



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Communications Services for Incarcerated People with Disabilities

The Federal Communications Commission has adopted rules designed to increase access to communications services for incarcerated people with disabilities. This FAQ addresses questions that incarcerated people and their families may have about the services available to them.

What’s covered by the FCC’s rules on communications services for incarcerated people with disabilities?

The FCC’s rules require providers of incarcerated people’s communications services (IPCS) to provide access to telecommunications relay services (TRS) and point-to-point video service for incarcerated people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind or who have a speech disability.

What’s NOT covered by the FCC’s rules?

The FCC’s rules apply to providers of IPCS, not to correctional authorities. The incarcerated person’s access to services depends on the correctional authority’s consent. The U.S. Department of Justice is in charge of accessibility rules that apply to correctional authorities.

The FCC’s rules do not cover communication devices and services (such as in-person or virtual interpreting services) for in-person visits to incarcerated people with disabilities.

What communication services do IPCS providers have to provide for incarcerated people with hearing or speech disabilities?

Starting January 1, 2024, the type of services that must be provided in a correctional facility depends on the following:

- The size of the incarcerated population in all the correctional facilities run by either the city, county, state, or federal law enforcement agency, and
- Whether broadband internet access is available at the facility.

If the total of correctional facilities run by a law enforcement agency have an “average daily population” of **50 or more** incarcerated people and available broadband internet access service, the IPCS provider in such a correctional facility must provide the following:

- Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS).
- Internet Protocol Relay Service (IP Relay).
- Video Relay Service (VRS).
- A point-to-point video service that allows direct communication between people who use American Sign Language (ASL).
- TTY-based relay service, and
- Speech-to-Speech Relay Service (STS).



If the total of correctional facilities run by a law enforcement agency has an “average daily population” of **50 or more** incarcerated people and **no** broadband internet access service, the IPCS providers in such a correctional facility must provide:

- Non-Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (CTS);
- TTY-based relay service; and
- STS.

If the total correctional facilities run by a law enforcement agency have an “average daily population” less **than 50** incarcerated persons, the IPCS provider in such correctional facilities must provide:

- TTY-based relay service and
- STS.

IPCS providers must provide access to at least one certified provider of each required form of TRS.

IPCS providers must make available appropriate screen-equipped communications devices for using these services, such as tablets, smartphones, and videophones, as well as the software required to enable communication.

How can an incarcerated person sign up for TRS?

Inform the correctional facility that you have a hearing or speech disability and that you request access to TRS. For some types of relay service, you also need to register with the TRS provider serving the facility.

You must register with the TRS provider to use VRS, IP CTS, CTS, or IP Relay:

- If you already have registered with a TRS provider, you may be able to log in under your existing registration.
- If you have not registered with a TRS provider, you must follow the process at your correctional facility to submit registration information.
- If your correctional facility has a system (“enterprise”) registration, you do not need to register individually.
 - Enterprise registration is currently available for VRS. The FCC is considering whether to allow enterprise registration for IP CTS.
- VRS and IP CTS providers must submit user registrations to the FCC (that is, the TRS user registration administrator) for verification.

You do not need to register with the TRS provider to use TTY-based TRS or STS.

Does an incarcerated person have to pay to use TRS?

IPCS providers **cannot** collect a charge or fee from any party for a call using VRS, IP Relay, TTY-based TRS, or STS, or for the use of a device or service to use these relay services.

An IPCS provider **can** charge for a call using IP CTS, CTS, or ASL point-to-point video, but the total charge cannot be more than the provider’s charge for a voice telephone call of the same duration, distance, type and time-of-day at the same correctional facility. This total cost includes any charge for the use of a device or service.

A provider **can** charge for a TTY-to-TTY call, but the total charge cannot exceed 25 percent of the applicable per-minute rate for a voice telephone call of the same duration, distance, type, and time-of-day at the same correctional facility. This total charge includes any charge for the use of a device or service.



What are the rules on monitoring TRS calls made in correctional facilities?

Employees of an IPCS provider or correctional facility may monitor and record relay service calls, just as they can with conventional telephone calls. Specific privacy and confidentiality rules apply only to TRS providers and their communications assistants (the relay service staff who handle the interpreting of speech to text or sign language, and vice versa).

What are “correctional facilities?”

Jail: A facility of a local, state, or federal law enforcement agency that is used primarily to hold individuals who are awaiting trial, are incarcerated for one year or less, or are awaiting transfer to another facility. This includes:

- Facilities operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or their contractors;
- Facilities operated by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) or their contractors;
- Secure mental health facilities;
- Juvenile detention facilities; or
- Private facilities that primarily house city, county, and regional incarcerated people.

Prison: A facility of a territorial, state, or federal agency that is used primarily to hold individuals convicted of felonies and incarcerated for more than one year. This includes:

- Public and private contractors; or
- “Jails” where the majority of incarcerated people are post-conviction and incarcerated for more than one year.

Where can I find more information about communications access for incarcerated people with communication disabilities?

- You can read the rule itself, 47 CFR § 64.6040, at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-64/subpart-FF/section-64.6040>
- You can learn about the registration requirements for IP CTS and VRS, 47 CFR § 64.611(k), at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-64#64.611>
- For specific questions, you can contact the Disability Rights Office at: 202-418-2517 (voice), or 844-432-2275 (videophone), by e-mail to dro@fcc.gov, or visit the DRO website at www.fcc.gov/accessibility.

More information on TRS

For more information about the various types of TRS, see the FCC's consumer guide (www.fcc.gov/guides/telecommunications-relay-service-trs) or visit the website of our Disability Rights Office (www.fcc.gov/accessibility).

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275



- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

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