

I'm writing as both a provider of video relay services (VRS) and as a consumer of such services. I'm writing because I have serious concern.

From my understanding of proposed changes to the handling of VRS oversight and funding, there is a very real chance that if these changes come to pass, there could be dire consequences to this important service.

Many people do not understand the unique skill set required to work as an interpreter in the VRS setting. The work requires an ability to handle an immense range of language modes, interpersonal dynamics, topics, and other intricacies of calls. This work requires the interpreters doing it be well trained, cognizant, mature, and have incredible skill to adapt from moment to moment. When an interpreter lacks these skills, VRS consumers are put at risk of having their personal and professional communication go a bit awry or severely off-course.

I fear that with proposed cuts to the funding structure of VRS, companies providing this service will be forced to constrain budgets. Given that the FCC does not currently mandate a minimum skills requirement of interpreters working in VRS, it will be all too easy for VRS companies to balance budgets by cutting pay to current, capable interpreters, or to hire non-certified interpreters who lack the skills and experience for the setting and can therefore be hired more cheaply.

As someone who cares deeply about the rights of deaf individuals to have free access to qualified telecommunications services, I implore the FCC to:

- 1) Not reduce the current funding to VRS reimbursement structures
- 2) Establish a skills requirement of interpreters working in the VRS arena.

Thank you for your attention,  
Amy Free  
Wisconsin