

Response to the FCC requested for information from the speech disabled community about their telecommunications needs:

I. STS ISSUES

A. Miscellaneous Issues

As a speech/language pathologist I have had many opportunities to help my clients communicate via phone, including use of the STS relay. In my experience, it takes at least 5 minutes to establish communication strategies to be employed by the CA when the consumer has complex communication needs and uses both natural speech and a communication device that has electronic speech. I agree that 20 minutes should be minimum, and that it should begin only after the CA can understand the consumer. I would recommend a series of questions before the CA asks what number to dial in order to establish the common communication patterns of the consumer. That way they will realize that there may be long pauses while the consumer composes a message and can explain that to the caller. They would also have a better understanding of the literacy level of the consumer and realize whether spelling or re-phrasing would be more appropriate when communication breaks down.

B. STS 711 Issues

Each time I have made a call with a consumer using the STS service, it has not been apparent that the CA has any idea about how the consumer communicates, and asks for the name of the consumer even though a profile was completed and submitted to Hamilton Relay Service. At the very least, the CA should be able to access the person's name and nickname in order to establish a communication rapport before making a phone call and trying to introduce a third person into the exchange. The voice output on a communication system may not always sound clear to the CA and reading from a profile screen would be much more efficient. That way the CA would just need to ask for confirmation of the name rather than asking the consumer to repeat over and over and then spell his/her name. The same should be true for people he/she calls regularly. Anytime the CA can ask the consumer a clarifying question it can speed up exchanges for those consumers with the most severe physical impairments, since composing messages electronically can be very slow.

Comments in red provided by:

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