



NEWS

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See *MCI v. FCC*, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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VIDEO RELAY SERVICE PROVIDER CSDVRS TO PAY NEARLY \$1.4 MILLION TO SETTLE INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALLEGED IMPROPER USE OF FCC'S TRS FUND

Consent Decree Includes Compliance Plan to Prevent Future Violations

Washington, D.C. – A provider of Video Relay Services (VRS), which are used by people with hearing and speech disabilities to place telephone calls, has agreed to pay nearly \$1.4 million to settle two federal investigations. The settlement resolves allegations of improper payments from the federal Fund that supports VRS, an Internet-based form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS).

The 2011 investigations by the FCC's Enforcement Bureau examined whether the provider, CSDVRS, LLC, improperly billed the TRS Fund for VRS calls that were actually generated by its own employees. Other issues in the investigations included whether the company routed calls through uncertified providers and whether a broadband application used by the company failed to fully transmit calls, including calls to emergency responders.

In the consent decree released today, CSDVRS agreed to repay the TRS Fund more than \$480,000 in overpayments and interest. In addition, the company will make a \$900,000 voluntary contribution to the U.S. Treasury. The company also must implement a robust compliance plan including new operating procedures, comprehensive re-training of its employees and contractors, and periodic reporting requirements.

“Consumers with hearing and speech disabilities rely on the TRS Fund for the kind of basic communications that most Americans take for granted – picking up the phone and calling a family member, the police department, or even a potential employer,” said Michele Ellison, chief of the Enforcement Bureau. Ms. Ellison added, “This settlement is the latest in the Commission’s efforts to ensure the continued integrity of the Fund and the reliability and quality of TRS service. We urge all TRS providers to take note and toe the line, as we expect strict compliance in this area.”

TRS services enable people with hearing and speech disabilities to have telephone conversations with hearing people worldwide using an interpreter. The VRS provided by CSDVRS and others is an Internet-based form of TRS that enables use of American Sign Language. Using broadband video over a computer or other device, the caller speaks in sign language to the VRS's provider's interpreter, who relays the call in real time to the hearing recipient. The service has become increasingly important because conversations can be conducted more quickly and seamlessly than through traditional text-based TRS services.

The FCC's TRS Fund compensates TRS providers for reasonable costs of providing service for interstate calls. TRS is funded from a fee paid for by subscribers of interstate telecommunications services. Congress created the TRS program in Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, codified at Section 225 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (Act). Under the Act, the Commission must ensure the provision of TRS that is functionally equivalent to voice telephone service. The Commission's TRS regulations set forth mandatory minimum standards that TRS providers must follow to meet this functional equivalency mandate.

The consent decree is available at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-12-1844A1.pdf

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