

Vermont Telecommunications Relay Service
Advisory Council Meeting
Draft Meeting Minutes

Department of Public Service, Zoom Virtual Meeting Space
January 10th, 2024, 10:00a.m. to 12:00p.m.

Attendees:

Aaron Brassard, PSD Telecom (Acting Vice Chair)
Hunter Thompson, PSD Director Telecom/Connectivity Division (Appointed Vice Chair)
Michelle Vicino, Account Manager at T-Mobile for VT Relay Services
Asia Johnson, Account Manager for Hamilton Relay (VT CapTel)
Pater Johnke, Deputy Director at VCIL and oversee EDP Program
Scott Brooks, Consolidated Communications
Laura Siegel, Director of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and DeafBlind Services
Harlie Quero, PSD, Telecommunications Coordinator, (Notetaker)

Observers:

Andrew Brenaman, T Mobile Accessibility
Ashley Happy, E911 Board

Interpreters:

Janet Dickinson, ASL
Nicole Comtois, ASL

Action Items (Also listed where relevant to specific Discussion):

| Action Item | Person Responsible | Deadline |
|--|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Corrections To Previous Minutes | Aaron Brassard/Harlie Quero | 1/10/2024 |
| PSD Investigate Representing Vermont in NASRA | Hunter Thompson/Aaron Brassard | 1/10/2024 |
| T-Mobile Report | Michelle Vicino | 1/10/2024 |
| Hamilton Report | Asia Johnson | 1/10/2024 |
| EDP Report | Peter Johnke | 1/10/2024 |
| Relay Service PSA (HireAbility, ATP) | Laura Siegel | 1/10/2024 |

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| VUSF to expand for SSP services (DBVI) | Laura Siegel | 1/10/2024 |
| Work Between e911 & Dept. Of Disabilities | Laura Siegel | 1/10/2024 |

Call to Order by Aaron Brassard.

Meeting Begins.

Motion to Approve Previous Minutes

Motion to Approve previous meeting minutes proposed by Aaron.

Laura Siegel makes a motion to approve the minutes.

Scott Brooks seconds motion.

Previous meeting minutes approved.

Old Business:

Rene Pellerin requested in the previous meeting that the Public Service Department Telecommunications Division investigate becoming a representative at the National Association for State Relay Administration.

PSD Telecom: “We have looked in registration at the NASRA. We found there is a registration fee and Sunni Eriksen is listed as the representative for the Department. We are waiting to hear back from NASRA if the registration fee is yearly, and if Sunni’s registration as the Department representative has expired, so Hunter can be enrolled.

New business:

T- Mobile Update - Michelle Vicino

Michelle: “Vermont relay we are continuing with social media. Still low on the outreach front. Social media still remains the way to go. One of the things that has changed with regard to social media is I have taken over as the administrator for the page. I always was the administrator, but I hired a social media coordinator to run the page. Since she is focusing on other things, I'm going to run the Vermont Relay and Instagram pages myself. It is going to look the same. It might be less or more postings. If you have anything that you want posted or if there is an event coming up or and an announcement reach out to me and I can get something, send out. We try to keep it spread to talk about all of these services and even if it is something to start engaging with our followers like asking questions or if it is a holiday like yesterday was law enforcement day. Stuff like that. Just some examples of what has been going out.”

Michelle (continued): We collaborated with Songs for Sounds. The truck drove all over New England but broke down while on their way to Vermont. They went to Bennington Veteran’s Clinic on October 30th, and they provide screenings on the truck, then once people discover they have hearing loss, we provide

the resources. The truck Then they want to White River Junction, then Burlington, had about 200 visitors at each of these events, each with a total of around 22 screenings. It was a good turnout and nice to receive feedback from the community. At these events everybody put out candy, and I would put mints out there, and they were just gone. Guess people per mints to candy! We also have the Yankee Sportsman Classic coming up, but I do not have a calendar date yet, at some point later this month. This event is full of outdoorsy folks. That will be a two-day event. We've gone every year, except the last few years due to COVID, so it will be great to go again this year. We are also considering the Vermont Maturity Expo, we are waiting on our Contractor to give us feedback on this event and are excited for her report. We run into people with hearing loss in the most unlikely places, so we will consider any event. Reach out to Jorica Stockwell for any events you suggest."

Michelle (continued): "Minutes from July 2021 – Present their minutes looked to be all over the place with TRS, but it has been decreasing. People are transitioning to internet-based services. The average each year is declining, but the service is still available and being used. On Slide six are the RCC available minutes. For some background, 2021 there was a spike in RCC, and they reached their peak. Then in March in 2022, they had us cut back in advertisements and outreach. Once they asked us started to promote again, this kicked up the RCC. This provides an explanation to all over the place numbers. We are still trying to get the word out about using the service. Regardless of where they work, if they live in the state of Vermont, they can use the service. Here we have the call breaks down. Overall, the percentage has changed, but TRS remains the dominant. Next on slide eight we have the Vermont relay website. We have stayed constant over the last few years with this. People tend to go to social media for the most up to date information. The website information is bit more stationary, does not change. We will continue to use social media for announcements. They are right at about 300-400 for website hits. It pretty much stays constant there. I connected with Jamie Motes about getting these numbers up. Finally, slide nine, is my contact information, reach out to me or Jorica Stockwell for any training or presentations. That's it for my end."

Questions:

Laura: "On Slide seven, what are the requirements related to dialing 911?"

Michelle: "I do not talk about any services that are not included in our relay program."

Laura: "The reason I asked. I invited Ashley specifically because she works without, and so it is the agents the call center for, so I am wondering about the software and there is a TTY button in the software."

Michelle: "What is the name of Ashley's organization?"

Laura: "E911. The software, I mentioned is the software for the dispatchers. The dispatch agency for 911. I went to their location and saw their software operating. There is a page for TTY, but they have a way for people to connect 911. So, I am wondering if they have to dial 711 to be connected with a 911 dispatcher?"

Michelle: "I can connect you with someone, but I do not know how their platform works at all. Andrew, do you know anything about this?"

Andrew: "I am not following the question."

Laura: "There is software used in the 911 system that allows a person to use this TTY to call 911 and that call would be recognized as a TTY user. So, I was wondering if there is anything else that needs to be

added. For example, they get disconnected or do not use 711. I do not know if they have someone in the system that is familiar with 711, but it seems important to know?

Andrew: “We ask those that are well versed to use 911 directly, not 711. Does that answer your question?”

Laura: “Yes, but I was wondering if you had received any feedback or experience with this issue.”

Michelle: “I have not heard any complaints. We encourage them, to use 911. We are not familiar with their software, but it makes sense why they have the TTY button. We do not see the need for the 711. But I can find some information for you Laura.”

Laura: “But if there is a situation where a TTY user calls 911 and they get disconnected, would they have to go back through the 711 system and be given a phone number?”

Andrew: “No, the dispatcher will contact the user directly. If there is a situation with two parties and they get disconnected the dispatcher would contact the user directly, and not go through 711.”

Michelle: “Yes, directly.”

Laura: “Thank you.”

Hamiton Relay Report - Asia Johnson

Asia: “Christa is out of the office. I am here today to give the report on her behalf. I will begin the report, based on the report shared to all of you. I am moving onto slide two. VT Captel has to be answered in ten seconds or less. We are showing how we performed in ten seconds. Around 85% of calls need to be answered in that timeline. We have met the requirement. Nearly 100% each month of calls are answered within that timeline. Next, the volume of calls on slide three. This is a two year snapshot of the call volume for VTCaptel in session minutes. Similar to what Michelle shared with you all there are some variants is here as it relates to call volume for the state of Vermont. Similarly, folks are transitioning to Internet-based relay and Internet-based taking advantage of resources like RCC and even some of the platforms that individuals have begun to use like Zoom or Microsoft teams. Some of them have some built-in captions that folks are utilizing as well. All of those are being explanations for the variants as we see in the call volume. Moving onto slide four on the quality scores for most recent month. Our operators are generating an average of 172.17 words per minute, with an accuracy of 99.75%. Our Vermont Captel customer care contacts on slide five from September to November show less interaction. We did have one person reach out in September for some general information.”

Asia (continued): “On Slide six we have provided our outreach update. There are active links to the VTCaptel website. The marketing materials are available as well. You can also visit with our newsletter. The most recent one is linked there and is available for download. For anyone who has subscribed or been added to the distribution list, this newsletter was also mailed to any addresses on that list. Next, we will discuss our Hamilton Relay High School Scholarship. This scholarship provides \$500 of financial support to a high school student who are facing hearing loss, or deaf, and or hard of hearing. We encourage applicants within Vermont. Deadline of app is Jan 31st. If the application is mailed in, it must be Postmarked by 1/31 to be considered. Consider them an award for the scholarship. Relatively simple app, request on school, grade point average, and share a reference from a teacher at their school. Last part of

the application is a written piece on how relay services have aided them or will aid them while obtaining their degree or how it might help. Please share this within your networks.”

Conclusion.

Questions:

Aaron: “Not a question, just that this scholarship seems like a great opportunity.”

EDP Report – Pater Johnke

Peter: “Nick submitted a short report to everyone. Not a lot of activity in terms of applications received. We didn't actually find anybody this quarter because we are in the midst of trying to help people determine what is the best device that fits their need. We also recognize it is important to take the time to do with right. Often times this is done in conjunction with the technology program, so a lot of times they borrow some devices from them. To do the in-person thing, I think it makes a difference when you really talk to somebody and explain in more detail how the whole process works. We have been to some recent conference that were in November and December. The Traumatic Brain Injury Conference was one of them. We had some information at the Health Equity Summit. We will continue to do that type of outreach. We also conducted some outreach with WCAZ, specifically on the distribute program, but no uptick in calls or referrals. Not sure the reasoning on that. We may go to the Vermont Maturity Expo. However, we are still looking for optics for outreach.”

Questions:

No questions

Relay Service PSA (HireAbility, ATP) - Laura Siegel

Laura: “The assisted technology program had reached out about concerns with the state employees and the public. They do not understand what that really means. Right now, we are trying to come up with video commercial. Some sort of advertisement to explain what it is and who it could help and where the funding is coming from. We have reached out to their department. We want to see if your department could potentially help with supporting that. I do not know if that is possible or not because right now what we are noticing is that people hear the word relay and often they are assuming that means, some sort of a sporting event like a relay race, or that it is not connected to phone services at all. So, there is a bit of a confusion. How can we explain that better? Maybe create this video and include phone-based and Internet-based relay services. Open to ideas and feedback and any of that.”

Conclusion.

Questions:

Michelle: “Are you asking Aaron or me for funding? I have a video made discussing relay services, I can look to see if the videos are current and have one on Vermont. Filming is expensive. I can see what videos we have and if they are up to date. However, if we are talking about the internet-based services. But we cannot talk about that, that part is up to the state.”

Peter: “I will add there is a March conference for state employees around accessibility. VCIL will be there, with accessibility to communications.”

Larura: “I and Agency of human services organizing that conference with tables and trainings to explain to state staff. Really being clear on relay services. The conference is on March 12th.”

Aaron: “That’s a great idea. Can you forward the information on back to me or actually to everybody? I was not aware that was going on.”

Laura: “We will have had our first meeting. Our next meeting is on Jan 22nd. I can invite you to that conversation if you’d like Aaron. Hopefully, I will have more information later in the month.”

Aaron: “We will add that meeting as an action item.”

Laura: “I will send that invite.”

VUSF to expand for SSP services (DBVI) - Laura Siegel

Laura: “Funding for SSP pilot program ends this year. Fred Jones from Division of Blind and Impaired, and I had how can we find stable funding to support this work. The Helen Kellar National Center sent us documentation showing all of the different states and what they are doing. I am just getting a feel for what we could do to help us out, and if this was an event that was doable. We discussed I do not know who can be involved.”

Aaron: “VUSF Is going under extreme changes. I think it is being introduced today, so I would not count on it for any additional funding right now because these changes are not going to be substantial, and I do not really have any details yet.

Laura: “Can you show the changes? Please elaborate on that”

Aaron: “No not yet, but I can provide the Bill number. A lot of the changes on funding things and additional income.”

Harlie: “The bill is H. 657.”

Questions:

No Questions.

Work Between E911 and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Blind Services at the Department of Disability Independent Living

Laura: “Looks like Rene, who is not here, requested this item. I will hold off on this point. I will try to make sure there are not gaps with my department and 911. My internet-based phone is not based in Michelle’s area. This point seems pointless to bring up now.”

Proposed tabling of item 6a by Aaron.

Item 6a being tabled until the next agenda.

Questions:

No Questions.

Open Discussion:

No points brought up.

Feedback from board members:

No feedback.

Scheduling:

Scott: "I noticed there are tentative dates on next meetings. Can we get those placeholders sent around?"

Harlie: "I can do that for everyone at some point next week."

Aaron: "Record time of getting this done. Last call for comments and questions?"

Conclusion

Motion to adjure by Aaron.

Approved by Scott and Peter

Schedule for 2024 meetings

April 10th, 2024 (Tentative)

July 10th, 2024 (Tentative)

October 9th, 2024 (Tentative)