



United States Department of Agriculture  
Rural Development

RD AN No. 4472 (1901-E)  
September 3, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)  
Teletypewriter (TTY) Numbers

**TO:** National Office Officials  
Acting State Directors

**ATTN:** Rural Development Program Directors, Legislative and Public Affairs  
Staff, State Civil Rights Managers and Coordinators, and Administrative  
Program Directors

**FROM:** Sherie Hinton Henry (*Signed by Sherie Hinton Henry*)  
Administrator  
Operations and Management

**PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:**

The purpose of this Administrative Notice (AN) is to clarify the recent Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) change for telephone access for persons with hearing or speech disabilities.

Current Telecommunication Relay Services (TRS) access numbers for each State have been replaced with a new 3-digit access number. The new number is 711. TRS facilitates telephone conversations between people with a hearing or speech disability and other individuals. Both voice and TRS users will be able to initiate a call from any telephone, anywhere in the United States, without having to dial a 7 or 10-digit access number.

The 711 dialing requirement **only applies to telephone "carrier" companies** that provide TRS services. The requirement will not stop the public's use of TDD/TTY lines and equipment.

**EXPIRATION DATE:**  
September 30, 2010

**FILING INSTRUCTIONS:**  
Preceding RD Instruction 1901-E

1400 Independence Ave, SW • Washington, DC 20250-0700  
Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

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"USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender."  
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Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

The TRS operates using a three person system, which consists of the caller, a Communication Assistant, and the receiver of the call. This is one way to communicate. Another way to communicate is person to person (TDD/TTY to TDD/TTY). This allows a caller using TDD/TTY telephone equipment to have direct communication ability with the receiver of the call that also has TDD/TTY telephone equipment.

Rural Development offices must retain TDD/TTY phone lines for customers or beneficiaries with a hearing or speech disability who wish to call them directly without using a three person system. Please take the appropriate action to reinstall TDD/TTY lines that were removed and provide training to staff on its operation. Continue to make available the TDD/TTY numbers on all forms of media, advertisement, and nondiscrimination statements.

**COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN:**

There are no previous ANs regarding this subject.

**IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The 711 system broadens the available communication abilities for persons with hearing and speech disabilities. With the assistance of the relay service, Rural Development will be able to provide the information and assistance requested. When Rural Development field staff receives a call from a TRS Communication Assistant stating, "Hello this is the relay service," do not hang up or direct them to call the State Office TDD/TTY number. Proceed with the call and provide the customer with the requested assistance or information.

**Assisted Program Compliance**

USDA issued 7 CFR 15b which implemented Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 on June 10, 1982, for assisted programs. Section 15b.4 (d) "Communications" states, "Recipients shall take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with their applicants, employees, and beneficiaries are available to persons with impaired vision and hearing."

Rural Development's Rural Utilities' telephone borrowers who participate in the TRS must comply with the 711 requirements. This requirement will be enforced through FCC regulation 47 CFR 64.601 – 64.606 for the provisions of TRS pursuant to Title IV of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Rural Development borrowers who participate in the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8/515 Rural Rental Housing Programs must comply with HUD's requirement to provide a telecommunication device in all project offices for the hearing or speech impaired.

Rural Development does not require **recipients** to have TDD/TTY equipment, as long as an equivalent method of communication with hearing and speech impaired persons is available, such as a State TRS.

Where it is determined the State TRS system is not considered equivalent, then a recipient is required to obtain TDD/TTY equipment for communication with hearing or speech impaired persons. To determine your State's compliance, please contact HUD or the FCC.

### **Conducted Program Compliance**

USDA's conducted programs, such as Single Family Housing, are covered in 7 CFR 15e, section 15e.160 (a) (2) which states, "Where the agency communicates with applicants and beneficiaries by telephone, telecommunication devices for deaf persons (TDD/TTY)'s or equally effective telecommunication systems shall be used to communicate with persons with impaired hearing." It is Rural Development's policy for the State Office to install the TDD/TTY device rather than have all local offices within the State obtain TDD/TTY equipment. The State Office TDD/TTY numbers are published on all correspondence within the State to comply with this regulation.

If you have questions regarding this Administrative Notice, please contact Carlton L. Lewis, Civil Rights Staff, Program Compliance Branch Manager. Mr. Lewis can be reached at (202) 692-0097 (Voice), (202) 692-0107(TDD) or (202) 692-0305 (Fax).

Sent by electronic mail September 15, 2009 at 3:10 p.m. by the Civil Right Staff.  
National Office Officials and State Directors should advise all personnel as appropriate.