

# CALLER

THE COMMONWEALTH

Virginia Relay: Telecommunications services for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafblind or have difficulty speaking

Winter 2021

## Exciting news from VDDHH!



**Felecia Payne** was recently appointed the new Virginia Relay Manager with Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH).

Felecia attended Reynolds Community College's Interpreter Training Program and became an interpreter in 2006. During the first two years of her interpreting career, she worked side-by-side with an amazing team of experienced interpreters for Hanover School System before making the transition to work at Purple Communications in 2008.

Shortly after joining Purple, Felecia earned her National Interpreting Certification and held various roles at Purple Communications during her 13 years there. Those roles included Interpreter, VRS Trainer, Center Supervisor, Center Manager and Regional Manager of Operations. As Regional Manager, Felecia was responsible for overseeing seven centers in three states along the east coast.

Felecia's goal is to grow Virginia Relay and ensure that everyone throughout the Commonwealth who needs services is aware of the resources available.

Felecia is married to Harry and has a 17-year-old son, Justin, who is a senior in high school. Felecia also has an additional family member, Kaiser, who is the sweetest dog in the world!

*"I would like for people to know that Virginia Relay is here and available to help bridge any communication gaps that exist for them," said Felecia. "I would also like ensure that people are aware of the connection between Virginia Relay and the Technology Assistance Program so that residents can take full advantage of all of the services and equipment that we have."*

# Real-Time Text

## What is Real-Time Text?

Real-Time Text (RTT) is a technology that allows text to be sent as soon as it is typed, making it very similar to having a conversation in person.

With RTT, there is no need to press a “send” key like you would for SMS, chat or other types of texting. A recipient can read a message as the sender is typing it. This can be critical for emergency calls to 911 or other situations.

For example, the user may be able to see partial responses and develop a response before the entire message is complete. This can help reduce confusion and better connect emergency 911 services in locations that support RTT.

## Advantages to Real-Time Text

In addition to improving accessible emergency communications, RTT has several advantages over TTY:

- RTT can eliminate the need to purchase specialized devices, such as TTYs, to send text in real time over wireless phones.
- Calls using RTT can be sent and received using your own ten-digit phone number.
- Both parties on an RTT call can send and receive text in real time at the same time, unlike TTYs, which requires taking turns.
- RTT is more reliable than TTY technology over IP networks – this means there will be less garbling and fewer drop-offs on calls.
- RTT provides callers with more characters for typing than TTYs do. For example, with RTT, you can use the “@” key, alphabets in multiple languages, and emojis, allowing conversations using the full “international character set.”
- Both RTT and voice can be used, either at the same time or interchangeably, during the same call.

**Stay ahead of the curve, apply today!**



**Each year, our contracted relay service provider, Hamilton Relay, awards a \$500 scholarship to one eligible applicant in Virginia.**

To qualify, applicants must be a graduating senior who is Deaf, DeafBlind, hard of hearing or has difficulty speaking. The required application materials must be submitted prior to the January 31, 2022 deadline.

Download the Scholarship Guidelines and Application at [hamiltonrelay.com/scholarship](https://hamiltonrelay.com/scholarship). For additional information, email [scholarship@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:scholarship@hamiltonrelay.com).



# Want to Access RTT Features on Your Phone? Here's How!

## Apple with iOS 10 or later:

1. Go to **Settings** > **Accessibility** > **RTT/TTY**.
2. Turn on **Software RTT/TTY** or **Hardware TTY**.
3. Tap **Relay Number** and enter a phone number for RTT/TTY relay calls.
4. If you want to send characters as you type them, turn on **Send Immediately**. Or to type full messages before you send, turn off **Send Immediately**.
5. To answer every call as RTT/TTY, turn on **Answer All Calls as RTT/TTY**.\*
6. If you want to answer and make RTT/TTY calls from an external RTT/TTY device instead of your iPhone, turn on **Hardware TTY**.

\* If you turn on **Answer All Calls as RTT/TTY**, you won't get voice calls anymore.

## Google Pixel

1. From a Home screen, tap the **Phone icon** 📞 (lower-left). If unavailable, swipe up from the middle to display all apps then tap **Phone**.
2. Tap the **Menu icon** ☰ (upper-right) then tap **Settings**.
3. Tap **Accessibility**.
4. Tap **Real Time Text (RTT)**, then tap one of the following:
  - Selected with blue dot.
    - Not visible
    - Visible during call
    - Always visible

## Samsung

1. From a Home screen, swipe up or down from the center of the display to access the apps screen. **These instructions only apply to Standard mode and the default Home screen layout.**
2. Navigate: **Settings** ⚙️ > **Accessibility** > **Hearing enhancements**.
3. Tap **Real-Time Text**.
4. Tap **Always Visible** to turn the RTT keyboard on  or off .

## LG

1. From a Home screen, tap the **Phone Icon** 📞 (lower-left).
2. If unavailable, scroll to display all apps then tap **Phone** 📞.
3. Navigate: **Menu icon** ☰ (upper-right) > **Call Settings** > **Additional Settings**.
4. Tap **Real-Time Text (RTT) Keyboard** to turn on .
5. You won't be able to make video calls or merge calls while RTT is on.
6. Tap the **Back icon** ⬅️ (upper-left) several times to return to the calling screen.

## Motorola

1. From a Home screen, tap **Phone** 📞 (lower-left). If unavailable, swipe up on a Home screen to access all apps, then tap **Phone**.
2. Navigate: **Menu icon** ☰ (upper-right) > **Settings** > **Accessibility**.
3. Tap **Real-Time Text (RTT) Call** to turn on . If prompted with a 'No Video Calls or Call Merging' message, tap **OK** to accept. Then tap the **Back icon** ⬅️ (upper-left) several times to return to the calling screen.



## Congratulations on your retirement, Elaine!

What started as a two-week temporary job assignment became a 25-year career at VDDHH! Elaine Ziehl retired as the Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) Coordinator on September 30.

She will be greatly missed by staff and interpreters! Elaine would reassure nervous interpreters taking their assessment tests and provide comfort food to the VDDHH staff!

Elaine is looking forward to spending more time with her family, especially her grandchildren.

We thank Elaine for 25 years of public service and send our best wishes on her next journey.

VDDHH Director Eric Raff (left) presenting Elaine Ziehl (right) with a certificate of retirement during her retirement party.



# VDDHH is recruiting!



Looking for a new opportunity with additional benefits and potential growth? The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) is currently hiring in the Richmond, Virginia area.

These positions address a wide range of issues facing the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. American Sign Language fluency may be required or preferred for the role.

## Community Services Manager

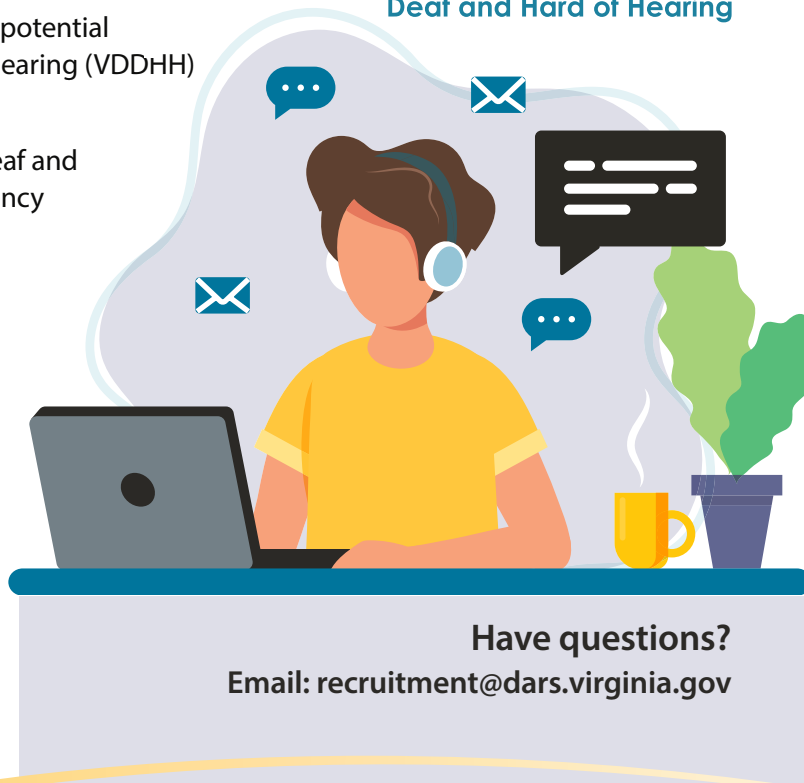
To learn more and apply, visit:  
[virginiajobs.peopleadmin.com/postings/235875](http://virginiajobs.peopleadmin.com/postings/235875)

## Virginia Quality Assurance Screening Coordinator

To learn more and apply, visit:  
[virginiajobs.peopleadmin.com/postings/251380](http://virginiajobs.peopleadmin.com/postings/251380)

## Administrative Assistant

To learn more and apply, visit:  
[virginiajobs.peopleadmin.com/postings/23735](http://virginiajobs.peopleadmin.com/postings/23735)



# Outreach Events

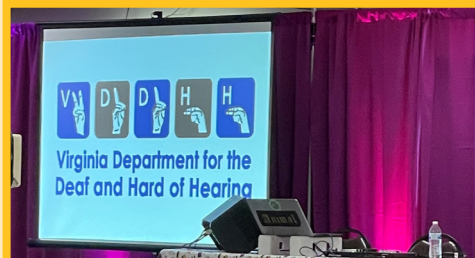
Outreach Coordinator Eric Alvillar attended a couple of events in person over the summer, including Black Pride RVA and Side by Side Springtime in Summer Fundraiser.



**Eric will be out and about this fall and winter! You can stop by and see him at this event:**

**March 16 - 19**  
**SHAV Conference**  
**Norfolk**

**If you'd like to book outreach with Eric, contact him at [eric.alvillar@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:eric.alvillar@hamiltonrelay.com)**



# Check out the newest Virginia Relay Partners!

In Virginia, there are thousands of people who are deaf, hard of hearing or who have difficulty speaking who count on Virginia Relay to connect with standard telephone users. Each day, hundreds of business calls are made through Virginia Relay. However, businesses that are unfamiliar with Virginia Relay may accidentally hang up on Relay callers who mistake the call for a telemarketer.

**Virginia Relay Partner** is a free program designed to eliminate hang-ups that many Relay users experience by educating businesses on how to identify, receive and place Relay calls. Here are our newest Partners!

## **Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center**

Chesterfield  
804-658-3341  
latinosenvirginia.org

## **Falls Church McLean Children's Center**

Falls Church  
703-534-4907  
fcmcc.org

## **New Directions Center**

Staunton  
540-886-6800  
newdirectionscenter.org

## **The Haven Shelter & Services, Inc.**

Warsaw  
804-333-1099  
havenshelter.org

## **Volunteers of America**

Alexandria  
703-341-5000  
voa.org

To sign up to be a Relay Partner or to recommend a business for training, contact Virginia Relay Outreach Coordinator Eric Alvillar at [eric.alvillar@hamiltonrelay.com](mailto:eric.alvillar@hamiltonrelay.com).

## New Virginia Relay Contract Awarded to Hamilton Relay

After a competitive procurement process, the Commonwealth of Virginia selected Hamilton Relay as the Telecommunications Relay and Captioned Telephone Service provider for Virginia Relay. The new contract continues accessible telecommunication services provided to Virginians who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind or have difficulty speaking.

Eric Raff, Director of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH), announced the new agreement noting, "While providing the latest in relay technology and calling features, the new contract also offers us several cost-saving measures and flexible pricing to meet the challenges of the Commonwealth's current calling patterns."

"As a new member to the Virginia Relay team, I look forward to continuing our work with Hamilton Relay," said Felecia Payne, VDDHH Virginia Relay Manager. "I am excited to build upon the high-quality services and outreach efforts my fellow Virginians have come to know since 1991."

Beth Slough, Director of Account Management for Hamilton Relay, remarked, "The opportunity to continue serving residents of Virginia is one that we take on with great excitement. Hamilton Relay is committed to bringing the life-

changing benefits that relay services provide to individuals across the Commonwealth of Virginia."

### **About Virginia Relay**

A free public service, Virginia Relay enables people who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind or speech disabled to communicate with standard telephone users. A specially trained Virginia Relay Communication Assistant (CA) relays the conversation between the two parties.

Relay services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year with no limit on the number or length of calls a user may make. By law, every call is handled with the strictest confidentiality. Special features are also available for Spanish-speaking and sign language users. Anyone can make a Virginia Relay call just by dialing 711.

### **About VDDHH**

Established in 1972, the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing promotes accessible communication so that persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing may fully participate in programs, services and opportunities throughout the Commonwealth. In addition to Virginia Relay, programs include Community Services, Emergency Preparedness, Interpreter Screening and Referral and a Technology Assistance Program for the distribution of adaptive communication devices.

### **About Hamilton Relay**

Hamilton Relay is a division of Hamilton Telecommunications, a diversified telecommunications service provider headquartered in Aurora, Nebraska. Hamilton currently has seven relay centers located across the nation, provides contracted Traditional Relay and Captioned Telephone services through 21 contracts in 15 states, the District of Columbia and the Island of Saipan, and provides internet-based Captioned Telephone services nationwide.



For more information about Virginia Relay and VDDHH, visit [varelay.org](http://varelay.org) or contact us at **800-552-7917**.

To learn more about Hamilton Relay, visit [HamiltonRelay.com](http://HamiltonRelay.com).

Visit us at [www.varelay.org](http://www.varelay.org)



### Find Us on Facebook!

Virginia Relay and VDDHH both have Facebook pages! Just type "Virginia Relay" or "VDDHH" in Facebook's search field and click the "Like" button at the top of the page to get regular updates on Virginia news, events and more.

## VDDHH Staff

### Eric Raff

Director

### Felecia Payne

Virginia Relay Manager

### Christine Ruderson

TAP Manager

### Karen Brimm

Community Services Manager

### Paul Stuessy

Community Services Specialist

### Pamela Dorman

Interpreter Services Program  
Specialist

### Rhonda Jeter

Business Manager

### Linda Thornton

Administrative Assistant

### Sherry Ross

Administrative Assistant



Virginia Department for the  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

### 2022 VDDHH Advisory Board Meetings

Wednesday, February 2

Wednesday, May 4

Wednesday, August 3

Wednesday, November 2

## Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC)

### Consumer Members:

#### **Paige Berry**

Representing Hearing Relay Users

#### **Kerry Byrne**

Representing Virginia Centers for  
Independent Living

#### **Alissa Conover**

Representing Virginia Association of  
the Deaf (VAD)

#### **Lisa Harbour**

Representing Association of  
Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA)

#### **Doral Jackson**

Representing Hearing Relay Users

#### **Rebecca Ladew**

Representing Speech-to-Speech Users

#### **Jenny McKenzie**

Representing Virginia Association of  
the DeafBlind (VADB)

#### **Christine Ross**

Representing Video Relay Service Users

#### **Linda Wallace**

Representing Hearing Loss Association  
of America (HLAA) Virginia Chapters

### Non-Voting Members:

#### **Eric Alvillar**

Hamilton Relay

#### **Christa Cervantes**

Hamilton Relay

#### **Mary Nunnally**

Department for Aging and  
Rehabilitative Services

#### **Eric Raff**

VDDHH Director

#### **Felecia Payne**

Virginia Relay Manager