

# AT&T's Real-Time Communication

by Sue Decker

## Deaf Say Bye to Phone Frustrations.

In January, AT&T introduced AT&T Video Relay Services, an innovative, web-based service that enables the nation's estimated 28 million deaf and hard of hearing to communicate with friends and family over the phone more easily than ever by using American Sign Language (ASL).

AT&T, a pioneer in developing and delivering communications services for people with hearing loss, will offer the new video service in addition to its internet and traditional TTY (text telephone) service, which enable a deaf or hard of hearing person to type messages that are read by an operator to the other party on the call.

AT&T has contracted with a renowned American Sign Language interpreting company, Hands On Sign Language Services of Rocklin, Calif., to provide the interpretation and video relay between the communicating parties. Hands On has been providing sign language services since 1990.

Sign language users with a computer, a high-speed Internet access line (like DSL or cable modem), and a low-cost web camera can use AT&T's Video Relay Services. AT&T Video Relay Services offers video interpretation nationwide.

AT&T customers, who use sign language to communicate, can do so on the Internet

with a nationally certified interpreter who relays the conversation over the phone in spoken language to the hearing party. There is a free software program that is available for download from the AT&T website ([www.relay.att.com/vrs](http://www.relay.att.com/vrs)). Hearing people may access the service through a nationwide toll-free number, 1-888-VRS-9998.

To customize your account at AT&T VRS, Customers will be able to fill out a "profile" form which will enable them to have their features automatically selected for them whenever they call into the service. This form is available to users by going to the [www.relay.att.com/vrs](http://www.relay.att.com/vrs) website. When you arrive at the website, click on "Phonebook" and you will be presented with a sign in page. Click on new user if you do not have a user name or password. A phone book is available for user's frequently called numbers. They will be able to access this phone book whenever they log in.

A hard of hearing customer can simply access Video Relay Service at [www.relay.att.com/vrs](http://www.relay.att.com/vrs) and request the Video Interpreter to dial back to the customer's own phone number - After the customer has picked up the call from the VI, s/he informs the VI the phone number to dial out to the party s/he wishes to call. The caller, who is bridged onto the connection, will have auditory and visual access to everything the called party says. The customer may then speak his/her response directly to the party s/he is calling.

The VRS user signs to a trilingual video Interpreter who will speak in Spanish to the Spanish-speaking caller. The trilingual video interpreter will interpret the hearing caller's Spanish message back to the sign language user. Spanish VRS is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM (Pacific Time).

Customer Services provides customers with information on video relay services, technical support and our Video Interpreters. Customers are encouraged to contact customer service for any type of questions. Simply click on 'Technical Support' at [www.relaycall.com/vrs/support.html](http://www.relaycall.com/vrs/support.html) and complete the web based customer service form. You will be taken to a list of answers to most frequently asked questions, which can be viewed



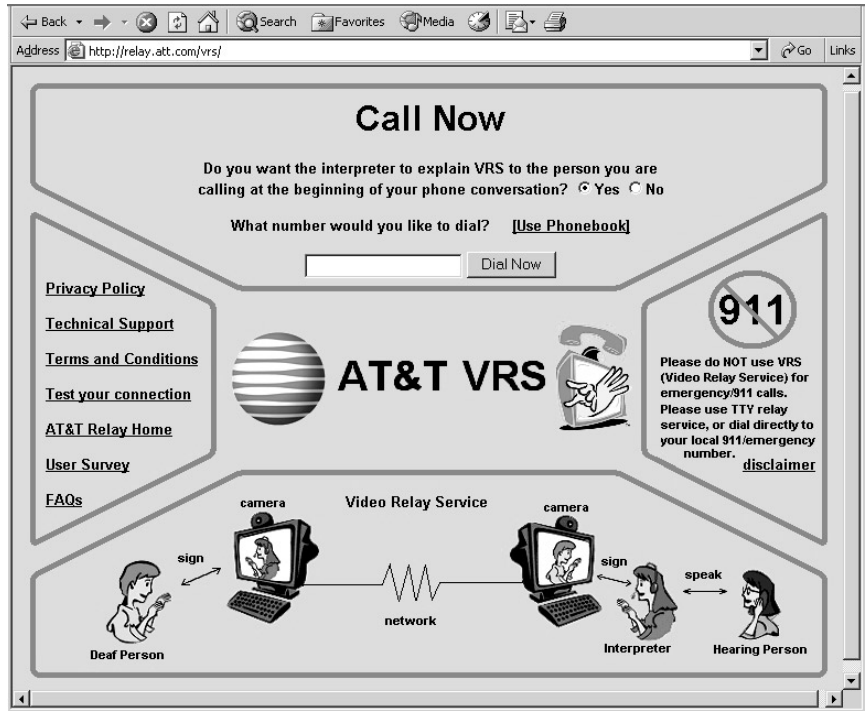
**Sue Decker**  
General Manager



at [www.relaycall.com/vrs/vrsfaq.html](http://www.relaycall.com/vrs/vrsfaq.html). Or you may submit your own specific questions on the technical support form at the bottom of the web page and receive an answer by email, usually within 24 to 48 business hours.

Parents who have traditionally had phone conversations with their children through TTY or text relay. With VRS these same parents have now embraced the opportunity to communicate with their children with emotions and expressions. With video relay services, their conversation is now enhanced by incorporating the emotional content of body language and facial expression.

AT&T has operated AT&T Telecommunications Relay Services for the deaf and hard of hearing for more than a decade, and was the first major telecommunications provider to do so. AT&T TRS has been the first to introduce many innovations to relay service, including Operator Services for the Deaf, relay services in Spanish and special features for the speech impaired.



Above is AT&T's VRS home page while below shows the screen during a conversation.

