

Technology for Your Child



CHOICES for Parents

P.O. Box 806045
Chicago, Illinois 60680-4121
Tel: 866.733.8729 (toll-free)
Tel: 312.523.6400 (v/tty)
E-mail: choicesforparents@yahoo.com
Web: www.choicesforparents.org

Professional members of CHOICES for Parents include: Alternatives in Education for the Hearing Impaired, Catholic Office of the Deaf, Chicago Hearing Society a division of Anixter Center, Child's Voice, Children's Memorial Hospital, Cochlear Americas, Deaf Access Program Mt. Sinai, Foundation for Speech and Hearing Rehabilitation, Hearing and Vision Connections, HITEC, Illinois Service Resource Center, International Center on Deafness and the Arts, Low Incidence Cooperative Agreement, MENDAC Institute on Early Childhood, and Sertoma Speech and Hearing Center.

As your child with a hearing loss grows, you will want to make your home as visual as possible. Regardless of the amount of hearing your child has, or doesn't have, the more he knows about what is happening around him, the better able he will be to understand his environment. This newsletter will review some of the technology that you and your family may be using throughout the years including TTYs, amplified phones, closed captioning, the Relay Service, video relay, alarm clocks and visual emergency alerting devices.

TTYs and Amplified Phones¹

TTYs and amplified phones can be obtained for free from the Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation (see below) if eligible, or purchased from HITEC², the Chicago Hearing Society³, or ICODA⁴.

TTY: A TTY (teletypewriter or telecommunications device) has a keyboard and a visual display. Features such as printers, answering machines, memory dialing, and cellular connections can be found on different models. To communicate over the phone, the TTY user can call another individual who has a TTY and have a direct conversation. If calling someone who does not have a TTY, the TTY user will call the Telecommunications Relay Service (see below).

CapTel (combination phone with captioning screen): A CapTel user is able to voice for himself but cannot hear well enough even on an amplified phone. CapTel calls are routed through the CapTel call center, where they are connected to the standard telephone user. At the call center, a specially trained operator (a captionist) uses a voice-recognition computer to convert all of the standard telephone user's

spoken words to text which is displayed on the CapTel phone user's screen. When the CapTel user speaks, his voice travels directly to the standard telephone user and when the standard telephone user responds, the words appear across the CapTel's screen for the CapTel user to read.

ITAC (Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation)⁵

The purpose of ITAC is to provide telecommunications access to people who are unable to use the standard telephone. This includes those who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, speech-disabled or deaf-blind. ITAC accomplishes this goal by providing the Illinois Relay Service and by issuing equipment that enables people with disabilities to communicate with standard telephone users.

ITAC has two main programs. Under the voucher program the user owns and is responsible for the upkeep of the equipment (amplified telephones and TTYs). Under the loan program ITAC owns and provides normal upkeep of the equipment (CapTel, TTY with LVD, and Braille phone).

To find out more information about the equipment issued, application requirements and eligibility, contact ITAC at 800.841.6167 (v/tty) or www.itactty.org⁶.

Closed Captioning⁷

Closed captioning allows persons with a hearing loss to have access to television programming by displaying the audio portion of a television program as text on the television screen.

Closed captioning provides a critical link to news, entertainment, and information for individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

1. "Babies and Hearing Loss" by CHOICES for Parents
2. HITEC, 8160 S. Madison St, Burr Ridge, IL 60527, phone: 800.288.8303, tty: 800.536.8890, www.hitec.com
3. www.chicagohearingociety.org and click on Product Sales
4. ICODA (International Center on Deafness and the Arts), www.icodaarts.org or call 847.509.8260
5. Information taken from www.itactty.org
6. Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation, 3001 Montvale Dr, Suite D, Springfield, IL 62704, 217.698.4170 or 800.841.6167 (v/tty), www.itactty.org
7. Information taken from www.fcc.gov (Federal Communications Commission)

Captions also help improve literacy skills. You can turn on closed captions through your remote control or on-screen menu.

Beginning in July 1993, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) required all analog television sets with screens 13 inches or larger sold or manufactured in the United States to contain built-in decoder circuitry to display closed captioning. Beginning July 1, 2002, the FCC also required that digital television (DTV) sets include closed captioning display capability.

In 1997, the FCC set a transition schedule requiring distributors to provide an increasing amount of captioned programming.

For more information on the FCC's closed captioning rules and requirements, as well as Spanish language captioning, exempt programming, and filing a complaint, contact the FCC at www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/caption.html⁸.

Illinois Relay Program

ITAC provides telecommunications relay service (TRS) in Illinois, through a contract with Sprint. Illinois Relay is a free service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

TTY users use relay to call people who use standard phones. A person using a standard phone may also call a TTY user through relay.

A person who uses a TTY types his or her end of the conversation to a Sprint Relay operator, who then reads their words aloud to the person at the other end of the line. The operator then types that person's spoken words and relays them to the TTY user as text. Both users can call 711 to reach the relay services or use 10 digit phone numbers based on the type of relay call you wish to make.

To make a relay call from a standard telephone, follow these steps:

- Dial 711 or the traditional 10 digit number for voice users.

- You will hear, "Sprint Relay operator [number]. May I have the number you are calling please?"
- Give the Sprint Relay operator (communication assistant) the area code and telephone number of the TTY user who you wish to call.
- The Sprint Relay operator will process your call, reading aloud what the TTY user types, and will type what you say back to the TTY user.
- Be sure to talk directly to your caller, avoid saying "tell him" or "tell her."
- Say "go ahead" at the end of your responses.

All Sprint Relay calls are strictly confidential. Federal law requires strict confidentiality for the communication assistants. No part of the conversation that takes place between two callers is revealed or stored in written or verbal form.

There are additional phone numbers (10 digit phone numbers) and options when using the relay service, including the person with a hearing loss using his own voice, using Spanish, and more. For more information about the relay service in Illinois, contact ITAC.

Video Relay Service

Several companies operate Video Relay Service (VRS), a free service for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community that enables anyone to conduct video relay calls with family, friends, or business associates through an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter via a high-speed Internet connection and a video relay solution (or VRS call option).

Video relay calls are placed over a high-speed or broadband Internet connection (i.e. DSL, cable, or T1 line) through a videophone appliance connected to a TV, or through a personal computer equipped with a Web camera and Sorenson EnVision SL (or Microsoft NetMeeting) software. The equipment can be used with any VRS ser-

vice. The deaf user sees an ASL interpreter on their TV and signs to the interpreter, who then contacts the hearing user via a standard phone line and relays the conversation between the two parties. (Two users with a videophone can talk directly with each other.) Hearing customers can also place video relay calls to any deaf or hard-of-hearing individual by simply dialing a toll free number with a standard telephone.

For more information about video relay, go to www.csdvrs.com, www.sprintvrs.com, or www.sorensonvrs.com.

Alarm Clocks⁹

Alarm clocks are always important to consider for your child; especially when he/she is school-age. Alarm clocks can wake up your child by any of the following options: flashing light, vibration (with a bed shaker), audio alarm with adjustable tone and volume, or any combination of these. Some alarm clocks can work as a receiver for an alerting system. Such systems alert the person with the hearing loss that the phone is ringing or that there is someone at the door. Alarm clocks are also available in smaller more portable designs that are convenient for traveling.

Visual Emergency/Warning Devices

There are various emergency/warning devices that are visual for your home. Some of these, such as fire alarms can be installed now, and some can be considered when your child is older or living on his own. For more information about emergency/warning devices, contact CHOICES for Parents.

When your child becomes older, or when communicating with an adult who has a hearing loss, you will encounter use of 2-way pagers and various computer technology. For more information, contact CHOICES for Parents.

8. Federal Communications Commission, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB), 445 12th St, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20554

9. Re-printed from www.hilec.com