

Interstate TRS Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes for October 1, 2021
Teleconference

ATTENDEES

Zainab Alkebsi, Chair, Deaf Consumers
Shannon Smith, Vice Chair, Hard of Hearing Community
Linda Vandeloop, Secretary, Interstate Telecommunications Providers/Contributors
Honorable Tim Schram, State Representative
Ron Bibler, TRS Users
Al Sonnenstrahl, Deaf Consumers
Steve Peck, NASRA
Jeff Rosen, TRS Providers
Bryen Yunashko, Deafblind Consumers
Phillip Hupf, Interstate Telecommunications Providers/Contributors
Honorable Andrew Fay, State Representative
Mark Tauscher, TRS Providers
Andrew Fitzenrider, Speech disabled Community
Holly Bise, NASRA

RLSA
Dave Rolka
Bob Loube
Mary Beth Osborne
Anmarie Jezorski
John McGrath
Garrett McGrath
Kane Christianson

FCC
Eliot Greenwald
Michael Scott

CONVENE

Chairperson Bibler greeted audience and called to order the Fall meeting of the TRS Advisory Council at 11:00 a.m. EDT.

FCC PRESENTATION

(Eliot Greenwald and Michael Scott)

Eliot Greenwald - TRS Docket Issues

On April 13, 2021, the Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau (CGB) certified ClearCaption to provide IP CTS on a fully automatic basis in addition to its CA-assisted service.

On May 21, 2021, the Commission adopted an NPRM on video relay service compensation. The comment period is complete and the FCC is reviewing the record and drafting a compensation order. The FCC has held ex parte meetings with each VRS provider.

On June 11, 2021, CGB granted CSD access to the TRS numbering directory so it can provide direct video calling services to its clients.

On June 17, 2021, CGB released a public notice seeking comment on a petition by Convo to raise the cap from the current 50% on VRS at-home call handling and to permit contract CAs to handle VRS calls on a permanent basis.

On June 25, 2021, CGB issued a Public Notice seeking comment on an IP CTS provider's proposal to freeze IP CTS rates at the level set last year. The comment period has closed.

On June 30, 2021, CGB released its annual TRS compensation order, which adopted rates, compensation levels for TRS, STS, CTS, and IP Relay services.

On July 16, 2021, CGB issued a Public Notice seeking comment on a Hamilton application amendment to seek authorization of use of ASR in addition to CA assisted for IP CTS. The comment period has closed.

On July 27, 2021, CGB issued a Public Notice seeking comment on an application from Tive, LLC seeking authority to be certified as a VRS provider. The comment period has closed.

On August 3, 2021, CGB issued a Public Notice seeking comment on a T-Mobile application to provide IP CTS using ASR in addition to CA-assisted IP CTS. The comment period is closed.

On August 6, 2021, the Commission released an NPRM seeking comment on proposals to revise the IP relay compensation methodology. Comments are due 30 days after the NPRM is published in the Federal Register, and reply comments are due 30 days after that. The item has not yet published in Federal Register.

On August 27, 2021, CGB released an order extending the pandemic waivers through December 31st. Late November and December, CGB will review the status of the pandemic to determine what to do next.

On August 31, 2021, CGB issued an order granting CaptionCall authorization to provide IP CTS using ASR in addition to CAs.

Michael Scott

In April of this year the Commission sought comment on whether updates to the FCC's CVAA rules were needed. The comment cycle for that closed in early July, and the record is being reviewed.

Also, in April the Commission released an FNPRM on text to 988. The comment period for that closed on August 10th, and the record is currently under review.

On May 12, 2021, the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program began providing a discount of \$50 a month for eligible households for broadband or up to \$75 on tribal lands and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, tablet, or desktop from our participating providers.

Also, in May the Commission adopted rules to implement the emergency connectivity fund that enables schools and libraries seeking funding for eligible equipment and broadband connectivity for students, school staff, and library patrons who would otherwise lack access sufficient for remote learning.

The State of the Lifeline market report was released in July.

Today, October 1, 2021, is the deadline for nominations for the 2021 FCC Chair's AAA awards.

On September 9, 2021, the Disability Advisory Committee held a meeting formed two new working groups that will start meeting soon - the wireline real-time text working group and the TRS use on videoconferencing platforms working group.

ROLKA LOUBE

Trends

IP CTS reported minutes are below the projection but in line with pre-pandemic volumes.

The recent announcement that federal relay services would transition from the GSA contract to services under the FCC. It is not anticipated that this will have a material impact on the fund.

Updates

A data request is sent out early each year to service providers and to state programs to identify costs of providing TRS services. The data is used to prepare information shared with the council and to develop the recommendation to the FCC. Rolka Loube is making some refinements to the data collection to allow better analytics and to increase consistency in the submissions. The changes will have to be approved by the Office of Management and Budget.

Mary Beth is working on a standardized Rate Review Subcommittee non-disclosure agreement. This agreement will be effective as long as the member is on the council.

The FCC directed Rolka Loube to implement the DATA Act which requires a report of information about recipients of money from the fund.

The FCC contracted with Rolka Loube to establish a centralized database for the National Deafblind Equipment Distribution Program whose primary focus is to enable the creation of similar annual reports that will provide information to improve the analytical capabilities of the Commission. This is not intended to be a public source of information. But the FCC may be willing to look into providing statistical data that does not reveal confidential information. The FCC is also willing to look into the possibility that the database could be used for the verification check for URD registration to streamline the registration process for deafblind individuals. Council members stressed the importance of securing the database and making sure confidential information is protected from unauthorized access.

Rolka Loube plans to change from LexisNexis to TransUnion as subcontractor for URD.

Rolka Loube is working on an identity validation database for IP CTS which is expected to be available mid-2022.

New Business

Discussion of sub-committees

Zainab moved and Bryen seconded the establishment of a Bylaws Subcommittee. The council approved the motion. Linda, Shannon, Bryen, Zainab, Holly, and Mark volunteered for the bylaws subcommittee.

Mary Beth said there is not a mandated subcommittee size. Robert's Rules indicate that if there are issues that the committees are considering that are less complex, then a smaller number of people on the subcommittee is best. If the issues are more complex, some additional members with expertise may be added. But most often a subcommittee should not exceed about 5-6 people.

Dave will review the Council budget to evaluate funding available for subcommittee meetings.

A URD Subcommittee to advise on service provider cost recovery related issues associated with the expansion of URD to IP CT was discussed. This subcommittee has already been created but has not been active. Ron agreed to check the membership of the committee so the group can develop its mission and start up.

The idea of forming a Lifeline subcommittee was discussed. It was widely recognized that there were gaps in lifeline with respect to people with disabilities but there was significant discussion about whether lifeline issues fall within the Council's charter. It was decided that the idea of a Lifeline subcommittee should be tabled until the Council could hear from lifeline experts. Jeff agreed to line up a speaker.

It was noted that the rates subcommittee should consider the impact of the growing volume of IP CTS that is handled by ASR.

Document Exchange

The Council discussed using a document sharing system. Consideration needs to be given to ensure accessibility and workarounds for those whose firewalls block access. Rolka/Loube will work with the council when information sharing is needed.

Election of Officers

Zainab was elected Chair

Shannon was elected Vice Chair

Linda was elected Secretary

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned