

A0000111858072

OR
PU/2
.30t7
:2000
/FallNOT
FOR
LOAN

OTRS Today

Updates and Information from
Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service

OREGON

MAR - 2005
518659854
STATE LIBRARY

Enhancements to Oregon Relay On the Way!

Over the past summer, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established a schedule for improvements and expansions to Relay services nationwide. With many FCC enhancements already in place, Oregon is ahead of the game. Other exciting measures are on the way, bringing greater speed, convenience, and safety to your communications. We'll keep you posted as these new developments click into place. *

Welcome to OTRS Today!

We're witnessing a revolution in telecommunications access. The lightning-fast pace of today's technical advances will transform tomorrow's communication services, while government advocacy brings better access to a growing community of OTRS users. It's an exciting time—but keeping up with these new developments is a challenge.

That's why we've launched *OTRS Today*, a newsletter designed to inform you of significant changes taking place in Telecommunication Relay Services here in Oregon. . . changes that affect the way you communicate.

continued on page 2

Enhancements Called for by the FCC

Enhancement	Implementation by:	Explanation
Faster typing speeds	12/18/00	Right now, communication agents (CAs) transmit your messages at a minimum of 45 words per minute (wpm). That typing speed will improve to at least 60 wpm, helping you get your message through faster.
Automatic transfer of emergency calls	To be determined	In an emergency, TTY callers are reminded to dial 9-1-1 directly. But if you call OTRS instead, the new system will transfer you instantly and automatically to your nearest public safety answering point. This upgrade will minimize delays in situations where seconds count.
CAs staying with the calls	12/18/00	Sometimes, the CA who takes your call must transfer you to another agent. While this may still occur, your initial CA will always stay with you for at least 10 minutes. If you're using Speech-to-Speech service, the minimum is 15 minutes. This change is expected to improve continuity.
Speech-to-Speech	3/1/01	If you have a mild to moderate speech disability, you can use Speech-to-Speech service to talk to a specially trained CA who will place your call, then repeat your message verbally to the called party. This service bypasses the need to type your message and speeds communication. OTRS users will have a new, dedicated number for this service. (See "Speech-to-Speech (STS) Eliminates Barriers," page 4.)
7-1-1 three-digit dialing	10/01/01	Next fall, calling OTRS will be a snap as 7-1-1 dialing is implemented. The current 800 numbers will remain available as well.

Welcome to *OTRS Today!* continued

Our lead article outlines the enhancements in store for you as we phase in systemwide upgrades in accordance with the FCC's new schedule. As this issue went to press, the Public Utility Commission was deeply involved in discussions with Sprint that will expedite a timely transition from planning to reality.

A major change keenly felt by all of us is Dot Johnson's retirement from her position as Sprint Account Manager for OTRS. Dot has demonstrated the meaning of service excellence during the past eight years and will be sorely missed. Though you might expect her to be hooking up the RV and taking off for sunny Florida, she's still going strong as president of the Oregon Association for the Deaf and continues to serve on committees of local not-for-profit organizations.

Taking over for Dot will be Van Scheppach, who brings many years of experience to OTRS from working with Sprint Relay Services throughout the Rocky Mountain Region. We expect to benefit from Van's technical and managerial expertise, and I personally look forward to working closely with him as we continue to improve Relay Services here in Oregon.

I hope *OTRS Today* will be of great service to you throughout the years of change ahead, and I look forward to hearing what you think about this inaugural edition. Please feel free to e-mail your questions, comments, and suggestions directly to me at damara.paris@state.or.us, or call 1-800-648-3458 (TTY), 1-800-848-4442 (Voice) to share your thoughts.

Meanwhile, enjoy your reading!



Damara Paris, Manager
Telecommunication Assistance Programs



Dorothy Johnson Leaves Legacy of Excellence

Last June, during a community gathering in the Salem-Keizer area, we honored an individual who has steered OTRS through the past eight years of growth: Dorothy "Dot" Johnson. On the occasion of her retirement, the State bestowed an award of appreciation, recognizing Dot's stellar accomplishments in service to the consumers of Oregon.

Dot has been instrumental in the development of Sprint's Telephone Relay Service System for many years. When Texas awarded Sprint its first Relay contract in 1990, Dot served on the management team that established the Austin Relay Center. As Sprint's Relay Agent Supervisor in Operations, Dot formed an energetic partnership with her Communication Agents, offering them a level of support that motivated them to give their utmost to their jobs.

Two years later, Sprint won the contract to manage Telecommunication Relay Services in Oregon, and Dot moved from Austin to Portland to take on the role of Account Manager. In the ensuing years, Dot supported Sprint accounts in Oregon, Montana, and Nevada, while also helping to establish several start-up accounts as new contracts were awarded.

As Sprint Relay celebrates 10 years of service, we also celebrate the contributions Dot Johnson made throughout her tenure at Sprint. In honor of her achievements, we've established the Dorothy Johnson Community Development Award. This award will be given each year to a qualified organization serving deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech-disabled people in Oregon.

We wish Dot all the best as she embarks on her new journey through life.

Your Assurance of Quality

If a problem arises while you're using OTRS and you wish to communicate your concern immediately, you can request a supervisor while still on the line, or you may ask the CA to transfer you to Sprint Relay Customer Service, or you can dial directly to 1-800-676-3777, 24 hours a day/7 days a week; or contact your Oregon Account Manager, Van Scheppach at 1-800-377-1150 (TTY) or through voice Relay, or e-mail van.scheppach@mail.sprint.com.

To ensure efficient and equal access to telephone services, every nationwide Relay Service must provide a central contact to whom you may pass along service complaints or problems. The FCC monitors complaint resolution and evaluates the quality of service delivery through this central contact.

In Oregon, your point of contact is Damara Paris, Manager. You can address your concerns to Damara by mail, e-mail,

TTY or send the reply post card within this publication.

Write to: Damara Paris, Manager
Telecommunication Assistance Programs
Oregon Public Utility Commission
550 Capitol Street NE, Suite 215
Salem, Oregon 97301-2551
1-800-648-3458 (TTY)
1-800-848-4442 (Voice)
damara.paris@state.or.us

“Reaching and Teaching” Diverse Groups — Starting with Seniors

One of the primary outreach goals of OTRS is “reaching and teaching” diverse groups within the population of our State. These groups include the senior population, other potential users of Relay services, members of the business community, and the media. By communicating with and educating people in these groups regarding the advantages and accessibility of Relay services, OTRS will achieve its goal of increasing usage of the Relay, including usage by the hearing population. In addition, meeting this goal also accomplishes our ongoing overall objective to inform and educate the general public, including the deaf/hard-of-hearing community, about OTRS.

This year, in order to achieve part of our “reaching and teaching” goal, we are pursuing two marketing communications avenues that will reach the largest numbers of senior adults possible: print advertising and targeted direct mail. We will continue to build upon the graphic look we created last year with general awareness ads that ran statewide and in a series of new brochures.

Throughout the rest of this year and the first half of 2001, you will see OTRS print advertisements targeted to older adults and their children in many of the senior publications you read. These include:

- *Senior Views*
- *Prime Time*

Be there for every special moment — even when you can only be there through the phone.

Good thing you and the loach lady are close friends — at first, that's all your granddaughters says. After she had her first loach lady, she wanted to call your girl's name.

All over you have already hearing clearly over the telephone. It's a good thing for you and the loach lady. OTRS is a free public service from Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service (OTRS) that lets you use any communication device with any standard phone and the conversation is relayed on a telephone with a text screen, so you can see the words being said in real time. It's just one of the ways OTRS helps you and the loach lady stay connected. It's also a good thing for you.

From now on, there's no need for you to use a single word of a telephone number, but that's a good thing because your granddaughters' eyes might not be too far away from the loach lady's eyes.

Are you one of the millions of Oregonians who has difficulty hearing or seeing? The telephone's eyes are about the benefits of OTRS and other options available through OTRS to only OTRS customers. Please call 1-800-377-1150.

- *Retirement Life News*
- *The Statesman Journal*
- *The Bulletin*
- *The East Oregonian*
- *The Mail Tribune*
- *Grants Pass Daily Courier*
- *Klamath Falls Herald & News*
- *Albany Democrat-Herald*
- *Corvallis Gazette-Times*
- *Roseburg News Review*

Our direct mail campaign for seniors will introduce OTRS to administrators of senior living and retirement communities. The direct mail pieces will include response cards, making it simple for administrators to

request additional information, ask to be added to the OTRS mailing list, request that we contribute articles for their community newsletters, and/or arrange for a group presentation to community residents.

Thanks to our Sprint Account Manager, Van Scheppach, who is providing and coordinating outreach opportunities, along with our marketing efforts, we are making important headway toward “reaching and teaching” people across our State who need to know about and understand Relay services.



Van Scheppach Steers OTRS into the New Century

Please join us in welcoming Van K. Scheppach, our new Account Manager, who will be overseeing Sprint's Relay team in Oregon.

A graduate of Gallaudet College, Van began his career as a social studies instructor at the high school level. He dedicated 19 years to education, teaching at schools for

the deaf in Idaho, Colorado, and Arkansas.

In 1991, Van left the academic world to work with the Colorado Public Utility Commission. He became Relay Administrator for the State, and spent three years monitoring Sprint's delivery of communication services to Colorado consumers before joining Sprint's corporate Relay Service Department in 1994. Since then, he has acted as

Sprint's Account Manager for Relay Services in California, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Nevada. Now that he's made it to Oregon, we hope he'll stay a long while.

Van's interests include fishing and stained glass craft. He also was an avid bowler for 29 years, but had to give it up due to an old football injury. He doesn't let that slow him down, however, and recently enjoyed the thrill of a lifetime as he

landed a 40-pound king salmon during a fishing trip to Alaska. Van also enjoys traveling, as it gives him a chance to meet new people and catch up with old friends.

Van can be reached at 1-800-377-1150 (TTY), or you can leave a message on Van's TTY answering machine by calling OTRS 1-800-735-1232 (Voice), and asking the CA to leave a message.

Speech-to-Speech (STS) Eliminates Barriers

By March 1, 2001, OTRS will implement Speech-to-Speech (STS). This new service will make a significant, positive difference in the lives of people with mild to severe/profound speech disabilities, enabling them to use the telephone independently.

Since Alexander Graham Bell invented the first telephone-like instrument more than 120 years ago, the telephone has grown to be a vital part of family and social culture and an essential tool in education, business and employment. Yet historically, people with speech disabilities have found it virtually impossible to use the telephone because of the difficulty listeners have in understanding what they are saying. Frequently, people who hear distorted speech when they answer the telephone simply hang up, leaving speech-disabled people frustrated and disappointed.

Pioneered by Sprint, STS removes the barriers that prevent people with speech disabilities from using the telephone. STS also allows people without speech disabilities to use the telephone to easily communicate with those who have speech disabilities. STS achieves this through a Communications Assistant (CA). The CA answers an STS call, then facilitates the call by dialing the requested number, listening to what the speech-disabled person says, then revoicing his or her conversation verbatim.

Currently, about a dozen states have STS. OTRS looks forward to the quickly approaching time when Oregon citizens with speech disabilities—whether they result from laryngectomies or other surgical treatments, or from health conditions such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, muscular sclerosis, stroke, head injury and stuttering—will be able use the telephone through STS.

For additional information on how to access the service beginning March 1, 2001, please contact Sprint Relay Customer Service at 1-800-676-3777 (Voice/TTY). ◦

Stay Connected Through OTAP

If you're living on a low income, you may be able to get reduced rates for your telephone service, thanks to a subsidy program administered by the Oregon Public Utility Commission. The Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP) helps to guarantee that all Oregonians have access to affordable basic services. Approximately 33,000 residents throughout the state currently take advantage of this program.

To qualify for OTAP, you must be enrolled in an approved state public assistance program such as the food stamp program, the Oregon Health Plan, Medicaid, or State Supplemental Security Income. If you are eligible, you'll receive a reduction of either \$10.50 or \$11.35 on your basic telephone service rates. (Currently, customers of Verizon, Qwest, and Sprint receive the higher deduction.)

To find out whether you qualify for the OTAP discount, contact the OPUC Telecommunication Assistance Program at 1-800-648-3458 (TTY) or 1-800-848-4442 (Voice). ◦



Telecommunication Assistance Programs
Oregon Public Utility Commission
550 Capitol Street NE, Suite 215
Salem, Oregon 97301-2551

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
No. 6440
Baltimore, MD

OR PU/2 .30t7 :2000 /Fall

OTRS today