



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

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DSHS sponsors CapTel public service announcements through Washington Relay

OLYMPIA – A free, captioned telephone service that enables the use of voice-recognition technology to translate spoken messages into text captions is now available to low-income Washington residents.

The new service is featured in a series of public service announcements across the state in February and March. The Department of Social and Health Service's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) has partnered with Sprint Relay to run the announcements on television and radio.

With CapTel Service, a person with hearing loss can read an incoming message and speak directly to the caller. Phones can be obtained from ODHH <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/odhh/Telecommunications/TED/Default.shtml> or purchased directly from CapTel Inc. The phones can be used to process and respond to phone calls.

“Our message is to promote public awareness about the availability of this invaluable service to hard of hearing or deaf people who need access to telephone services,” said Eric Raff, director of the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

About 20,000 people with a hearing loss rely on Washington Relay to make approximately 45,000 calls per month, Raff said.”

The TV public service announcement includes two stories that demonstrate how CapTel can have a positive effect in the life of person with hearing loss. “The Gift” features an elderly man who receives a CapTel phone from his daughter that enables him to communicate with his friends. “Going Fishing” features a young boy and his mother who are able to use the service to talk to a hard-of-hearing relative about fishing.

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