

FACT SHEET: TELEPHONE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH SPEECH DISABILITIES

If you have a speech disability and live in the USA (including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), you can now use a new, free telephone service 24 hours a day. It is also available (fewer hours of the day) in Sweden and Australia. This FCC mandated service, called Speech to Speech (STS), provides communication assistants (CAs) for people with difficulty being understood by the public on the telephone.

STS is provided through the TTY relay in each state. Unlike TTY, STS enables people with speech disabilities to communicate by voice through a CA as many people with speech disabilities have difficulty typing.

People with speech disabilities can dial toll free to reach a patient, trained CA who is familiar with many speech patterns and has excellent language recognition skills. This CA makes telephone calls for them and repeats their words exactly in a 3-way calling environment. Every month users make about 6,000 calls nationally. STS is the only way for many people to telephone others not accustomed to their speech. Many STS users have Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy, ALS, multiple sclerosis, or muscular dystrophy. Other users stutter or have had a laryngectomy. STS also helps some speech synthesizer users.

Bob Segalman, Ph.D. has cerebral palsy and developed the concept of STS. Now it makes telephone use much easier for him. To try out STS, report problems or get more information: Call 800-854-7784 and ask for Dr. Bob Segalman (direct 916-263-8689). You may also visit the STS website: <http://www.stsnews.com/> or contact Katherine Keller at stslistserv@stsnews.com to place you on the STS List Serve.

Bob is gathering support letters to insure that every state implements an STS Outreach Service to tell people with speech disabilities about STS.. If you're willing to sign a support letter, please e-mail Bob at: bsegalma@dor.ca.gov and indicate which state you live in and request a draft.

For a list of U. S. Speech-to-Speech access numbers go to:
<http://www.stsnews.com/Pages/STSDial-UpTelnumbers.html>

Australia provides STS.

Contact: Ace.Tom.McCaul@uq.net.au (Tom McCaul).

Sweden has just extended its STS trial for one year.