



Information for organisations with clients who are deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired

A Telecommunications Relay Service for meeting the telephone communication needs of deaf, hearing impaired and speech impaired people has been established in New Zealand under the Telecommunications Service Obligations regulatory framework. The Relay Service is available on a nationwide basis and is marketed under the name New Zealand Relay.

Sprint International New Zealand has been appointed the relay service provider under an agreement with the Crown that is administered by the Ministry of Economic Development.

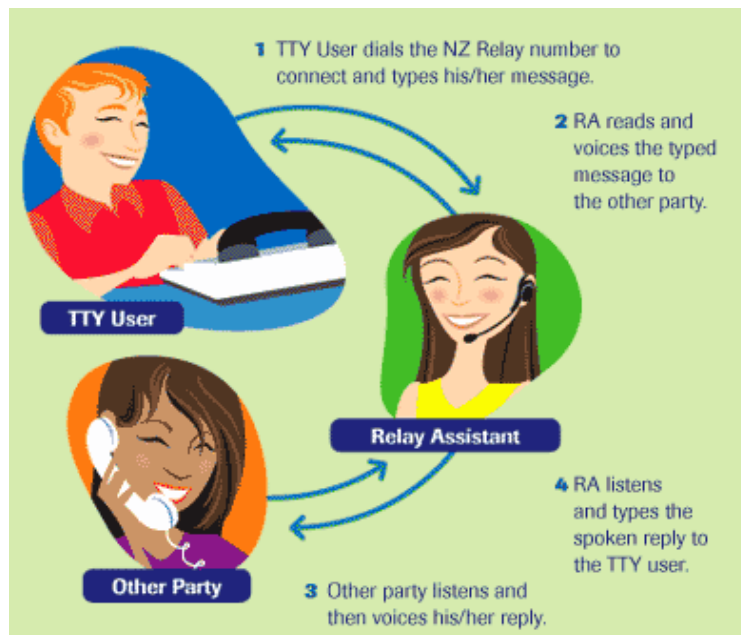
The relay service works by a Relay Assistant relaying a telephone call between a deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired person and a hearing person. The Relay Assistant acts as a bridge relaying the entire conversation between the relay users. To make relay calls the relay system can be accessed by dial-up using a telephone or TTY¹, and can also be accessed through the Internet Relay web site.

There are currently three basic types of relay calling:

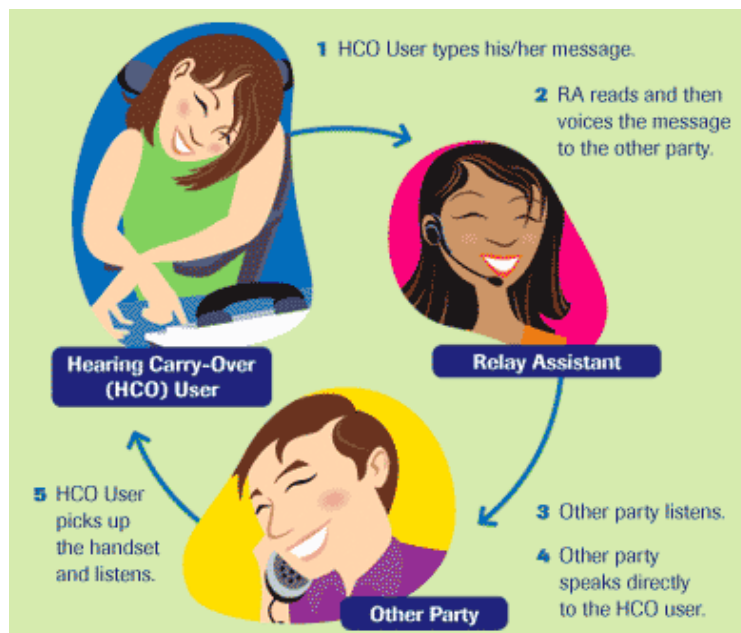
- Text (TTY) to Voice
- Hearing Carry Over (HCO)
- Voice Carry Over (VCO)

¹ Teletypewriter or textphone (see pictures below)

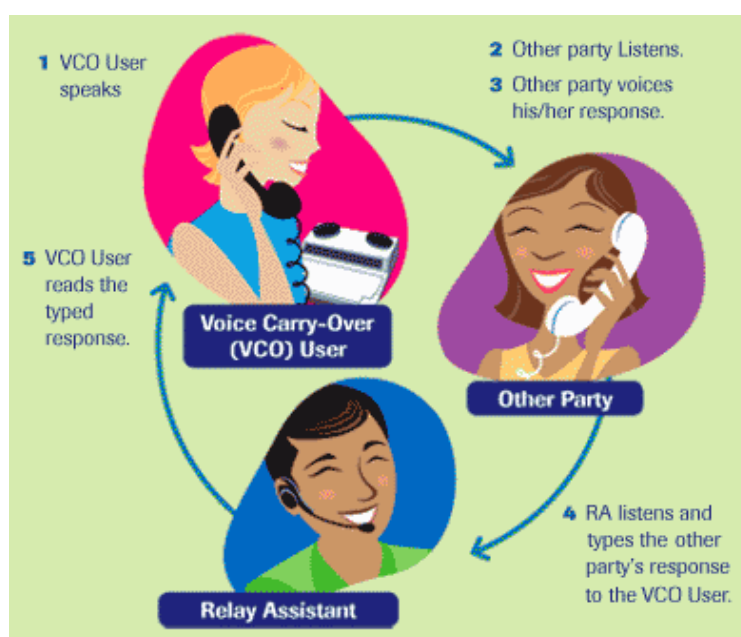
Text (TTY) to Voice



Hearing Carry Over (HCO)



Voice Carry Over (VCO)



Non-discrimination and Privacy

The Human Rights Commission has determined that disabled people should have access to the telecommunications network that is equivalent to that for other New Zealanders. New Zealand Relay enables organisations to meet this requirement by making it possible for a deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired person to converse with an organisation through a Relay Assistant who provides a service similar to a traditional translation service. Although organisations must protect client personal information, this need not prevent them from accepting a relay call.

Most organisations that deal with clients by telephone will already have protocols in place that allow them to satisfactorily identify clients over the phone. These protocols can usually be easily adapted to allow organisations to satisfy themselves that they are communicating with their client via a Relay Assistant.

See Appendix 1 for a template flow diagram for the handling of client relay calls.

Confidentiality of Relay Calls

Relay Assistants simply act as an intermediary between a Relay User and the individual or organisation with whom the Relay User wishes to converse.

All NZ Relay Service operators or Relay Assistants sign a strict confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 2) to ensure the privacy of information received in the course of their interaction with Relay Users. Records of a relay conversation are deleted when the Relay User disconnects the relay call.

If an organisation is concerned about the identity of a Relay User, then security questions can be asked of the Relay User through the Relay Assistant acting with the Relay User's authority.

Speech to Speech Service Trial

A trial of a speech to speech (STS) relay service commenced in August 2005 and is scheduled to continue until mid 2006. This service assists people who have a speech impairment e.g. born with a speech impediment, suffer a stroke that impairs their speech, have had larynx surgery, use a speech synthesizer, have suffered head injuries, or have other speech impairments. Relay Assistants are trained to help speech impaired people be understood by anybody receiving calls from them, for example the Relay Assistants can repeat words or sentences that are not understood by the other party. The other party responds by speaking directly to the speech impaired person in the same way as for a Hearing Carry Over call. The essential difference is that the caller only requires a telephone and not a textphone or TTY.

Relay Compatible Organisations

Examples of organisations holding personal information that have changed their call centre processes and are now accepting relay calls include:

- Automobile Association
- Baycorp Advantage
- Contact Energy
- Inland Revenue (pending)
- Kiwibank
- Land Transport New Zealand (driver licences)
- Ministry of Social Development including Work & Income, Studylink, Community Services Cards, the National Data Match Centre, International Services, The Southern, Eastern, Western and Northern Collection Units, War Pensions, and the Residential Care/Support Subsidy Units.
- Telecom
- TelstraClear

Further information

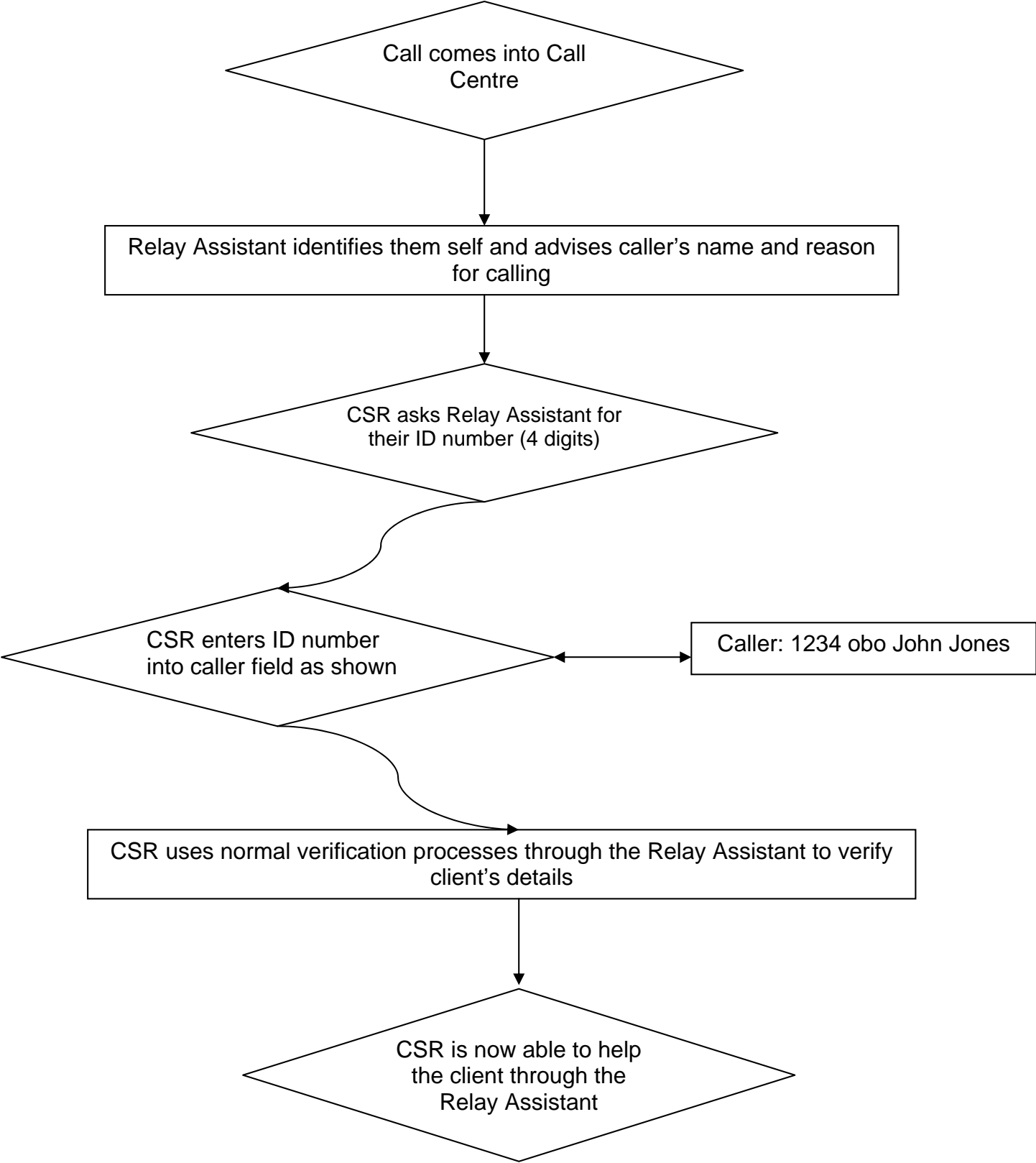
Please see the New Zealand Relay website at www.nzrelay.co.nz.

If you would like to discuss how your clients can use the relay service for communicating with your organisation or obtain references for the experiences of other organisations, please contact:

TRS Contracts Administrator
Ministry of Economic Development

Phone + 64 4 472 0030
Fax + 64 4 479 4655
Email relay.administrator@med.govt.nz

Template Flow Diagram for Client Relay Calls



Appendix 2

Relay Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

People who work as Relay Assistants sign confidentiality agreements that require them to abide by the following rules:

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- 1 Under no circumstances will I disclose to any caller the names, schedules, or personal information of myself or any past or present fellow employees working at New Zealand Relay.
2. I will share upon request any information about a call with persons who have authorised consulting and/or supervisory function over my work. I will not discuss, even among other Relay employees or my supervisors, any names or specifics of any relay call, except as required in the course of resolving complaints. I may discuss the general situation that I need assistance with in order to clarify how to process a particular type of relay call.
3. I will not watch or listen to actual calls unless I am involved in processing the call, training or monitoring for quality.
4. I will not act on any information I have received from a relay call.
5. I shall continually keep all assignment and related information strictly confidential.
6. I shall render relay conversations faithfully, always conveying the content and spirit of the speaker using the language that is most readily understood by the person(s) involved, and rendering the communication in its exact form and content.
7. I shall not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions on any relay call at any time.