

VRS is Inaccessible Without Video Equipment

- Consumer access to VRS is severely restricted if video equipment is not widely available.
- The penetration rate of video equipment is low. While there is sketchy data about relay consumers, we can deduce that only a small minority of deaf and hard of hearing ASL users now have access to video phones.
- The distribution of video equipment needs to continue to grow for those who are poor, elderly, in rural areas, and made available in workplaces, educational institutions, health care facilities and public places.

Video Phone Distribution By VRS Providers Is Still Necessary

- VRS providers are the primary source of interoperable video phones.
- There are tens of thousands of people on wait lists to receive video phones from VRS providers.
- State telecommunication equipment programs do not provide video equipment to deaf and hard of hearing residents.
- Maintaining incentives for VRS providers to distribute video phones to consumers is essential for true access to relay services.

Video Equipment Used With A Different Default Provider

- Similar to equipment provided by VoIP and wireless companies, video phones may not work at all or have reduced functionality with a different default provider. The video phone just like a SIP or cell phone is not an independent device and requires a matching hosted network and switching environment.
- The wireline telephone network is not the appropriate comparison because: 1) unlike the telephone network, the VRS system did not start out as an integrated nationwide network run by a single company; 2) there is no VRS equivalent to the part 68 rules to set uniform video phone standards; and 3) interoperable video phones are not available for purchase from retail stores.
- The proprietary interest of video phone manufacturers may not permit their reprogramming or changing user interfaces.

The Functionality of Video Equipment After The NANP Number is Ported

- Most if not all types of interoperable video phones will not work or have reduced functionality with a different default provider.
- Enhanced features such as video mail, speed dial, address book, call logs, and missed call alerts could be lost with a different default provider.
- For most types of video phones, 911 dialing after being ported to a different default provider will be problematic.
- Snap!VRS is currently the only certified relay provider that supports SIP calls.
- Even assuming porting video phones could be made to work, it would require considerable time and significant outlays of capital investment (as well as intense cooperation) by all VRS providers.

Requiring VRS Providers to Support the Full Functionality of Video Equipment After A Number Is Ported Is Inconsistent with Sound Public Policy

- The significant capital investment of the VRS companies that provided the video phone would be wiped out if other VRS providers could grab their equipment for free.
- Many VRS providers could not afford to continue to support, maintain, and repair video equipment of former customers, nor could they tolerate the liability risks if they were required to be responsible for the video equipment of former customers.
- Incentives for VRS providers to make available video phones, or to innovate features to enhance functional equivalency would be greatly diminished or disappear entirely.
- If providers are required to forfeit their video phones to their competitors, this would *undermine* the benefits of 10-digit numbering and interoperability rules by reducing consumers' access to video phones.

Requiring VRS Providers to Support the Full Functionality of Video Equipment After A Number Is Ported Is Also Inconsistent with FCC Precedent

- VRS providers *receive no compensation* from the TRS Fund for their investments in video phone equipment and their R&D expenditures to develop enhanced VRS functions. A requirement that VRS providers must now hand over the fruits of such voluntary, non-reimbursable investments to their competitors would be squarely at odds with this well-established FCC regulatory approach. At the very least, such a reversal of direction would have to be accompanied by a fundamental change in the cost reimbursement rules to compensate providers for their investments in such equipment.
- Placing this burden on VRS providers would be also entirely inconsistent with the FCC's treatment of VoIP, wireless and broadband consumer equipment.

Consumer Outreach

- Snap!VRS has been communicating to stakeholders about the limitations of interoperable video phones used by customers who have ported their numbers to a different default provider.
- There is a need for extensive education so that consumers are aware of the capabilities of video phones once they have ported their number.

Fulfilling the Promise of Relay Services

- The FCC should maintain the current version of section 64.611 (c) and not revise it to require providers to manage devices after customers port a number to a different default provider.
- VRS providers need to focus on implementing the new numbering system without the disruption of an onerous requirement to manage their devices for another VRS provider.
- In addition to promoting the spirit of competition and innovation, it is critical that the FCC preserves incentives for VRS providers to distribute video equipment during a time where they are not available in the stream of public commerce.