



## **Direct Video Communications between Government/Businesses and Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind or Have a Speech Disability**

Thousands of deaf and hard of hearing individuals who communicate in American Sign Language (ASL) use third-party communication assistants over video relay services (VRS) to place telephone calls to customer assistance divisions of government agencies and businesses in the United States every day. To improve these interactions, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Disability Rights Office has implemented a direct video communications solution – launching an ASL Consumer Support Line in June 2014 – the first of its kind in the federal government.

The FCC's ASL Consumer Support Line allows users to make video calls directly to the FCC to obtain assistance and information about issues under the FCC's jurisdiction. Analysis of calls received reveals a very high consumer satisfaction rate.

The benefits of direct video communications are several:

- **Improved Communications** – Direct video access minimizes misinterpretation of relayed information, makes more effective use of time, and enables ASL users to express themselves in an unfiltered and visual manner that is comfortable, natural and native to them.
- **Career Opportunities** – Employing deaf or hard of hearing individuals fluent in sign language to handle customer service video calls will help federal agencies and private businesses expand hiring opportunities for these individuals. President Obama's Executive Order 13548 (signed in 2010) directs federal agencies to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- **A Simple Solution to Implement** – The technology needed to implement a direct video communications system is readily obtainable, affordable and easy to set up. For example, the FCC's ASL Consumer Support Line system operates over the same technology used for VRS, so consumers with videophones do not have to purchase any additional equipment or software to make direct video calls.
- **Secure Communications** – With proper configuration, agencies can use a high-speed broadband and their own internal networks without compromising security or facing potential barriers created by firewalls.
- **Cost Savings** – Since the FCC's ASL Consumer Support Line was established, the amount of staff time spent supporting VRS calls to the FCC's main toll-free number has nearly been eliminated. The replacement of three-way interpreted calls with two-way direct calls is a cost savings to the public.

Given the various advantages of direct video communications, the FCC is encouraging federal and private entities to make this form of communication a core component of their contact center strategy. To assist in achieving this goal, the FCC is currently developing a direct video communications platform solution. The technical guidance needed to utilize this solution for direct communications will be made freely available for interested parties in the near future. For more information, contact Alok Doshi, [alok.doshi@fcc.gov](mailto:alok.doshi@fcc.gov).