-to-English services.

Dial 7-1-1 or 800-877-1264 to initiate a Spanish Relay call.

Remote Conference Captioning (RCC)

RCC allows people who have difficulty hearing over the phone during conference calls to read text of what the participants are saying—even the fall-themed joke your boss just told.

Visit MarylandRCC.com to learn more.

Hearing Carry-Over (HCO)

HCO is designed for those who have difficulty speaking on the phone and would like to type their responses. With this service, planning your trip to the pumpkin patch with your loved ones over the phone is quick and easy!

Dial 7-1-1 or 800-735-2258 to start a HCO call.

Explore All Your Relay Options

Go to **MDRelay.Maryland.gov/Pages/Services** to learn more about ALL our available Relay services!

Catch These Upcoming Events



December 7

Third Annual Holiday FUN!

Join the Maryland Deaf Community Center for a festive day of shopping and activities for children. There will be ASL-fluent vendors, cookie decorating, games, and more!

Email any questions you have to Donna at **Donna.Dimarco@DeafMDCC.org**

400 S Carroll Street, Frederick, MD 21701



December 13

Deaf Night Out

Stop by the Baltimore Christmas Village with Baltimore City Association of the Deaf for their last Deaf Night Out of the year.

Contact **BCADeaf2020@Gmail.com** for more information.

601 E Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21202



Where Our Team Has Been Recently

Outreach Coordinator Outreach Coordinator Intern Abi Turner concentrated her efforts on field visits in Carroll and Frederick Counties and participated in several community engagement activities. Exhibit booth highlights included the Randallstown YMCA Juneteenth Celebration, the Disability Arts Festival, the Veteran's Association Resource Fair, and Deaf & Hard of Hearing Night Out at the Frederick Keys baseball game. She also delivered presentations to the Reister's View 50 Plus Community and the Maryland Association for Parkinson's Support.

Connor Fitzsimmons' outreach efforts included presentations and exhibits across the region, with highlights such as the Parkville Senior Center presentation in June, the Emmanuel Temple Spring Fair, and Dundalk Safe Start Night, where he also distributed Spanish-language outreach materials.

National Community Leader Presented to Maryland Resident

Hamilton Relay recognized Eddie Martinez as the recipient of their National Community Leader Award! Eddie has been a transformative leader within the DeafBlind Community in Maryland and beyond. His longstanding dedication includes serving as past president and active member of the Metropolitan Washington Association of the DeafBlind (MWADB), a member of the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD), and a Governor-appointed advisor to the Maryland Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. His leadership and advocacy have left a lasting mark at both the local and state levels. Eddie's influence extends nationally as well.

As a member of the FCC Disability Advisory Committee, Eddie was instrumental in advancing a pilot initiative into what is now, the iCanConnect program, which provides free telecommunication equipment to individuals across the country who are DeafBlind. Through his unwavering commitment, vision, and compassion, Eddie continues to inspire progress and promote greater accessibility for all. TAM is proud to celebrate his remarkable legacy and lasting impact!



January 10 - February 15

Balloonacy

Imagination Stage is hosting a beautiful, movement-based show, *Balloonacy*, that will delight audiences of all ages and communicators of all languages.

Go to imaginationstage.org/on-our-stages/balloonacy for tickets and accessibility information.

4908 Auburn Avenue,
Bethesda, MD 20814





Telecommunications Access of Maryland

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Reflecting on Hispanic Heritage Month



Each year, from September 15 to October 15, we celebrate the influence and contributions of the Hispanic community to America's achievements, culture, and history. The official 2025 Hispanic Heritage Month theme was Collective Heritage: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future. For members of the Hispanic community who speak Spanish and could benefit from Maryland Relay services, we would like to remind you that Spanish Relay is a free service option for all Maryland residents. Maryland Relay hopes to contribute to accessibility within the Hispanic community by offering all our call options in both Spanish-to-Spanish and Spanish-to-English translations.

Make a Spanish Relay Call
Dial 7-1-1 or 800-877-1264 to get started.