

ORIGINAL



STATE OF FLORIDA
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
DOCKET NO. 991222-TP

VISTA IT, INC.
TECHNICAL PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE A
TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE SYSTEM
IN FLORIDA

NOVEMBER 10, 1999

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FPSC-RECORDS/REPORTING

November 10, 1999



Mr. Richard Tudor
C/o Ms. Blanca Bayo
Division of Records and Reporting
The Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Reference: Docket No. 991222-TP

Dear Mr. Tudor,

VISTA IT, Inc. is pleased to submit its proposal to the Florida Public Service Commission for the provision of the Florida Relay Service System.

VISTA is uniquely qualified to provide this critical service to the State of Florida and the users of the Relay Service and can do so with the least potential risk of service disruption that may be encountered in a transition of service to a new vendor. VISTA presently operates the Florida Relay Service, employs all of the FRS Communication Assistants, and has a well established and qualified administrative, supervisory and support staff in place today.

VISTA has been operating the Florida Relay Service as subcontractor to MCI WorldCom since June of 1998. In that capacity, VISTA employs all FRS staff, with the exception of MCI WorldCom's Program Manager and assistant and two Network Engineers.

VISTA has brought the FRS back to a high level of quality operation and will continue to achieve high quality service objectives during the period leading up to transition to the new relay vendor - such newly selected vendor, of course, we hope will be VISTA.

VISTA has been providing relay services to Massachusetts users since May 1996 and Florida since June 1998. VISTA has also provided day-to-day relay operations for California Speech-to-Speech Relay Service since February 1999. We are presently the prime contractor for the Massachusetts Relay Service (May 1999) and, as subcontractor to MCI WorldCom, operate relay centers in Florida and Wisconsin, as well as for MCI WorldCom's National Relay offering.

Headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, VISTA has created a highly skilled data and telecommunications network service, network management and professional services company with a balance between government and commercial markets.

VISTA has a combined employee base of over 1200 employees and growing, VISTA has operations in 16 states, 24 cities and 25 locations across the United States.

VISTA Information Technologies, Inc.
489 Whitney Avenue • Suite 100
Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040
Office 413 • 493 • 1100
Fax 413 • 493 • 1190

VISTA's core capabilities include project management, facilities planning, database development, LAN and WAN administration, applications and voice and data telecommunications systems and call center and help desk services management.

VISTA's Enterprise Support Services (ESS) division includes Colorado and Virginia sites providing help desk capabilities to service clients such as IBM, MCI and Federal Express. VISTA provides consulting services to a variety of clients including the Marriott Hotels, Howard University and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). VISTA also provides on-site network planning, installation and support services.

VISTA's ESS division also includes the Call Center Services unit with sites in Massachusetts, Florida and Wisconsin, providing call center management, telecommunications relay operations and staffing for VISTA and MCI WorldCom state telecommunication relay service contracts.

In addition, VISTA is a Federal Government contractor, providing diverse professional services to agencies such as the United States Army, the General Services Administration (GSA), the Pentagon, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Department of Veterans Affairs, the United States Customs Service and the United States House of Representatives.

VISTA's MTS Division, headquartered in Worcester, Massachusetts, provides LAN & WAN consulting, design, installation and PC sales and services to customers such as Holy Cross College, a variety of municipalities, Provident, Hospital Special Care, and Plymouth Rock Insurance.

VISTA's NIS division, with sites in Georgia, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, California, Maryland and Pennsylvania, provides LAN & WAN consulting, design, installation and service to such clients as Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Summa Health Systems, Oberlin College, General Motors, Johnson Controls, Fidelity Federal Bank, Universal Studios, Los Angeles County, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Pentagon, Alcoa, Allegheny General Hospital and Lucent Technologies.

VISTA's corporate mission is to enable our customers to be more competitive by utilizing the most productive and cost effective communications and information technologies. VISTA's corporate vision is to build a nationwide network services company, recognized in the marketplace for customer focus and comprehensive information technology solutions.

Florida will be pleased with a decision to select VISTA as its next Relay Service provider in large measure because VISTA has shown that it knows how to deliver a high level of quality and consistent performance.

VISTA's responsiveness to the users of relay, our dedication to community Education and Outreach will be areas in which we will quickly set ourselves apart from previous vendors. Florida Relay users will have more involvement in and input to the direction that their relay takes in the future, along with a direct community presence in the delivery of service quality assurance and measurement.

VISTA looks forward to providing the State of Florida a truly responsive, quality Relay Service. VISTA welcomes the opportunity to discuss its proposal in person with the Proposal Review Committee or others of the FPSC.

The following sections specifically address the requirements specified for this letter of transmittal:

Bidder

VISTA IT, Inc., a Delaware corporation, and subsidiary of Vista Information Technologies, Inc., a Delaware corporation, both having their principal offices at 2195 Fox Mill Road, Suite 200, Herndon, VA 20171, herein submits its Technical and Price Proposals in response to Florida Public Service Commission Request for Proposals, Docket No. 991222-TP, for provision of a Telecommunications Relay Service System.

Compliance with RFP

VISTA IT will comply with all requirements and specifications of the Florida RFP, with the following exception taken:

Section B, 40. Custom Calling Features, b) Last Number Redial, which feature VISTA IT is not able to provide at this time.

Section B, 43. Performance Bond. Contrary to the statement in VISTA's Technical Proposal at section b. 43, VISTA takes exception to the performance bond limit requested. VISTA's insurance carriers are expressing that the requested limit far exceeds the risk exposure to the state of Florida and therefore is not in line with actuarial guidance for issuance of such bond. VISTA would be pleased to negotiate a more reasonable performance bond limit should it be selected as the next vendor for Florida Relay Service.

Section C, 6. Bid Security Deposit. \$500,000 bid bond will be forwarded under separate cover for delivery November 10, 1999 to FPSC.

Authorization and Contacts

I, Thomas E. O'Neill, Vice President of VISTA IT, Inc., hereby certify that I am the VISTA IT person authorized to make this proposal. I or my alternate, Mr. John Town, Vice President of VISTA IT, Inc., are duly authorized to make decisions or answer questions related to the proposal and any subsequent contract. We may be contacted at the respective addresses and numbers listed below.

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Holyoke, MA 01040

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Request for Confidential Proprietary Treatment of Proposal Information

VISTA IT requests that, pursuant to 364.183 F.S. and 25-22.006 FPSC Practice and Procedures, the following referenced information submitted in its proposal be accorded "proprietary confidential business information" treatment by the Commission:

Financial information submitted in response to Section C, 4. Financial Information, and that is submitted in Attachment 3, in its entirety. Citing 364.183(3)(b) F.S., VISTA IT, Inc. is a privately held corporation, as is its parent company, Vista Information Technologies, Inc. Its financial information is not released to the public and is restricted to internal officers and auditors, bank officials and others subject to nondisclosure agreements only. Publication or general availability of VISTA IT, Inc. financial information would potentially cause harm to its business interests.

Pricing information submitted in response to Section D, Price Proposal, that is submitted separately from the Technical Proposal. Citing 364.183(3)(d) and (e) F.S., publication or general availability of VISTA IT, Inc. pricing information in response to this proposal may cause harm to its business interests by impairing its competitive position in future procurements for like or similar services.

Training materials submitted in Attachment 1 in response to Section B, 9. CA Training. Citing 364.183(3)(b) F.S., VISTA IT considers its training materials to be "trade secrets" as they encompass and incorporate confidential and proprietary practice and reflect the systems operations which are themselves confidential and proprietary, disclosure of which may cause harm to VISTA IT business interests.

Proprietary Confidential "Black" Binders

To assist FPSC and the evaluators in distinguishing the two versions of our proposal, VISTA IT has submitted twenty (20) two-sided copies of its Technical Proposal in White binders, plus eight (8) copies submitted in Black three-ring binders clearly marked as containing Proprietary Confidential business information. These eight (8) black binders are restricted for use by the evaluators. The remaining twenty (20) White binders contain the same Technical Proposal with the exception of having Proprietary Confidential business information marked out.

Price Proposal

VISTA IT has submitted its price proposal in a sealed envelope clearly marked "SEALED - TO BE OPENED ONLY BY THE FPSC PROPOSAL OPENING OFFICER" as per the RFP's instructions.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. O'Neill
Vice President
VISTA IT, Inc.

11/10/99

FILING CHECKLIST

Checklist Item No.	Initials of Bidder's Contact Person	Brief Title	Page No. of Bidder's Proposal	Pass/Fail OR Maximum Points
1.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Format (RFP ref. Section C-1 and D)	N/A	N/A
2.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Transmittal Letter, Address, Contact Person, Tel. And Fax No., Legal Name of Bidder, and Statement of Compliance with or Lack of Compliance with RFP Requirements (RFP ref. C-2)	<u>FOREWARD</u>	P/F
3.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Check List (RFP ref. C-8 and E)	<u>FOREWORD</u>	P/F
4.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Certification by FPSC and FCC (RFP ref. A-5)	<u>2</u>	P/F
5.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Conflict of Interest (RFP ref. A-28)	<u>10</u>	P/F
6.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Can provide by June 1, 2000 (RFP ref. B-3)	<u>11</u>	P/F
7.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Term of Contract (RFP ref. B-4)	<u>13</u>	P/F
8.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Access Numbers (RFP ref. B-5)	<u>13</u>	P/F
9.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Location of Relay Center (RFP ref. B-6)	<u>13</u>	P/F
10.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Availability of System to Users (RFP ref. B-7)	<u>14</u>	P/F
11.	<i>[Signature]</i>	Minimum CA Qualifications and Testing (RFP ref. B-8)	<u>15</u>	100
12.	<i>[Signature]</i>	CA Training (RFP ref. B-9)	<u>17</u>	100

Checklist Item No.	Initials of Bidder's Contact Person	Brief Title	Page No. of Bidder's Proposal	Pass/Fail OR Maximum Points
13.	<i>TC</i>	Staff Training (RFP ref. B-10)	<u>23</u>	100
14.	<i>TC</i>	Counseling (RFP ref. B-11)	<u>24</u>	25
15.	<i>TC</i>	Procedures for Relaying Communications (RFP ref. B-12)	<u>25</u>	100
16.	<i>TC</i>	Interaction with Answering Machines and Voice Response Units (RFP ref. B-13)	<u>32</u>	25
17.	<i>TC</i>	Languages Served (RFP ref. B-14)	<u>37</u>	P/F
18.	<i>TC</i>	Additional Languages Served (RFP ref. B-15)	<u>37</u>	25
19.	<i>TC</i>	Shift Advisor/Consultant (RFP ref. B-16)	<u>38</u>	P/F
20.	<i>TC</i>	Confidentiality (RFP ref. B-17)	<u>38</u>	P/F
21.	<i>TC</i>	Voice and Hearing Carryover (RFP ref. B-18)	<u>42</u>	50
22.	<i>TC</i>	Obscenity (RFP ref. B-19)	<u>47</u>	P/F
23.	<i>TC</i>	Emergency Calls (RFP ref. B-20)	<u>47</u>	50
24.	<i>TC</i>	Blockage (RFP ref. B-21)	<u>49</u>	200
25.	<i>TC</i>	Answer Time (RFP ref. B-22)	<u>49</u>	200
26.	<i>TC</i>	Equipment Compatibility (RFP ref. B-23)	<u>50</u>	P/F

Checklist Item No.	Initials of Bidder's Contact Person	Brief Title	Page No. of Bidder's Proposal	Pass/Fail OR Maximum Points
27.	<u>TC</u>	Transmission Levels (RFP ref. B-24)	<u>51</u>	P/F
28.	<u>TC</u>	Measuring Equipment Accuracy (RFP ref. B-25)	<u>52</u>	P/F
29.	<u>TC</u>	Emergency Operations (RFP ref. B-26)	<u>52</u>	50
30.	<u>TC</u>	Intercept Messages (RFP ref. B-27)	<u>56</u>	P/F
31.	<u>TC</u>	Service Expansion (RFP ref. B-28)	<u>57</u>	50
32.	<u>TC</u>	New Technology (RFP ref. B-29)	<u>59</u>	50
33.	<u>TC</u>	Consumer Input (RFP ref. B-30)	<u>60</u>	100
34.	<u>TC</u>	Complaint Resolution (RFP ref. B-31)	<u>62</u>	200
35.	<u>TC</u>	Charges for Incoming Calls (RFP ref. B-32)	<u>64</u>	P/F
36.	<u>TC</u>	Billing Arrangements (RFP ref. B-33)	<u>65</u>	50
37.	<u>TC</u>	End User Billing (RFP ref. B-34)	<u>67</u>	50
38.	<u>TC</u>	Relaying Interstate or International (RFP ref. B-35)	<u>68</u>	50
39.	<u>TC</u>	End User Selection of Carrier (RFP ref. B-36)	<u>69</u>	50
40.	<u>TC</u>	Recipient of Toll Revenues (RFP ref. B-37)	<u>69</u>	P/F
41.	<u>TC</u>	Long Distance Call Billing (RFP ref. B-38)	<u>70</u>	50

Checklist Item No.	Initials of Bidder's Contact Person	Brief Title	Page No. of Bidder's Proposal	Pass/Fail OR Maximum Points
42.	<u>TA</u>	Special Needs (RFP ref. B-39)	<u>71</u>	25
43.	<u>TA</u>	Custom Call Type Features (Speed Dialing & Last Number Redial) (RFP ref. B-40)	<u>73</u>	25
44.	<u>TA</u>	All Unsolicited Features in Basic Relay Service Price Proposal (RFP ref. B-41)	<u>74</u>	200
<u>Optional Services Not in Basic Relay Service Price Proposal</u>				
45.	<u>TA</u>	a. Other Custom Calling Type Services (RFP ref. B-42 a)	<u>78</u>	Optional / 0 Points
46.	<u>TA</u>	b. 900/976 Services (RFP ref. B-42 b)	<u>79</u>	Optional / 0 Points
47.	<u>TA</u>	c. Enhanced Transmission Speed and Interrupt Capability (RFP ref. B-42 c)	<u>80</u>	Optional / 0 Points
48.	<u>TA</u>	d. Video Relay (RFP ref. B-42 d)	<u>80</u>	Optional / 0 Points
49.	<u>TA</u>	e. Speech to Speech Service (RFP ref. B-42 e)	<u>81</u>	Optional / 0 Points
50.	<u>TA</u>	f. Other Optional Features Not Included in Basic Relay (RFP ref. B-42 f)	<u>82</u>	Optional / 0 Points
51.	<u>TA</u>	Submission of Monthly Invoice (RFP ref. B-44)	<u>83</u>	P/F
52.	<u>TA</u>	Travel (RFP ref. B-45)	<u>83</u>	P/F
53.	<u>TA</u>	Reporting Requirements (RFP ref. B-46)	<u>83</u>	P/F

Checklist Item No.	Initials of Bidder's Contact Person	Brief Title	Page No. of Bidder's Proposal	Pass/Fail OR Maximum Points
54.	<i>TW</i>	Liquidated Damages (RFP ref. B-47)	<u>85</u>	P/F
55.	<i>TW</i>	Transfer to New Provider (RFP ref. B-48)	<u>85</u>	P/F
56.	<i>TW</i>	Insurance (RFP ref. B-49)	<u>85</u>	P/F
57.	<i>TW</i>	Public Entity Crimes (RFP ref. C-3)	<u>88</u>	P/F
58.	<i>TW</i>	Financial Information (RFP ref. C-4)	<u>88</u>	P/F
59.	<i>TW</i>	Experience and Customer References (RFP ref. C-5)	<u>88</u>	200
60.	<i>TW</i>	Bid Security Deposit (RFP ref. C-6)	<u>89</u>	P/F
61.	<i>TW</i>	Subcontractors (RFP ref. C-7)	<u>90</u>	P/F
62.	<i>TW</i>	PRICE PROPOSAL (RFP ref. Section D) Must be filed in a separate sealed envelope marked: "Sealed -- To Be Opened Only By the FPSC Proposal Opening Officer"	<u>ENVELOPE</u>	See RFP Sec. D & E
MAXIMUM TOTAL POINTS				2125

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A. ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

1. Issuing Entity and Point of Contact

This Request For Proposals (RFP) is issued by the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC). The Commission's Proposals Review Committee (PRC) Chairman is the sole point of contact concerning this RFP and all communication must be made through the Proposals Review Committee Chairman, Mr. Richard Tudor. Mailed correspondence must be addressed to Mr. Richard Tudor, c/o Ms. Blanca Bayo, Division of Records and Reporting, The Florida Public Service Commission, 2540 Shumard Oak Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850 and should reference Docket No. 991222-TP. Facsimile correspondence can be directed to the PRC Chairman at (850) 413-6517. E-mail can be directed to the PRC Chairman at: rtudor@psc.state.fl.us

VISTA understands and will comply.

2. Purpose

This RFP is for the purpose of contracting for a Florida Relay Service (FRS) System that meets the needs of the people of the state of Florida pursuant to the Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991 and which satisfies or exceeds the relay system certification requirements of the Federal Communications Commission under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Bidders must comply with the requirements of both laws.

Section F is a copy of the annual report provided by the current relay provider concerning the Florida relay traffic for the months of June 1998 through May 1999. It appears that there is an error in the report regarding total call minutes. Accordingly, for informational purposes, the billable minutes for Florida Relay Service for the months of June 1998 through August 1999 are provided in Section G of this RFP. The Bidder assumes all responsibility for the accuracy of data from these reports and billable minute information in using them for bidding purposes.

VISTA understands and will comply.

3. Other Applicable Laws/Legal Considerations

This RFP and any resulting contract shall be governed by the laws of the State of Florida. The bidders and Provider shall comply with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.

The contract shall be construed according to the laws of the State of Florida. Any legal proceedings against any party relating to or arising out of this RFP or any resultant contract or contractual relation shall be brought in State of Florida administrative or judicial forums. Venue will be in Leon County, Florida.

VISTA understands and will comply.

4. Scope

This RFP contains the instructions governing the proposal to be submitted and the material to be included therein, mandatory administrative and operational requirements which a bidder shall meet to be eligible for consideration, specific instructions for proposal submission and evaluation criteria.

VISTA understands and will comply with the Florida RFP instructions provided.

5. Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity

The provider shall have a Florida certificate of public convenience and necessity or only use for relay service, telecommunications providers that have a Florida certificate of public convenience and necessity to provide local and intrastate interexchange service. The provider shall also have necessary FCC authority or only use for relay service, telecommunications providers that have necessary FCC authority to provide interstate and international service. The FPSC reserves the right to require certification of any entity pursuant to this contract.

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA uses only Florida certified vendor(s) for the provision of telecommunications relay. These vendors also have FCC authority to provide interstate and international service under present laws, statutes, and regulations. VISTA will provide copies of their vendor(s) certification upon request by the Florida Public Service Commission.

6. Definitions/Acronyms

The following terms, when used in this RFP, have the meaning shown below:

- a. **Abandoned calls** - Calls reaching the relay switch and terminated by the caller before a communications assistant answers regardless of the amount of time that has elapsed since the call reached the relay switch.*
- b. **Administrator** - A corporation not for profit incorporated pursuant to the provisions of chapter 617, F.S., and designated by the Florida Public Service Commission to administer the telecommunications relay service system and the distribution of specialized telecommunications devices. [s. 427.703(1), F.S.]*
- c. **Advisory Committee** - A group created by 427.706, F.S., and consisting of up to ten individuals named by the FPSC for the purposes described in Chapter 427, F.S.*
- d. **Answer time** - The point in the progression of inbound calls at the relay center when the communications assistant is ready to serve.*
- e. **Billable Minutes** - For the purpose of calculating and rendering bills to the Administrator [S.427.704(2), F.S.], billable minutes is the elapsed time between the time the incoming call enters the FRS provider's relay center switch and the completion of relay service. Total session time shall be rounded to the nearest one-tenth of a minute or less per session and the time for all call sessions shall be added together for all incoming calls during the month to produce the total billable minutes per month. The total of billable minutes for the month shall be rounded to the nearest one-tenth of a minute. In a session which includes a mix of intrastate toll or local calls and interstate or international calls, the time associated with the interstate or international calls shall not be included in the billable time for that call session.*
- f. **Blocked calls** - Calls reaching the relay switch which do not terminate by ringing a communications assistant position.*
- g. **Communications Assistant (CA)** - A person who relays conversation to and from users of a relay system, normally converting the conversation between text and voice. The CA may also be a mechanized device that meets the requirements described for the Florida Relay Service.*
- h. **Deaf** - Having a permanent hearing impairment and being unable to discriminate speech sounds in verbal communication, with or without the assistance of amplification devices. [s.427.703(3), F.S.]*
- i. **Dual Sensory Impaired** - Having both a permanent hearing impairment and a permanent visual impairment and includes deaf/blindness. [s.427.703(4), F.S.]*
- j. **FPSC** - Florida Public Service Commission*
- k. **FRS** - Florida Relay Service*
- l. **General Assistance Calls** - Incoming calls to the CA that are not associated with an outgoing relay call. Such calls may sometimes be to provide information about using relay or other types of calls that would normally be handled by customer service.*

- m. **Hard of Hearing** - Having a permanent hearing impairment which is severe enough to necessitate the use of amplification devices to discriminate speech sounds in verbal communication. [s.427.703(5), F.S.]*
- n. **Hearing Impaired or Hearing Disabled** - Being deaf or hard of hearing and includes being dual sensory impaired. [s.427.703(6), F.S.]*
- o. **Hearing Carryover** - A feature that enables a user with a speech disability to utilize his useable hearing for direct reception of voice communications and to use the FRS CA for conversion of the user's communications from TDD to voice.*
- p. **Incoming Call** - An incoming call refers to the portion of the communications connection from the calling party to the relay service center. An incoming TDD call is a call originated by a TDD user. An incoming telephone call is a call originated by a telephone user. An incoming call includes calls to the relay service telephone number for completing a relay call as well as general assistance calls.*
- q. **Minor Irregularity** - A variation from the request for proposal terms and conditions which does not affect the price of the proposal, does not give the bidder a significant advantage or benefit not enjoyed by other bidders, or does not adversely impact the interests of the agency.*
- r. **Outgoing Call** - An outgoing call refers to the portion of the communications connection from the relay service center to the called party. An outgoing TDD call is a call to a TDD user. An outgoing telephone call is a call to a telephone user.*
- s. **Provider** - The entity with whom the FPSC contracts to provide Florida Relay Service pursuant to this contract.*
- t. **PRC** - Proposals Review Committee*
- u. **Speech Impaired or Speech Disabled** - Having a permanent loss of verbal communication ability which prohibits normal usage of a standard telephone set. [s.427.704(10), F.S.]*
- v. **STS or Speech to Speech** - A service that enables a person with speech disabilities to use relay service with his own voice or voice synthesizer, rather than using a TDD. A specially trained CA functions as a human translator for people with speech disabilities who have trouble being understood on the telephone. The STS CA repeats the words of the speech disabled user to the other party on the call.*
- w. **Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD or TTY)** - A mechanism which is connected to a standard telephone line, operated by means of a keyboard, and used to transmit or receive signals through telephone lines. The term includes mechanisms equipped with sight assisting devices such as a large print screen or braille printer and also includes computers. [s.427.703(14), F.S.]*
- x. **User** - Includes either the calling or called party in a relay call.*
- y. **Video Relay** - Video relay interpreting allows the caller, utilizing video conferencing facilities, to use sign language to communicate with the CA who voices the call to the hearing person at the receiving end.*
- z. **Voice Carryover** - A feature that enables a user with a hearing disability to utilize his useable speech for direct expression of voice communications and to use the FRS operator for conversion of the other user's communications from voice to TDD.*

VISTA understands each of the definitions and acronyms supplied and uses these same definitions and acronyms in this proposal.

7. Key Dates

(The following dates are targets, the FPSC reserves the right to change the dates.)

Release RFP October 7, 1999

Bidders' Conference..... October 14, 1999

Deliver Final Questions
About RFP to PRC Chairman..... 3:00 pm Eastern Time, October 25, 1999

TECHNICAL AND PRICE PROPOSAL
DUE DATE & TIME..... 3:00pm Eastern Time, November 10, 1999

Recommendation Presentation to the FPSC..... January 11, 2000

Letter of Intent January 14, 2000

Performance Bond Due..... Upon execution of contract

Begin Service..... June 1, 2000

VISTA understands and is prepared to comply with each of these dates for proposal submission, performance bond issuance and initiation of service.

8. Questions Concerning RFP

Prior to or after the bidders' conference, potential bidders may submit, in writing, questions regarding the RFP. To the extent practical, such questions concerning the RFP will be responded to at the bidders conference. Questions filed after the bidders' conference will be responded to in writing to known potential bidders, if time permits. All questions should be received by the PRC Chairman by 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time, October 25, 1999.

VISTA understands and will comply.

9. Amendments or Supplements to RFP

In the event that it becomes necessary to revise or clarify any part of this RFP, an amendment or supplement will be provided to each bidder of record receiving the original RFP.

VISTA understands and will utilize any amendments or supplements, which may be provided to the RFP in this proposal.

10. Restrictions on Communications

From the issue date of this RFP until a provider is selected, bidders are not to communicate with any FPSC Commissioner or staff member or Advisory Committee member regarding this RFP except for: a) written correspondence to or from the PRC Chairman or b) oral discussions at the

bidders conference or at an oral interview or site visit. For violation of this provision, the FPSC reserves the right to reject the proposal.

VISTA understands and will limit any necessary communication regarding the RFP and this proposal to written correspondence to or from the PRC Chairman.

11. Bidders' Conference

A public bidders' conference in connection with this RFP will be held on October 14, 1999. The conference will be at 9:30 AM in Room 152 of the Easley Building, 4075 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee, FL. The FPSC will transcribe the proceedings of the bidders' conference. An overview of the RFP will be presented. Written questions submitted in compliance with Paragraph A.8. above will be addressed. In addition, the PRC will make every attempt to respond to questions from the floor; however, depending on the question asked, a complete response may have to be deferred until after the conference.

VISTA understood and attended the Bidder's Conference.

12. Modifications, Withdrawals, and Late Proposals

Proposals may only be modified or withdrawn by the bidder up to the established filing date and time. It is the responsibility of the bidder to ensure that the proposal is received by the Division of Records and Reporting on or before the proposal due date and time. Both technical and price proposals must be filed by November 10, 1999, at 3:00 pm eastern time. Late proposals will not be accepted.

VISTA understands and will comply.

13. Bidding Costs

Neither the FPSC nor the FRS system is liable for any costs incurred by a bidder in conjunction with development of its bid.

VISTA understands and will comply.

14. Rejection of Proposals, Correction of Errors

The PRC Chairman and FPSC reserve the right to reject any or all proposals. The PRC Chairman and the FPSC also reserve the right to accept proposals despite minor irregularities and to allow a bidder to correct such minor irregularities.

VISTA understands and will comply.

15. Public Availability of Proposals, News Releases and Public Announcements

Technical and Price proposals will each be made available to the general public within ten (10) days after each is opened. The price proposals will not be opened until after the technical proposals are evaluated. The FPSC may issue press releases or public announcements concerning filed proposals or the bid process.

VISTA understands and complies with the exception of those items designated as confidential under the guidelines of Section A-25 of the RFP.

16. Protests

Failure to file a protest of either the RFP or the letter of intent within the time prescribed in subsection 120.57(3), Florida Statutes, shall constitute a waiver of proceedings under Chapter 120, Florida Statutes.

VISTA understands and will comply.

17. Letter of Intent/Notification to Bidders

Upon selection of a potential provider by the Commission, the Commission will issue a letter of intent to the potential provider. The letter of intent is the point of entry to protest the award pursuant to Section 120.57(3), F.S. A contract shall be completed and signed by all parties concerned within thirty (30) days of mailing the letter of intent. If this date is not met, through no fault of the FPSC, the FPSC may elect to cancel the letter of intent and make the award to another bidder.

All bidders will receive a copy of the letter of intent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

VISTA understands the process for Letter of Intent and that VISTA will receive a copy of said letter whether or not they are the chosen Provider for the contract.

18. Award of Contract

The FPSC shall award the contract to the bidder whose proposal is the most advantageous to the state, taking into account the following considerations in Section 427.704(3)(a), Florida Statutes:

- a. The appropriateness and accessibility of the proposed telecommunications relay service for the citizens of the state, including persons who are hearing impaired or speech impaired;*
- b. The overall quality of the proposed telecommunications relay system;*
- c. The charges for the proposed telecommunications relay service system;*
- d. The ability and qualifications of the bidder to provide the proposed telecommunications relay service system as outlined in the RFP;*
- e. Any proposed service enhancements and technological enhancements which improve service without significantly increasing cost;*
- f. Any proposed inclusion of provision of assistance to deaf persons with special needs to access the basic telecommunications system;*
- g. The ability to meet the proposed commencement date for the FRS;*
- h. All other factors listed in the RFP.*

VISTA understands this procedure as outlined.

19. Award Without Discussion

The FPSC reserves the right to make an award without discussion of proposals with the bidder. Therefore, it is important that each technical and price proposal be submitted in the most complete, understandable and accurate manner possible.

VISTA understands and will comply.

20. Oral Interviews/Site Visits/Written Data Request

Bidders may be asked to participate in oral interviews, respond to a written data request, make their facilities available for a site inspection by the PRC or make their financial records available for FPSC audit. Such interviews, site visits and/or audits will be at the bidder's expense except that the PRC will pay for its own expenses (transportation, meals, housing, etc.) Bidders should come to oral interviews prepared to answer the PRC's questions and the bidder's primary contact person (person signing the letter of transmittal accompanying the RFP or his designee) shall be present at all meetings with the PRC or FPSC.

VISTA understands and will comply with any PRC requests for interviews and/or site visits.

21. Contract Document

The successful bidder will be required to sign a contract which will include the following elements:

- a. *The RFP,*
- b. *The bidder's Proposal in response to the RFP,*
- c. *A document identifying any modifications or clarifications to the proposal and identifying optional items contained in the proposal and desired by the FPSC to be included in the FRS.*

All of the above items together will constitute a complete initial contract that will be approved by the FPSC's Executive Director on behalf of the FPSC.

VISTA understands the components of the contract as identified.

22. Limited Liability

To the extent provided for in Florida Statute 427.707, the FPSC, its Advisory Committee and PRC assume no liability with respect to the RFP, proposals or any matters related thereto unless there is malicious purpose or wanton and willful disregard of human rights, safety or property in the establishment, participation in or operation of the telecommunications relay service. To the fullest extent permitted by law, all prospective service providers and their assigns or successors by their participation in the RFP process, shall indemnify, save and hold the FPSC and its employees and agents, including the Advisory Committee and PRC, free and harmless from all suits, causes of action, debts, rights, judgements, claims, demands, accounts, damages, costs, losses and expenses of whatsoever kind in law or equity, known and unknown, foreseen and unforeseen, arising from or out of the RFP and/or any subsequent acts related thereto, including but not limited to the recommendation of a bidder to the FPSC and any action brought by an unsuccessful bidder.

VISTA understands and accepts this statement.

23. Disclaimer

All information contained in the RFP, including any amendments and supplements thereto, reflects the best and most accurate information available to the FPSC at the time of the RFP preparation. No inaccuracies in such information shall constitute a basis for change of the payments to the provider nor a basis for legal recovery of damages, either actual, consequential, or punitive.

VISTA understands and accepts this statement.

24. Cancellation/Availability of Funds

The FPSC shall have the right to unilaterally cancel, terminate, or suspend any ensuing contract, in whole or in part, by giving the Provider sixty (60) days written notice by certified mail. If a breach of the contract by the Provider occurs, the FPSC may, by written notice to the Provider, terminate the contract upon 24 hours notice. Said notice shall be delivered by certified mail, return receipt requested, or in person with proof of delivery. The provisions herein do not limit the FPSC's right to remedies at law or to damages.

During the life of the contract, should funds become unavailable to support the telecommunications relay service system, the FPSC reserves the right to discontinue the service for a period of time, to adjust service specifications, or to discontinue the provision of certain services in order to reduce costs.

VISTA understands and accepts this statement.

25. Public Bidder Meetings and Proprietary/Confidential Information

Written requests for confidentiality shall be considered by the FPSC as described in Chapter 364.183, F.S. Rule 25-22.006, F.A.C., should be followed in making a request.

Meetings held between the FPSC or PRC and bidder shall be open to the general public. Should the need arise to discuss any confidential materials, the FPSC or PRC will attempt to hold such a discussion by referring to the confidential material in a general way without closing the meeting. All meetings with bidders will be transcribed.

All material submitted regarding this RFP becomes the property of the FPSC and subject to Chapter 119, F.S. (Public Records Law). The PRC reserves the right to use any or all information/material presented in reply to the RFP, subject to any confidentiality granted via Chapter 364, F.S. Disqualification of a bidder does not eliminate this right.

VISTA understands and will comply.

26. Non-Collusion

By submitting a proposal, the bidder affirms that the proposed bid price has been arrived at independently without collusion, consultation or communication with any other bidder or competitor, that the said bid price was not disclosed by the bidder prior to filing with the FPSC, and that no attempt was made by the bidder to induce any other person, partnership or corporation to submit or not submit a proposal.

VISTA states that this proposal is made free and clear of any collusion, consultation or communication with any other bidder or competitor. At no time has the bid price for this proposal been disclosed to parties outside of VISTA. VISTA has in no way attempted to influence any other person's, partnership's, or corporation's participation in this bid process.

27. Changes in Contract

Any change in the contract shall be accomplished by a formal written contract amendment signed by authorized representatives of both the FPSC and the provider. No other document or oral communication shall be construed as an amendment to the contract.

VISTA understands and will comply.

28. Conflict of Interest

The award hereunder is subject to the provisions of Chapter 112, Florida Statutes (Public Officers and Employees). All bidders shall disclose with their bid the name of any officer, director, or agent who is also an employee of the state of Florida, or any of its agencies. Further, all bidders shall disclose the name of any state employee who owns, directly or indirectly, an interest of five percent or more in the bidder's firm or any of its branches.

VISTA employs no persons who are additionally employees of the state of Florida or any of its agencies and believes there to be no conflict of interest in submitting this proposal. Further, no Florida State employee owns an interest of five percent or more in VISTA's firm.

29. Minority Business

It is the policy of the Commission to encourage participation by minority business companies (as defined in s. 287.012, F. S.) in Commission contracts. If two identical bids/proposals to an invitation for bids or request for proposals are received and one response is from a minority owned company, the Commission shall enter into a contract with the minority owned company. If applicable, the bidder should include in its proposal evidence that it qualifies for the definition of a minority business.

VISTA understands and accepts this policy.

B. THE SERVICE TO BE PROVIDED

1. Overview

This section of the RFP lists and describes the specific basic features of the relay service required to be provided. At the end of this section, the FPSC also requests the bidder to comment on (and in its price proposal, propose a price separate from the price for basic service for) the provision of optional services which are not required to be provided. The optional services offered will not be evaluated until after a bidder is selected; at that time, the FPSC may choose to purchase some or all of those services in addition to the basic services.

VISTA understands and will follow these instructions. VISTA sets forth, in the following sections, detailed descriptions as to how VISTA will provide each of the components of the proposed service. VISTA has responded to each of the mandatory requirements of the RFP fully and completely. Any exceptions or modifications to a requirement have been noted in the cover letter to this document and are detailed in the appropriate response section.

Additionally, VISTA has proposed provision of some optional features. VISTA understands that FPSC may elect to negotiate and purchase any, all or none of these optional services as FPSC deems appropriate for the citizens of Florida.

2. Scope of Service

The relay service shall be designed to provide the means by which a hearing, speech or dual sensory impaired person using a TDD can communicate over the existing telecommunications network with a non-TDD user (and vice-versa) through the use of the relay system. The service shall also provide other telecommunications services to persons with hearing and speech disabilities as further described below.

The FPSC is interested in providing a relay service that is as cost efficient as possible while at the same time providing a service as equivalent to standard telecommunications service as possible.

VISTA looks forward to providing the State of Florida with telecommunications relay service that meets each of the following requirements as described.

VISTA endeavors in this proposal to offer the State of Florida high quality relay service, as equivalent to standard telecommunication as possible, at a price that is fiscally responsible.

3. Commencement Date

The commencement date for the service is June 1, 2000. Bidders shall provide a work schedule showing how they can meet that deadline and shall provide a statement that they can provide the complete service by that date.

VISTA understands that the Florida Relay Service under this proposal will begin service June 1, 2000. VISTA is uniquely positioned as the employer of all of the present FRS Communication Assistants, Supervisors and Administrative staff, which allows us to offer

the following plan for a smooth, seamless transition from the current contract to the new contract should VISTA be chosen as the provider.

VISTA proposes to relocate the FRS center from its present location in downtown Miami to a facility which is better situated to take advantage of existing labor resources, more accessible to staff and less likely to be subject to government-mandated evacuation in the event of severe weather. VISTA is acutely aware of the difficulties posed to the user community when the existing facility has been mandated to evacuate its staff from the existing Miami facility that overlooks Biscayne Bay. In light of those past events, VISTA believes it only prudent to locate to a less exposed position.

As a contingency, VISTA has arranged the continued use of the present Relay center in the event that the time constraints imposed by this procurement prove to delay the full availability of the new Relay center.

VISTA will be able to immediately take over the FRS contract utilizing CAs already familiar with the needs and expectations of the user communities. VISTA will concurrently develop new and expanded employee pools for supplementing the Miami staff and providing qualified staff for the new center.

Additionally, VISTA's experienced relay operators in their Massachusetts center will be utilized to provide additional support to handle Florida Relay calls while the new center is being completed.

Upon successful contract negotiation with FPSC, VISTA will immediately deploy its national team of Human Resource, Technical and Operations specialists to develop the new Florida Call Center. VISTA's Call Center Management has already begun site selection research and personnel availability and demographic studies. Final site selection will be made immediately upon notification of intent to award. The VISTA start-up team are armed with fully developed and tested methodologies for installing all telecommunications and computer equipment, recruiting and hiring prospective CAs, and implementing training classes. Current VISTA CAs will be utilized in the existing center while the new centers are in development. We believe the following advantages of a new location outside of downtown Miami will be gained:

- Better insulation from severe weather evacuations. The current center is located in a "first alert" zone, meaning that it is within the first section of mandatory evacuation. VISTA will identify a location beyond that "first alert" zone and further inland in order to avoid as many evacuation orders as possible.
- Expanded employee pool. Many qualified workers simply do not want to work in downtown Miami for a variety of reasons. The new center will offer such persons a more desirable working environment and should enable VISTA to identify and recruit excellent candidates on a continuing basis.
- Service maintenance. VISTA will select a site in southern Florida near enough to the existing site that we will be able to maintain the employment of our current CAs, thus helping to ensure a smooth transition for FRS users.

VISTA will be able to immediately take over the FRS contract utilizing CAs already familiar with the needs and expectations of the user communities. VISTA will concurrently develop new and expanded employee pools for supplementing the Miami staff and expanding qualified staff for the new center.

4. Term of Contract

Service shall begin on June 1, 2000. The term of the contract will be an initial three year period. Upon mutual agreement between the FPSC and the provider, the contract may allow for the term to be extended for up to two additional one year periods. By June 1, 2002, and June 1, 2003, the provider should notify the Florida Public Service Commission of its desire to extend for an additional year.

VISTA understands and will comply. If chosen as the Florida Relay providers, VISTA's trained and experienced staff are ready to commence service for a three-year contract on June 1, 2000. VISTA also understands that there will be the option of two one-year extensions to the contract, upon mutual agreement between FPSC and VISTA. VISTA will notify FPSC no later than June 1, 2002 and June 1, 2003 of our desire to participate in these extensions.

5. Access Numbers

There shall be a single access number for TDD users, a single access number for voice users, a single access number for ASCII users, and a single access number for Spanish users. TDD access shall be by using the number 800-955-8771, voice access shall be by using the number 800-955-8770, and ASCII access shall be by using the number 800-955-1339. The provider shall secure a toll free telephone number for Spanish access. The provider must request FPSC authority to use additional numbers for relay access (e.g., STS, other foreign languages, etc.). If a caller calls the wrong access number, the system shall process the call without requiring the caller to redial.

VISTA understands and will comply. The existing FRS access numbers for TTY users, voice users and ASCII users will be maintained under VISTA's contract. Florida TTY users will dial 1 800 955-8771; Voice users will call 1 800 955-8770 and ASCII user's will call 1 800 955 1339 as under the current contract. VISTA will also provide a new access number for Spanish speaking users of the Relay. Should FPSC choose to contract with VISTA for other optional services for example, Speech-to-Speech Relay, additional access numbers will be provided in agreement with FPSC. Should a relay user accidentally call the wrong access number for their needs (i.e. a voice caller calls the TTY line), the CA will be able to complete their call for them without the need for the caller to redial. A 10-digit International number will be supplied that will allow callers travelling outside of the United States to access the Florida Relay from countries that do not support 800 numbers.

VISTA will provide a toll free Customer Service number for the Florida Relay.

6. Location of Relay Center

The provider shall be required to locate a relay center in the State of Florida. A minimum of 80 percent of Florida relay traffic shall be handled by the Florida located center except when emergency conditions exist at the Florida center. Emergency conditions that would justify handling what is normally Florida traffic outside the state would include situations such as natural disasters, bomb threat, etc. and would not include traffic spikes.

Notwithstanding the above requirement, during the months of June, July and August, 2000, the provider may handle all Florida relay traffic using out-of-state relay centers. The 80% minimum Florida traffic handled out of a Florida center must be met beginning with the month of September, 2000.

VISTA understands and will comply. VISTA foresees no difficulty in assuming full operation of the Florida Relay service on June 1, 2000 from an in-state location. In the event that procurement and contract timelines constrain the timeframe for relocating the Relay service to its new location, VISTA has made contingency arrangements to continue providing the service from the existing Miami location until the new center is fully operational. Additionally, VISTA can provide call-handling support from its Massachusetts Relay center to the same standards of service as specified for the Florida Relay.

7. Availability of System to Users

The service shall be designed to relay local, intrastate toll and interstate and international calls that originate or terminate in Florida. Relay service shall be available 24 hours per day every day of the year.

No restrictions shall be placed on the length or number of calls placed by customers through the relay center.

VISTA's Florida Relay Service will be capable of processing intrastate calls, interstate and international as well as local calls that originate or terminate in Florida. The relay service will be designed to process all calls normally provided by carriers, including non-coin sent paid, third party number, person-to-person, calling card and collect calls, calls accessing pagers, answering machines, voice mail and calls accessing conference calls.

Callers may access the Florida Relay Service from outside of the United States, in order to place a relay call terminating in Florida. There will be no restriction placed on callers as to the number or duration of their relay calls.

8. Minimum CA Qualifications/Testing

The provider shall adequately supervise and train its employees to always be courteous, considerate and efficient in their contact and dealings with its customers and the public in general, and shall make checks from time to time to ensure that courteous service actually is being rendered.

Bidders shall specify how they plan to demonstrate that CAs meet all necessary proficiency requirements. CAs shall be able to quickly and accurately type TDD relay messages. The provider shall use valid, unbiased tests for CAs on subjects including, but not limited to:

- a. Basic skills in English grammar.*
- b. A minimum typing speed of 55 correct words per minute.*
- c. Minimum spelling skills sufficient to quickly and easily spell words comparable to a beginning college level conversation.*
- d. An understanding of characteristics of limited written English and American Sign Language (ASL) as it may be reflected in the written language of TDD users.*
- e. Deaf culture.*
- f. Ethics, e.g., how a CA deals with situations he may encounter.*
- g. Confidentiality.*
- h. Clarity of speech.*

Any person who has not passed this examination shall not be utilized as a CA. CAs shall be retested at least annually.

Overview

VISTA is committed to providing highly trained, professional Communication Assistants for the Florida Relay Service. All management and CA employees are required to meet strict standards of professionalism, ethics and confidentiality. All VISTA Communication Assistants will be monitored to assure that they are courteous and attentive on FRS calls.

VISTA utilizes a Relay specific program to pre-screen all applicants. This system of questions was carefully developed to screen applicants for their past work history, their typing, grammar and spelling skills and their suitability for the Relay environment. This interview package was designed to identify candidates who meet the skill requirements as well as the strict Confidentiality and Ethical Standards applied by VISTA to all their Relay operations.

Pre-screening, non-biased tests are administered to test typing, spelling, grammar and voicing skills.

Spelling and Grammar

VISTA recognizes the need to employ non-biased, validated grammar and spelling testing and our testing materials are standard entry-level college exams. The Interview Administrator will verify the results. A 90% accuracy rate is required to achieve a passing score on the exams.

Typing Skills

The typing test is computerized and evaluated against a standard of 55 wpm with an accuracy requirement of 90%. The software automatically evaluates the test for both speed and accuracy. The Interview Administrator validates the typing test results.

Voicing

Applicants are additionally screened for their voicing abilities with attention paid to clarity, diction and application of appropriate voice tones. Candidates are required to voice an assortment of possible scenarios they may encounter on a Relay call, including some they may find objectionable or uncomfortable. Only candidates who clearly and accurately voice the examples, while applying appropriate voice tone and inflection, receive a favorable rating.

Training Entrant

Should a candidate pass all required pre-screening, they will be admitted to VISTA's two-week CA initial training program. Upon completion of this program, CAs are required to complete another round of testing, including written policy and procedures, typing skills, voicing skills and call processing policies, written forms of ASL, Deaf and Speech Disabilities Cultures, etiquette, ethics, confidentiality and professional judgement. All testing materials will be made available to FPSC upon written request. Detailed information on the training classes follows in Section B.9.

90-Days and Annual Skills Assessment

New CAs are required to complete testing after three months of employment and another round of tests one year from that date. These tests consist of a written policy and procedure exam and a written spelling and grammar exam. The policy and procedure test includes questions designed to measure the CAs knowledge and skills in the areas of call handling, confidentiality, ethics, ASL, Deaf and Speech Disabilities Cultures, etiquette and professional judgement. Additionally, each CA is required to participate in simulated test call scenarios to directly test their call handling abilities, auditory spelling skills and voicing skills. Any CA who does not meet the rigorous standards of these exams will be required to attend additional training to improve their skills. Only CAs who demonstrate an ability to improve their performance to meet all Relay standards will be retained on an on-going basis.

VISTA uses a computer-assisted program to test for typing speed and accuracy with a minimum standard set at 55 words per minute and a 90% accuracy requirement.

VISTA tests all CA-trainees at 90 days of employment for basic, college-entry level grammar skills utilizing a validated written grammar test. The minimum required score for the exam is 90% accurate answers. Testing materials will be made available to FPSC prior to the implementation of the VISTA Florida Relay Center.

VISTA believes that it is important that CAs possess clear, pleasant speaking voices in order to smoothly and accurately facilitate communication to the hearing caller. All CAs are tested at entry for basic diction and clarity. Training sessions emphasize clarity, voice tone and diction. Additionally, CAs are taught not only ASL vocabulary and signing skills, but are instructed in ASL syntax and grammar to better equip them to voice ASL-typed conversations in a way that the voice user can easily understand.

It is critical to a successful call to convey the proper tone as well as to know what the tone of the other party is. VISTA CAs are trained to portray themselves as genuine, natural and conversational without inviting conversation from either party.

As part of their 90-day and annual exams, CAs are tested for voice clarity, diction and appropriate application of inflection and voice tone. CAs expressing themselves vocally with an accent that may impede communication are given additional training in accent-reduction and diction.

All VISTA CAs are tested again to measure each of the critical skill areas: call processing, typing, spelling, grammar, professionalism, confidentiality and ethics as well as Deaf Culture and ASL.

9. CA Training

Each bidder shall demonstrate in its proposal how ongoing CA training will be provided by including with its proposal an outline of a proposed CA training plan. The provisions for CA training shall include, but not be limited to, an understanding of limited written English and ASL, deaf culture, needs of hearing and speech disabled and dual sensory impaired users, ability to speak in a tone of voice consistent with the intent and mood of the conversation, operation of relay telecommunications equipment, how to handle hearing and voice-carryover, ethics, confidentiality and other requirements of the Provider's operating policies and procedures. Training shall include both simulated and live on-line call handling.

VISTA complies.

VISTA utilizes a variety of teaching styles and techniques including lectures and demonstrations, video, overhead projections, group activity, interactive games and quizzes, peer presentations and hands-on experience (both simulated and live relay calls) in the CA training program.

VISTA will provide 80 hours of customized training on site for all new hires. 66.75 hours is conducted in the classroom where trainees train on hardware and software identical to that they will be using on the Relay floor. This classroom time includes a minimum of 13.5 hours of practice call sessions. The training area is equipped with all types of equipment that a CA may encounter when handling a call: TTYs, Ameriphones, answering machines, voice mail and other automated systems. Trainees are allowed to practice calls reaching each type of equipment as part of their initial training. VISTA provides all training and telephone equipment necessary for trainees to practice *all* types of call scenarios, including VCO, HCO, VCO to VCO, 2-line VCO, answering machines, voice mail and automated response systems. CA-trainees that have completed the initial two-week training period are also allowed to utilize the equipment to continue practicing and improving their call handling skills, during their regularly scheduled work

hours, provided that such practice does not interfere with the Center's ability to promptly answer all calls.

CA trainees spend another 13.5 hours of time on the Relay floor, 4 hours observing highly qualified Communications Assistants/Training Assistants (CA/TAs) handling live calls and 9.5 hours handling actual calls themselves with CA/TA backup and guidance.

During the remaining 60 days of a CA's training, an assigned Primary Supervisor observes the CA's performance on live calls and will provide one-on-one critique and training sessions. An on-going record of CA performance is kept to track CA compliance with VISTA's strict Relay standards and the requirements of this RFP. CAs who demonstrate a weak area of call handling are provided with personalized one-on-one training such as Practice Call Drills, Stress Management and ASL. CAs have available to them, 24 hours a day, all equipment needed to practice more challenging calls such as Voicemail and Automated Response Systems. Consoles are also available for CAs to practice and improve their typing skills and they are encouraged to increase their skills to a level beyond the minimum requirements. VISTA has found that these one-on-one sessions between trainee and Supervisor not only assist Relay in assessing a CA's skill, but also develops an encouraging, supportive relationship for the CAs. Supervisors work closely with the Trainers to develop unique training programs to fit a particular CA's needs.

VISTA is committed to providing excellent performance and continuously updates its training program to reflect the specific needs of the local community as well as advances in technology. VISTA training programs produce excellent CAs well versed in the many aspects of Relay.

The following outline offers a summary description and outline of VISTA's training program for new CAs:

TRAINING CURRICULUM SUMMARY

Intro to the Relay

- Review the description and purpose of relay services.
- Introduce TTY and discuss TTY history.
- Discuss ADA
- Introduce concepts of Equal Access, Functional Equivalence and Pledge of Confidentiality and Relay Code of Ethics

TTY Etiquette/Using TTYs

- Introduce proper use of abbreviations, elimination of punctuation, purpose of using "GA" and "SK", and method of correcting typos. Trainees will place calls to each other on TTYs utilizing these guidelines.

Experience Relay

- Trainees are given the opportunity to place calls through Relay (utilizing a separate Training Gate to handle calls without affecting live calls to the Relay Center) to understand the perspectives of TTY and Voice consumers and to understand how the CA interacts with callers.

CA Experience

- Presentation by experienced CAs. Informal discussion regarding their experiences during and after training; provides encouragement to Trainees who may be nervous about the CA position, as well as building the initial basis for the trainees' transition to the Relay floor.

Who Uses the Relay?

- An overview of the consumer populations who use the relay system as well as some thoughts about their diverse expectations of the relay.

Pledge of Confidentiality and Relay Code of Ethics

- In depth presentation regarding importance of confidentiality and ethics. Session includes lecture, inter-active exercises and quiz. Confidentiality and Relay Code of Ethics training is repeated throughout the CAs tenure at VISTA.

Voicing

- Trainees learn concepts of voicing verbatim, in full thoughts and with conversational inflection. ASL Voicing: Sample sentences of ASL gloss are provided to demonstrate proper voicing.

Decision Making – The Ethical Way -

- Sample questions that customers may present to CAs during call processing are discussed to assist the CA in using proper judgment and to respond to challenging situations professionally and politely.

Workstation Professionalism

- Appropriate and inappropriate behavior at the workstation and on relay calls is discussed.

Ergonomics

- Presentation regarding the meaning and purpose of Ergonomics in the workplace. Introduction to relaxation exercises.

Technical Training

- Introduction to the Workstation
- Keyboard Functions
- Customer Profiles

Call Processing

- TTY TO Voice
- TTY to Voice Answering Machines
- TTY to Voice Automated Systems/Pagers/Voicemail
- Voice to TTY
- Voice to TTY Answering Machines
- Voice Carry Over (TTY to Voice/Voice to TTY)
- Hearing Carry Over (TTY to Voice/Voice to TTY)
- VCO to VCO
- 2-Line VCO
- TTY to VCO
- VCO to TTY
- HCO to HCO
- CCP
- International Calls
- Billing Options
- Emergency Calls

Trainees will learn key aspects of call handling while handling "practice calls" in the training room:

- Maintaining the role of the CA
- Facilitating communication
- Garbled or unclear messages
- Relaying everything verbatim
- Status reports to both callers
- Using proper voice inflection, clarity and diction

Deaf Culture & ASL

VISTA and local representatives of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech Disabled communities provide training for new CAs. This program provides education and orientation to deafness, Deaf Culture and language and the unique needs of persons with communications disabilities.

Following are curriculum outlines for both the Deaf Culture and ASL series of training classes.

DEAF CULTURE

Training regarding Deaf Culture maintains the primary goals of familiarizing new CAs with Deaf culture and the Deaf community, in particular the language, behaviors, social norms and attitudes and how these are viewed by and/or directed towards Hearing people or people outside of the Deaf culture. An emphasis is placed upon exposing new

CAs to the culture of a large portion of relay 's customers and to assist in the understanding of differences (both real and perceived) between Deaf and Hearing cultures.

Class Presentation Outline:

LECTURES – The Deaf Community
 The Culture Values
 What is American Sign Language (ASL)?
 Getting Attention
 Deaf History and History of ASL

VIDEO – Introduction to Deaf Culture

DEAF AWARENESS QUIZ
 Upon completion of quiz, answers are discussed.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

ASL

ASL classes are designed with the primary goal of introducing new CAs to the visual language of signs and teaching some basic sign vocabulary to assist new CAs in communication with signing staff members.

Class Presentation Outline

VERBS	WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY QUESTIONS	
TIME	OTHER WORDS	CLOTHES
FEELINGS	NUMBERS	PLACES
RELATIVES	GRAMMAR NOTES	
COLORS	CULTURE NOTES	

Additional class time is spent on instructing CAs to handle requested Grammatical Changes – ASL to English and English to ASL.

A Post Training Test is administered on the last day of training. The written portion of the test consists of multiple choice questions pertaining to Policy & Procedures, Confidentiality & Ethics and Deaf Culture & ASL.

A sample, confidential copy of VISTA training materials can be found in **Attachment 1**. These training materials include a sample Operator Call Processing Manual as well as sample step-by-step procedural guides currently used in VISTA's Massachusetts Relay. Specific training materials will be developed for the Florida Relay under the terms of the new contract and available for review and approval by FPSC.

On-going Training

VISTA believes that effective call handling requires on-going training and skill improvements for all CAs. Supplemental training is provided to all CAs and Supervisors on an on-going basis. This supplemental training touches on all parts of the basic training program for two reasons. One is to improve the CAs areas of weakness as identified by the Supervisors. The second is to build upon the basic foundation of skills and knowledge. Supplemental training includes, but is not limited to:

- Confidentiality and Code of Ethics
- ASL "gloss" and grammar
- Deaf Culture
- Needs of Speech-Disabled and Deaf/Blind Relay Users
- Techniques to improve Ergonomics
- Operation of Relay Telecommunications Equipment
- Handling of emergency calls
- Spelling and Grammar
- New policy and technical information
- Updated call handling protocol developed in cooperation with the local community
- Stress management and sensitivity training

VISTA is committed to working closely with FTRI and the Florida Relay community to evaluate and refine call processing to best meet the community's needs. We believe that the community is an invaluable source of feedback for the Relay. Such feedback will be considered by the Relay Administration and Training departments for inclusion in future call-processing procedures. All CAs and Supervisors will be scheduled for supplemental training to learn any revisions that occur through this feedback.

Each VISTA CA is assigned a Primary Supervisor who regularly meets with them to assess their skills, explain or clarify policies, and generally support the CA in their relay responsibilities. Primary Supervisors hold regularly scheduled meetings with their CA teams to promote team building, customer service skills, stress management skills as well as to provide the opportunity for CAs to ask questions and voice concerns about VISTA policies and procedures.

Primary Supervisors are responsible to keep detailed, on-going records of each of their CAs performance and to work with the training department to develop and implement individualized supplemental training sessions for each of their CAs as needed.

VISTA provides Relay staff with an in-house library of books and videos of interest to the TRS communities including Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind and Speech-Impaired topics and publications. In addition, VISTA provides ASL-based puzzles and drills for CAs to use to practice their ASL skills. Subscription copies of Deaf Press newspapers are provided at the "library" as well. Operators and other relay personnel may "sign out" any literature or video from the library. VISTA also believes that CAs and Supervisors should be kept abreast of current trends and issues in the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind and Speech-Disabled communities. Articles, special events and broadcasts regarding the Relay User Community are published and posted and the CAs are encouraged to learn more about the community, while respecting their unique role as CAs. VISTA's Outreach and Quality Assurance staff participate in national

organizations, such as ALDA, NAD, SHHH and TDI in order to keep the VISTA Relay community abreast of current trends and needs of Relay users.

The Operator Bulletin Board contains feature articles from major newspapers and magazines and announcements of special events in the TRS community, such as closed-captioned films, exhibits etc. All VISTA Relay staff are encouraged to attend these events and to bring in articles of interest to share that they may find in their personal reading.

VISTA rewards CAs for excellent attendance, and excellent call handling skills. Gift certificates, certificates and plaques are awarded through the Operator of the Month program.

10. Staff Training

All relay center staff, including management, shall receive training in ASL, deaf culture, needs of hearing, speech and dual sensory impaired users, and ethics and confidentiality. Each proposal should include an outline of a staff training plan indicating training topics and time frames as well as explaining how individuals or organizations (such as deaf service centers, state agencies, universities, etc.) representing the hearing and speech impaired community would be used to assist with the training.

VISTA understands and will comply.

Working with FTRI and FPSC, VISTA proposes to subcontract with qualified members of the Florida Relay community and state agencies to provide instructors to work with VISTA training staff for disability awareness, Deaf Culture and ASL training. Organizations including, but not limited to the following will be contacted and invited to participate in various venues: Florida Association of the Deaf (FAD) and its Local Affiliates, Florida chapters of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH), Florida chapters of Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA), Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB) Florida Deaf Service Center Association (DSCA), Centers for Independent Living, Florida Speech-Language-Hearing Association (FLSHA), as well as Speech Pathologists and Health Care professionals specializing in CP, MS and ALS treatment. CAs and Supervisors are required to attend on-going classes, covering a variety of topics.

Additionally, VISTA and Florida Relay community members will develop and provide all VISTA relay staff with Relay User Panel discussions. These Relay User Panels will be made up of members of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind and Speech-Impaired DPRS communities and organizations. The panels provide OPRs and Supervisors with direct experience and teaching from a variety of DPRS users while protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. VISTA has successfully hosted such panels at their Massachusetts Relay Center and has found CA response to be very positive and that the personal contact has enhanced CA understanding of the various communities they serve.

ASL classes include not only signing but also ASL structure and grammatical translation from ASL to English and from English to ASL. At the end of each session of classes (an average ASL session consists of six weeks of classes, Deaf Culture sessions generally

of eight weeks of classes) OPRs and Supervisors will be required to take certification tests to evaluate and acknowledge their performance in the session.

Topics included during the ASL supplemental training sessions include, but are not limited to:

- Alphabet, pronouns, WH-questions, verbs, yes/no questions, and related grammar and cultural notes
- Relatives, feelings, time, numbers, grammar notes regarding tenses
- Types of work (with agent suffix), types of work (without agent suffix), verbs other words, days of the week, time indicators with grammar notes,
- Grammar ASL vs. English
- Colors, clothes, more verbs, foods, and associated grammar and cultural notes
- Household words and relationships,
- ASL to English translation
- Multi-directional verbs, negatives, facial expressions, opposites

Deaf Culture classes include but are not limited to, these topics:

- History of Deaf America
- Cultural Values
- TTY History
- Channels of communication
- Schools and Clubs
- Mainstreaming and Assimilation
- Language and Communication
- Deaf Children
- Specialized Vocabulary
- Oral History
- Success Stories
- Group loyalty and Cultural norms
- Deaf/Blind cultural norms
- Late Deafened persons
- Hard of Hearing persons
- Speech Disabilities

VISTA enjoys a strong relationship with various state agencies (including the Equipment Distribution Program) and community members in Massachusetts, where we provide relay service. VISTA works closely with those agencies to provide education and outreach to both CAs and the general population. Drawing on our experiences in Massachusetts, VISTA's Outreach and Quality Assurance department will work to establish a positive, proactive relationship with FTRI and other Florida State agencies and organizations.

11. Counseling of CAs and Staff

Bidders are required to outline counseling and support program that will help CAs and staff deals with the emotional aspects of relaying calls. Those providing this staff support shall have training in dealing with the emotional aspects of handling relay calls. However, in counseling sessions, the

CA shall not give to the support person the names of callers involved. The counseling support system shall follow the confidentiality provisions of this RFP.

VISTA complies.

VISTA recognizes that Communication Assistants often encounter emotionally charged situations on calls and that they face an added challenge of being prohibited from discussing call content. All VISTA Supervisors and Management staff are trained to provide counseling and stress management tips to CAs. CAs are free at any time to ask their Primary Supervisor or another member of VISTA Relay Management to discuss any issue or situation. All CAs are training as part of Confidentiality and Ethics training to never discuss call particulars, such as a caller's name, locations or other identifying characteristics. CAs are instructed to request a "safe" or "private" location for discussions of emotional or stress-inducing situations. The CA is immediately taken to one of the private offices or conference rooms and given an opportunity to share their feelings, vent their frustrations or ask for advice. Supervisors are trained to be supportive and non-judgmental and provide the CA with strategies to help reduce tension. CAs who seem upset are permitted an extra break to take a walk or sit quietly and relax before resuming their duties on the phones.

12. Procedures for Relaying Communications

The system shall be designed to convey the full content of the communication. Unless requested otherwise by a user, the CA shall relay all calls according to the following procedures.

- a. *The method to be used in the system is for the CA to be identified by a number (not name) followed by "M" if male and "F" if female. The provider shall establish a method which will allow identification of the CA in the event a complaint is filed or a user wants to praise the work of the CA.*

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs announce each call with the Relay name, their identification number and gender. Voice callers will be greeted with, "Florida Relay Service CA 1234 Go Ahead". VISTA believes that a CAs gender is identified by their vocal quality to hearing callers. Text Relay users will be sent a macro message, "FRS CA 1234F GA". At the end of the call, as sign-off procedure, CAs are required to repeat their CA number and gender designation, i.e., "Thank you for using the Florida Relay. This is CA 1234, good bye", TTY users will be sent the macro message, "THK U, FRS CA 1234 BYE SK". When a VISTA CA logs onto their computer, their CA number is automatically included in these macro messages to ensure the TTY user receives the information. Commendations or complaints may be given to Customer Service referencing the CA number.

- b. *The system shall keep the user informed on the status of the call, such as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected or on hold throughout the call session. The system shall provide feedback to callers on call status within 10 seconds after a caller has provided the number to call and continue to provide feedback until the call is answered.*

VISTA complies.

CAs are required to keep both callers informed at all times of the call status. Special macro keys are available to assist the CA in efficiently informing the caller of dialing, ringing, busy, recordings, gender of person speaking and other status information. If the terminating party puts the originating caller on hold, CAs are instructed to update the originating caller every 20-30 seconds of their holding status. CAs are trained to provide initial feedback to the originating caller within 10 seconds after receiving the number to dial and a GA from the TTY user. Normally, that update will be in the form of a dialing macro, "DIALING 800 444 4444 pls hold", indicating that the CA is dialing the requested number. Should any additional billing information be required before the CA can place the call (i.e. first name of caller on collect calls), the CA will ask the caller for that information within 10 seconds of receiving the number to dial and the GA from the TTY user.

- c. *All users shall have the option of telling the CA what aspects of the call that he/she will handle. For example, the TDD user may voice the call (voice carryover), rather than have the CA do it or the caller may ask that relay be explained as soon as someone answers the call.*

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs are trained to follow standard call handling policy and procedures unless informed otherwise by the Relay user either at the beginning of a call, or via the caller's Customer Profile. VISTA recognizes that at all times, the decision making power on calls lies with the originating caller and will follow instructions as given. Some areas of call processing available through the Customer Profile feature for VISTA relay users include, but are not limited to:

No Announcement of Relay: Here the CA will not announce the call as a Relay call, but will type the called party's greeting verbatim, followed by GA, and allow the TTY user to begin the call themselves.

No Explanation of Service: This choice allows the TTY user's calls to be announced by the CA, but the CA will not ask the called party, "Do you know how to use Relay?" nor will the CA explain the service to the called party. The choice of explanation will lie with the originating caller.

VISTA recognizes that, on certain calls, the text --based relay user may wish to override their profile option. For example, if a TTY user has the Customer Profile, No Explanation of Service, they may choose to type at the beginning of a specific call, "CA pls explain relay on this call". The CA will then follow those instructions and explain relay to the called party.

Callers are always free to inform the CA they wish to use VCO or HCO on a call or they may choose to establish a Caller Profile that will automatically inform the CA that the caller uses VCO or HCO when they call into the Relay center.

- d. *When the call is first answered and at all times during the conversation, the system shall type to the TDD user or verbalize to the non-TDD user verbatim what is said or typed unless the relay user specifically requests summarization. If the CA summarizes the conversation, the CA shall inform both parties that the call is being summarized.*

VISTA understands and will comply.

In accordance with FCC regulations and Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act, all VISTA relay calls will be relayed verbatim (word-for-word) unless specifically requested otherwise by the caller, either text or voice. CAs are trained to type the voice user's exact words to the TTY user, including the voice user's greeting when answering the phone. Likewise, CAs will voice, word for word, exactly what is typed by the text Relay user.

If the TTY user prefers that the CA summarize the conversation, the CA will inform the hearing caller that the request has been made. The CA will then type all critical components of the conversation to the TTY user, indicating where words have been omitted by the use of ellipses (. . .). Critical components include, but are not limited to, names, dates, phone numbers, addresses, appointment times, hours of business, prices, etc. Some TTY users prefer to always have recordings summarized when they access one through relay. VISTA offers its Relay users a Caller Profile option, Abbreviated Auto Messages, which automatically informs the CA to summarize any recorded messages that TTY user may reach.

- e. *When the CA is asked to explain relay to a user, the CA shall express the term "explaining relay" to the other user on the call to let them know what is happening rather than transmitting all of the explanation. The CA shall not inform the telephone user that the TDD user is hearing or speech disabled unless the TDD user asks the CA to do so.*

VISTA's CAs are trained to ask every voice user, whether they are originating or receiving a relay call, "Do you know how to use Relay"? If the voice user is unfamiliar with relay, the CA will send the macro message, EXPLAINING RELAY GA, to the TTY user. This allows the text Relay user to type their initial message while the CA explains the service. In the rare instance when a voice caller reaches a TTY user who is unfamiliar with Relay, the CA will inform the voice user that they are explaining the service, and ask the voice caller to hold until the text TRS user is comfortable with the procedure.

Standard explanation scripts for the various Relay call types are included at the end of this response.

VISTA will include in the Customer Profile feature and option for "No Explanation of Service". This choice allows the TTY user's calls to be announced by the CA, but the CA will not ask the called party, "Do you know how to use Relay?" nor will the CA explain the service to the called party. The choice to explain the service will remain with the originating caller. If a Relay user with this profile decides to override their profile option on a given call, they may instruct the CA in advance, "CA pls explain relay", and the CA will follow those instructions.

VISTA CAs are instructed never to identify the TTY user as Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Speech-Impaired unless the TTY user asks the CA to do so. VISTA's approved explanation of a TDD or TTY follows the explanation scripts below.

VISTA Relay explanation scripts:

TTY to Voice

"The caller will be typing on a (TTY) teletext device. I will relay the conversation to you. When you hear the words, "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower and directly to the caller. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Relay will begin now..."

Voice to TTY

"The person you are calling uses a (TTY) teletext device. The person will type and I will relay the conversation to you. When you hear the words, "GO AHEAD," it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower and directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Please hold while I dial XXX-XXX-XXXX"

Voice Carry Over to Voice

"The caller is making a voice carry over call using a (TTY) teletext device. You will hear the person speaking directly to you. When the caller say the words "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower, and directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Relay will begin now"

Voice to Voice Carry Over

"The person you are calling (have reached) uses Voice Carry Over on a (TTY) teletext device. You will hear the person speaking directly to you. When you hear the words "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower, and directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Please hold while I dial XXX-XXX-XXXX"

Hearing Carry Over to Voice

"The caller is making a Hearing Carry Over call using a (TTY) teletext device. The caller can hear you and I will relay the caller's typed response to you. There may be pauses as the message is typed. When you hear the words "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. Please speak directly to the caller. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Relay will begin now..."

Voice to Hearing Carry Over

"The person you are calling (have reached) uses Hearing Carry Over on a (TTY) teletext device. The person can hear you and I will relay their typed responses to you. There may be pauses as the message is typed. When you hear the words, "GO AHEAD," it is your turn to respond. Please speak directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response ...Please hold while I dial XXX-XXX-XXXX."

Explanation of a Teletext Device

A teletext device, or TTY, is a communications device used by people who may be deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled, instead of a standard telephone.

- f. When speaking for the TDD user, the CA shall adopt a conversational tone of voice appropriate to the type of call being made and conveying the intent and*

mood of the message. The CA shall also indicate identifiable emotions by typing those in parentheses, (e.g., he's laughing, he's crying). Any identifiable background noises shall be relayed to the TDD user in parentheses. The CA shall identify to the TDD user, if identifiable, the gender of voice users when they first come on the line. All of the above should be done automatically unless the user asks that it not be done.

VISTA complies.

It is critical to a successful call to convey the proper tone as well as to know what the tone of the other party is. VISTA CAs are trained to portray themselves as genuine, natural and conversational without inviting conversation from either party. Training instructs the CA to be attentive to the content and context of the conversation, as well as other instructions given by the text user, in order to effectively voice the typed conversation. For example, when a TTY user types (ha ha), (mad), or (tired) the CA's voice should reveal that underlying message by laughter, sounding angry or sounding tired. All CA trainees are given voicing classes during which a wide variety of possible call scenarios are presented so that they can practice realistic and appropriate tone of voice skills.

Likewise, when a standard phone user's voice has a discernible sound to it, CAs will, to the best of their abilities, relay that sound as (sounds tired), (sounds out of breath) or whatever is appropriate. CAs understand that voice tone can add additional meaning and nuance to the words spoken by the voice user and will type indicators of such to the TTY user. CAs are NOT allowed to make judgment calls on sounds or tone of voice and will use the most objective language possible when describing what they are hearing. For example, if the caller is speaking very quickly and abruptly, the CA may type (sounds hurried) or (sounds rushed), not the more subjective, (sounds too busy to talk to you). The CAs are trained to only provide a written description of what they are hearing. It is up to the caller to pursue more information from the other party if they so desire. Similarly, CAs are trained to only describe background sounds factually, without including any personal judgment in the description. For example, CAs are not allowed to type (sounds like wild party in background), but only what they actually are hearing (music and laughter in background).

CAs are required to send a gender identifier (M) or (F) as soon as the hearing person comes on the line. If, during the course of the conversation, another hearing person begins to speak, the CA will notify the TTY user of the new party by sending another gender message. In the rare cases where a CA is unable to identify the hearing caller's gender, no gender message will be sent.

Some TTY users prefer not to receive any tone of voice or background sound indicators from the CA. VISTA provides the option of two Caller Profiles, No Tone of Voice and No Background Sounds. TTY users may elect to establish either or both of these profiles. The Caller Profile automatically informs the CA of the caller's preference when they contact Relay. A TTY user may, at their discretion, override their profile by informing the CA, for example, "CA type tone of voice on this call". Likewise, a caller without a profile may elect to receive no tone of voice or background sound indicators, simply by informing the CA of their preference at the beginning of the call.

- g. CAs shall indicate to the user, if known, if another person comes on the line.*

VISTA complies.

CAs indicate another person has come on the line by sending a new gender designation, (M) or (F), for the new speaker and typing whatever that person says, i.e., "Hello, this is Sally". It is sometimes necessary for the CA to clarify what is happening on the call, for example, a new person unexpectedly begins speaking without announcing themselves, CA will type (NEW PERSON SPEAKING) and send the appropriate gender macro message.

On calls that require transfers, the CA will keep the text user informed of the status of the call. For example, Person 1 says (and CA types) "Please hold while I transfer your call to the Supervisor", the CA will send (HOLDING), when the new voice comes on the line, the appropriate gender designation (M) or (F) will be sent, followed by that person's greeting, "Supervisor here".

- h. All comments directed to either party by the CA or to the CA by either party shall be relayed. These comments shall be typed in parentheses. However, comments between the CA and a relay user at the beginning of a call which deal with billing information need not be relayed to the other user.*

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay CAs are required to keep the text Relay user informed on any interaction they have with the voice caller. Everything that the voice caller says is relayed to the TTY user. CAs are required to smoothly facilitate call connections, and to this end, they sometimes must request certain information from the voice caller. In order to avoid any confusion, CAs will keep the TTY user informed by describing the CA actions, in parentheses, i.e. (CHECKING BILLING PLS HOLD). The called party's response to questions regarding billing, etc. will be typed verbatim. Often CAs encounter multiple receptionists and switchboard operators when placing calls to businesses for TTY users. If the caller has given the CA the name of the person they are requesting, the CA will place the call, type the answering party's greeting and send (ASKING FOR JOHN) to the TTY user. In an effort to quickly and efficiently facilitate call connection, conserve TTY tape and avoid confusion, the CA does not type any incidental text to the TTY user, for example, "One moment" spoken immediately as the call is transferred to "John". When the person being called, "John" in this example, answers, the CA types his greeting and sends the male gender macro message, (M) John here, how can I help you QQ GA. If the CA encounters someone while trying to connect with the requested party and that voice user says something that impacts the call, the CA will type their words verbatim, for example, "John is not here, may I take a message?". The CA then will ask the voice person if they know how to use relay, and will proceed with normal relay procedures.

Likewise, if it is necessary for a CA to explain relay to the voice caller, the CA will conserve TTY user time and tape, by sending the macro (EXPLAINING RELAY) GA, rather than typing out the entire explanation script they are reading to the voice TRS user.

If, during the conversation, the voice user directs a question to the CA, the CA will type their question, verbatim, to the TTY user. The CA will remind the voice user to speak directly to the caller, and that they are not allowed to engage in conversation during the course of the call, but are only there to relay information between the TTY and voice user. If the voice user continues to try and engage the CA in conversation, the CA will inform the TTY user (Asking CA about how relay works). The CA will still not answer the question, but will defer control of the call to the TTY user.

If, during the conversation, the CA finds it necessary to give further instructions to the voice caller in order to facilitate communication, the CA will keep the text TRS user informed of their actions, i.e. (ASKING PERSON TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO U). VISTA finds that these status updates keep the text user informed of CA actions, without causing unnecessary confusion for either caller. VISTA has found that typing (SPEAK DIRECTLY TO CALLER PLEASE) can sometimes confuse callers as to whom the comment is directed. The descriptive message (ASKING PERSON TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO U) avoids such confusion.

- i. *CAs shall verify spelling of unfamiliar proper nouns, numbers, addresses, information about drug prescriptions and other unfamiliar words that are spoken and are to be relayed.*

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs are trained to verify spelling of proper nouns, addresses and difficult technical or medical terms (e.g. names of medications). CAs will keep the TTY user informed and indicate that the spelling has been verified by placing spaces between the letters, such as M A C K E N Z I E. If the TTY user spells out a name in the same manner, i.e. C L A R K S E N, the CA will spell out the name for the voice caller. If either party asks for a spelling or clarification, the CA will relay the request verbatim to the other caller and type/voice the response appropriately.

- j. *The CA will stay on the line until both parties have terminated the call.*

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs are required to remain on the line on all calls, until either the originating party has terminated the call, both parties have agreed to terminate the call, or the originating party requests the call be transferred to a Supervisor. The originating caller will be offered the option to place another call following the completion of the first one.

- k. *CAs shall not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions or additional information into any relay call. This also means the CAs shall not make any value judgements on the profanity or obscenity or legality of any messages. Furthermore, the CAs shall not hold personal conversations with anyone calling the system.*

VISTA complies.

All VISTA CAs, Supervisors and managers are trained to follow strict guidelines in call handling and ethical relay practices. CAs, Supervisors and managers are not permitted to counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions, messages, observations, personal questions or additional information into any relay call. CAs, Supervisors and managers are trained to remain neutral at all times on calls and will not make value judgements regarding call content, legality or the character of persons using the relay. CAs, Supervisors and managers may not hold personal conversations with consumers calling into the relay center, on a relay call, or related to a relay call even when prompted by callers.

- l. Users shall not be required to give their names or the name of the party they are calling, unless needed for billing.*

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay users will not be required to give the CA their names or the names of the party they are calling with the exception of certain types of long distance calls (i.e. 3rd party billing and collect calls) where this information may be required. VISTA CAs will not refuse to make a call if the caller does not wish to give his or her name, except when billing requires the name to be provided. In cases where the caller is required to provide their name (i.e. for a collect call), no record of the caller's name will be kept beyond termination of the call.

- m. For each incoming call, the CA shall without delay make as many outgoing calls as requested by the caller.*

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs are trained to offer the originating caller (TTY or Voice) the option of placing another call immediately following the first one. Callers are permitted to place unlimited calls during one Relay session.

- n. If a user requests that a CA of a specific gender be used, the system shall comply whenever possible.*

VISTA complies.

VISTA will employ both male and female CAs throughout 24 hours of operation, allowing TTY users the option of a male or female CA whenever possible. Selection for either gender will be available in the Customer Profile options so that when the TTY user's call arrives, it can immediately be transferred to their choice, if a CA of the opposite gender answers the call. If the CA handling the call needs to be replaced, a CA of the same gender will be assigned to the call whenever possible.

- o. If a user requests that the same CA be used during the entire conversation, the system shall comply whenever possible.*

VISTA complies.

Relay users will have the option of requesting that the same VISTA CA remain on their call for the entire conversation. The caller's request will be honored whenever possible. During some particularly long calls (i.e. over an hour in duration), the CA may need to be relieved from the call for a brief break. VISTA CAs are encouraged, however, to remain on all calls until they are completed unless the CA is physically unable to do so.

13. Interaction with Answering Machines and Voice Response Units

The bidder shall explain if and how messages will be left on or retrieved from answering machines and if and how interaction with voice response units will be accomplished.

VISTA complies.

VISTA's CA workstations are able to record and playback answering machine messages.

VISTA's Relay systems include the ability to capture high rate per minute voice systems such as answering machine and Voice Response Unit. Automated messages are typically recorded at a high rate of speed, sometimes over 200 words per minute. The captured-recording feature plays the message back to the CA headset at a slowed rate under CA control. Playback is handled to provide natural sounding speech rather than the distortion normally associated with slow playback.

The CA will activate the recording mechanism by a single key-press. This will cause recording to begin. The CA headset will be connected to the playback function. The CA will be able to adjust the speed by pressing either of two keys that will speed up or slow down the rate of playback by 10 percent increments.

The captured announcements or messages are automatically deleted from the console's memory and hard drive at the end of the call.

VISTA's CAs shall leave messages on answering machines or other voice processing systems or any voice driven menu systems if the user activates one while placing a relay call. The relay user must remain on the line for the message process to be completed. Following are the CA procedures for leaving messages on answering machines, voicemail or other automated voice message systems.

1. The CA shall inform the caller when an answering machine has been reached by sending the macro message, (ANS MACH).
2. The CA shall relay any outgoing message on answering machines accessed to the caller (both voice and text) unless requested not to do so.
3. The CA shall ask the caller if she/he wishes to leave a message.
4. The CA shall leave the caller's message, either by voice or by text.
5. The CA shall confirm to the caller that the message has been left.
6. The caller shall be charged only for one call, regardless of the number of redials required to leave the message.

VISTA's CAs shall retrieve messages from answering machines, voice processing and voice response systems, and/or paging systems. CAs will relay a text message to a voice user or a voice message to a TTY user. CAs are able to access these systems as long as the relay user is able to provide any necessary access codes and telephone numbers that may be required by the system they are trying to reach. CAs will relay the messages verbatim, unless instructed otherwise by the caller. If the message system allows a caller to save, delete or repeat a message, the CA will type (or voice) these options to the user and wait for user's instructions. VISTA CAs will send confirmation that these instructions have been completed.

VISTA will provide tips to relay users on accessing message systems on the Florida Relay Website as well as in outreach materials. These tips will include instructions for the Relay user to provide the CA with the necessary access codes, PIN numbers, etc. required by the user's particular message system. CAs are able to access systems and retrieve messages more quickly if the caller provides all necessary codes at the onset of

the call. If the caller does not supply the information up front, the CA will type any system prompts they reach which ask for the information, followed by GA, in order to allow the Relay user to provide their responses.

VISTA offers a Customer Profile option, Abbreviated Auto Messages, for Relay users who wish to have the CA type only critical information from recorded messages. Such critical data includes, but is not limited to, names, addresses, telephone numbers, hours of operation, etc.

A more detailed description of how Florida Relay users will be able to interact with voice response units follows in section B.13.d.

- a. *The bidder should explain how any access code used to retrieve messages will be confidentially handled.*

VISTA complies. Many automated message systems require the CA to enter a password or access code to access the caller's messages. VISTA will include tips to Relay users on the Florida Relay Website as well as in outreach materials instructing them on how to best access these systems. These tips will include instructions for the Relay user to provide the CA with the necessary access codes, PIN numbers, etc. required by the user's particular message system. If the Relay user tells the CA, for example, "DIAL 800 444 4444 Mailbox # 4433 Password 1234 GA", the CA will dial the requested number and keep the TTY user informed by sending the following messages:

DIALING 800 444 4444 RING 1, 2, etc (ENTERING NUMBER PLS HOLD). The last message, "entering number pls hold" indicates that the CA has reached the system and is entering the mailbox and password information supplied by the TTY user. If the caller does not supply the information up front, the CA will type any system prompts they reach which ask for the information, followed by GA, in order to allow the Relay user to provide their responses.

Any access codes, PIN numbers, etc. will not be retained beyond the duration of the call. This requirement is reflected in the Relay Code of Ethics and Confidentiality (found in Attachment _____) and is covered in initial and supplemental training for all CAs, Supervisors and managers. Any Relay employee violating these rules is subject to immediate disciplinary action up to and including employment termination.

- b. *The bidder should explain if and how messages will be retrieved from an answering machine if the originating party calling the relay center is at the same location as the answering machine. For example, if a person is at home and cannot retrieve his messages from his own answering machine, how will the relay center accomplish retrieving the message and relaying the information to the hearing impaired person when only one telephone line exists to the residence?*

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs will be trained to retrieve messages left on a voice answering machine for a TTY user when only one phone line exists in their home. The TTY user would call Relay and inform the CA that they wish to retrieve their voice messages from their answering machine. The caller will need to inform the CA that they are calling from the same location as the answering machine. Although it is not technically feasible at this time for the CA to listen to, and type back the message simultaneously to the TTY user, VISTA can provide the service. The CA will instruct the caller to put the receiver down to the

answering machine and play the messages when they get the GA from the CA. The CA will then change the originating connection to VCO and send GA. The caller will press play and the CA will listen to the messages, transcribing the message manually. The caller will need to watch their recorder to see when it shuts off and replace their receiver onto their TTY. When the recording is finished, the CA will turn off VCO and the originating caller will be once again connected in TTY mode. CA will type "MSGS RETRIEVED READY TO RECEIVE QQ GA". This will give the TTY user an opportunity to get ready to receive their messages in text format. When the TTY user sends an affirmative reply, the CA will then type their messages to them, verbatim. When the last message is typed, the CA will type (MSG FINISHED) GA and await further instructions.

In the event that future technology allows for CAs to perform this function without having to manually transcribe the messages, VISTA will be available to discuss this feature further with FPSC.

- c. *The bidder should explain how charges for long distance relay calls will apply when multiple calls are necessary to complete leaving or retrieving a message on an answering machine or retrieving a message from a voice response unit.*

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay Users will be charged only for one call, regardless of the number of redials required to leave messages on answering machines, or retrieve messages from voice mail and other automated systems.

- d. *The bidder should explain if and how calls will be handled in order for the caller to interact with voice response units. (e.g., "Press 1 to ...").*

VISTA complies.

VISTA recognizes that a large number of calls to businesses and virtually all toll free calls result in the caller accessing some type of automated menu system (Press 1 to ...). These calls can be difficult for any person to navigate but they cause particular problems for Relay users.

VISTA's Relay systems include the ability to capture high rate per minute voice systems such as answering machines and voice response units. Automated messages are typically recorded at a high rate of speed, sometimes over 200 words per minute. The captured-recording feature plays the message back to the CA headset at a slowed rate under CA control. Playback is handled to provide natural sounding speech rather than the distortion normally associated with slow playback.

If a caller accesses an automated system while calling through relay, the CA will notify them by sending the macro message, (RECORDING). The CA will then begin typing, verbatim, the automated message. If the recording is too fast, or too long, for the CA to be able to type it by ear alone, the CA will activate the in-console recording mechanism by a single key-press. The CA will inform the caller by sending the macro message (COLLECTING INFO PLS HOLD). Once the console has captured the recording, the CA will then playback the information into their headset and transcribe it verbatim to the TTY user. The CA is able to adjust the rate of playback by pressing either of two keys that will speed up or slow down the rate of playback by 10 percent increments.

VISTA's Relay system is fully compatible with Enhanced Protocol features, including Ultratec's Interrupt feature. If, while the CA is typing the menu choices from an automated system, the TTY user sees the choice they want, the TTY user can press their Interrupt command. The CA console will flash INTERRUPT REQUESTED. The CA will immediately quit relaying the recorded message and send GA to the TTY user. The CA will then await instructions from the TTY user. Because some automated systems hang up on callers unless you provide immediate responses, these calls may require multiple calls to the automated system. The caller will be charged for only one call, regardless of the number of redials necessary to interact with the system.

The captured announcement or messages are automatically deleted from the console's memory and hard drive at the end of the call.

If the TTY user does not interrupt the CA, the CA will continue typing the entire recorded message and then send the macro (MESSAGE FINISHED) (HUNG UP) GA. The CA will then await further instructions from the TTY user. VISTA has discovered through many test calls that the majority of systems require that callers redial as the system automatically disconnects if no response is received within a few seconds.

The Florida Relay Website will include tips for Relay callers to make interaction with menu systems easier through relay. VISTA CAs are trained to follow the TTY users instructions. If a TTY user tells the CA, for example, "Call 800 THE BANK NEED CUSTOMER SERVICE PERSON", the CA will call the number, let the caller know they've reached a recording and to please hold. The CA will then listen to the recording and choose the option for Customer Service, without needing to type all of the other information that may be included. This saves the TTY user's time and TTY paper and makes their call more efficient. Once the CA hears the option for Customer Service, they will type (CHOOSING CUSTOMER SERVICE PLS HOLD). When the Customer Service person answers, relay will proceed according to normal procedures. If the recording does not give an option for Customer Service, or a live representative of any kind, the CA will inform the TTY user by typing, "NO CUSTOMER SERVICE LIVE PERSON OPTION GA" and await further instructions from the TTY user.

VISTA recognizes the frustration that can result from trying to interact with these automated menu systems and will include instructions and tips on the Florida Relay Website as well as in outreach materials.

Florida Relay Users will also be able to access state-of-the-art-paging systems with VISTA's Relay. CAs are trained to leave numerical or verbal messages on pagers, if requested to do so by the TTY user. The TTY user should provide the CA the number to dial, any necessary access codes and the message they wish to leave on the pager. For example, "Call 555 111 2222 PAGE ME 555 222 1111 GA". Many paging systems do not have any greeting when answered. The CA will dial the number and send the macro message (ENTERING NUMBER PLS HOLD) so that the TTY user will know that their numeric message is being left. Once the CA has entered the number into the paging system, they will inform the TTY user with another message, (MSG LEFT) GA. The TTY user is now free to place another call or terminate the session. If the CA reaches a voice answering system, they will process the call as detailed in section B.13, above.

14. Languages Served

At all times, the provider shall make available CAs with the capability to provide relay service to users who use either English, Spanish or ASL (American Sign Language) on their relay call. Translation from one language to another is not required.

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay users who prefer to use Spanish language may request a Spanish language CA. The Florida Relay system will be capable of transferring calls internally to a Spanish speaking CA when the customer requests Spanish to Spanish relay. VISTA will also provide specific access numbers that callers wishing to use Spanish relay can call.

The Florida Relay Center will be staffed with CAs capable of handling Spanish-to-Spanish relay calls of all types. Spanish speaking Relay users can inform the CA when they reach relay that they wish to place a Spanish call. If that CA is not bi-lingual, the call will be transferred to a Spanish speaking CA. Spanish callers experience the exact same call processing, as do English-speaking relay users. To facilitate these calls, the consoles are equipped with Spanish macro keys to inform callers of call status. The CAs are provided with Spanish versions of the Relay explanation scripts. VISTA will recruit Spanish-speaking candidates through resources that serve the Hispanic population.

CAs are trained, in accordance with Title IV of the ADA, to relay verbatim. That is, the CA types every word that is spoken, and voices exactly each word that is typed. However, since ASL is not a written language, sometimes its transliteration to written English may cause communication difficulties on a call. VISTA recognizes that some TTY users may desire communication assistance in the form of conversational English grammatical correction applied to typed ASL expressions in order to facilitate understanding by both Relay users. VISTA shall train Supervisors and CAs to apply best effort standards in assisting callers who request translation. The role of the Supervisor or CA is to reword ASL like typed messages into a conversational English word order and to modify spoken words from English grammar into an ASL like typed message. VISTA will provide classes specifically dedicated to training CAs on the grammatical structure and syntax of ASL in written form, as well as how to properly translate those expressions in grammatically correct spoken English. Upon completion of these training sessions, participating CAs and Supervisors will be required to pass skills test to evaluate their abilities to assist on these types of calls. CAs must successfully complete this training in order to process requests for communication assistance in the form of grammatical correction. A list of qualified CAs will be available to all Supervisors so those Relay users requesting assistance can be provided with a specially trained CA.

15. Additional Languages Served

The provider will not be required to serve languages other than English, Spanish, or ASL. However, additional evaluation points may be given for proposals that include how the provider would handle relay calls using one or more additional languages (e.g. French, or Creole etc.).

At this time, VISTA does not offer languages other than English, Spanish and ASL.

16. Shift Advisor/Consultant

On each shift the provider shall employ in the relay center at least one person who is highly knowledgeable of ASL in order to serve as an advisor/consultant to assist CAs in understanding the intent of messages and properly communicating the full content of communication.

VISTA complies.

VISTA believes that all Florida Relay users should experience the smoothest relay communication possible. VISTA will recruit and hire specialized Shift Advisors who are highly knowledgeable in both ASL and Deaf Culture. These Advisors will be available to assist CAs and callers should there be difficulty in communication due to a language conflict between ASL expressed in typing, and English. VISTA will work with area Deaf Services Organizations to identify and recruit qualified applicants for these positions. While these Advisors may not be certified Interpreters, they will be highly skilled and will be required to pass internal certification exams and to continue to develop their skills through continuing education programs. In addition, VISTA believes that it is important for all Relay CAs and Supervisors to be trained to provide basic grammatical transliteration between ASL and English.

VISTA recognizes that some TTY users may desire communication assistance in the form of conversational English grammatical correction applied to typed ASL expressions in order to facilitate understanding by both Relay users. VISTA shall train Supervisors and CAs to apply best effort standards in assisting callers who request translation. The role of the Supervisor or CA is to reword ASL like typed messages into a conversational English word order and to modify spoken words from English grammar into an ASL like typed message. VISTA will provide classes specifically dedicated to training CAs on the grammatical structure and syntax of ASL in written form, as well as how to properly translate those expressions in grammatically correct spoken English. Upon completion of these training sessions, participating CAs and Supervisors will be required to pass skills test to evaluate their abilities to assist on these types of calls. CAs must successfully complete this training in order to process requests for communication assistance in the form of grammatical correction. A list of qualified CAs will be available to all Supervisors so those Relay users requesting assistance can be provided with a specially trained CA.

17. Confidentiality of Calls

As required by s.427.704(1)(c), F.S., all calls shall be totally confidential; no written or electronic script shall be kept beyond the duration of the call. CAs and supervisory personnel shall not reveal information about the content of any call and, except for the minimum necessary for billing, complaint processing, statistical reporting or training purposes as further described in this RFP, shall not reveal any information about a call. CAs and supervisory personnel shall be required to sign a pledge of confidentiality promising not to disclose the identity of any callers (except for the reasons discussed in this section) or any information learned during the course of relaying calls, either during the period of employment as a CA or after termination of employment.

VISTA complies.

VISTA understands that confidentiality is of the utmost importance, and will hold all calls and all related information in strict confidence.

All CAs, as well as all other personnel associated with the relay center, are required to sign a detailed Pledge of Confidentiality and Relay Code of Ethics. This document is intended to clearly detail in a point-by-point fashion exactly what confidentiality means. This is extremely important since a breach will result in the employee's immediate termination. Claiming failure to understand that their actions represent a breach of confidentiality will not be accepted as a defense. A copy of the Pledge of Confidentiality and Relay Code of Ethics can be found at **Attachment 2**.

During the required new staff orientation and throughout training, the importance of confidentiality is stressed. An initial two-hour class is required to familiarize all CAs and Relay staff with the concepts and importance of Relay Ethics and Confidentiality. Additional class time is devoted to presenting call scenarios and circumstances that may inadvertently lead to a breach of confidentiality. In order to provide instruction on how to properly handle calls, CAs are coached on appropriate and inappropriate actions. A Code of Ethics and Confidentiality Awareness Quiz is administered and discussed upon completion to reinforce the CAs understanding of these principles.

Additionally, all CAs attend ethics training and professionalism training classes (one hour each in duration) during their initial training. These classes detail methods and strategies for handling various types of situations and people while maintaining strict ethical guidelines.

VISTA and VISTA IT employees are prohibited from:

- keeping any records of conversations
- divulging the content of relayed conversations
- acting on the information contained in relayed conversations
- censoring the contents of relayed conversations

From initial interview throughout the training program and daily on the production floor, it is repeatedly stressed that confidentiality is the one area where there is absolutely NO flexibility.

Any call-related conversations between a CA and a Supervisor or Manager will take place in a private area of the center during work time. Call specific information (if necessary to resolve complaints, billing procedures or emergencies) will not be discussed with anyone who is not employed at the relay center at any time. No records of call content are kept after originating call termination. All call information automatically disappears from the screen upon termination of the call by the originator. Consoles do not have the ability to store data or text after the originator terminates the call.

All Relay staff are given guidelines to follow when they feel it is necessary to discuss a call with their Supervisor or other member of the management team. At no time are persons allowed to divulge personal information, i.e., names, locations, telephone numbers etc., unless that specific information is necessary for a Customer Service resolution and follow up call and the caller has given permission for their address etc. to be given out.

Observing or listening to actual calls by anyone other than the CA serving that call is prohibited except for training or quality assurance. A Supervisor may need to review the call on the screen in order to provide call processing clarification, resolve technical

problems or assist with a billing question asked by the CA. As part of the learning process, trainees sit with an experienced CA or CA Training Assistant to observe call handling procedures. Guidelines are provided to these CAs in order to maintain confidentiality during these sessions.

On-going reminders are posted and supplemental training is provided to all Relay staff. Visual reminders are posted throughout the relay center and annual supplemental training in Confidentiality and Code of Ethics is required of all CAs. All Relay staff must complete and sign a copy of the Code of Ethics and Confidentiality Pledge annually. Only persons who have received proper training and have signed a current Pledge are allowed in the production area of the relay center.

Complaints or allegations of a breach of confidentiality are investigated by senior management at the center and may require the suspension of the employee(s) allegedly involved until completion of the investigation. The suspended employee(s) will receive back pay from the date of suspension if there is no finding of a breach of confidentiality. The employment of relay personnel who, after investigation, are found to have violated the confidentiality rules are terminated. Such individuals will not be eligible for re-hire.

No information beyond that necessary for billing is retained once an originating call is terminated. In cases where a consumer requests a follow-up call to a complaint or comment, their name and phone number are only recorded with their permission. This information is then only shared with the Customer Service and/or Center Manager for follow up.

VISTA is committed to assuring all Relay users that their calls will be held in the strictest of confidence, will be relays quickly and efficiently and that they will be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

In keeping with this commitment, the physical Relay Center itself is a secure location with access to the production floor only provided to authorized personnel and authorized visitors. All entrances, other than the reception area entrance, contain electronic locks. No one outside of those directly associated with the Relay Center shall have access to the production area. Visitors are allowed in the production area of the Florida Relay Center only by permission of, and when accompanied by, a member of the Relay administrative staff, and only then after they have signed the Pledge of Confidentiality and Relay Code of Ethics form. Observation of an in-progress call is strictly prohibited.

Further information regarding VISTA's Confidentiality requirements is contained below.

- a. *When training new CAs by the method of sharing past experience, trainers shall not reveal any of the following information:*
 - i. *names of the parties to the call*
 - ii. *originating or terminating points of specific calls*
 - iii. *specifics of the information conveyed*

VISTA trainers, when training by the method of past experience, will not reveal:

- Names, genders, or ages of the parties to the call;
- Originating or terminating points of the call;

- Specifics of the information conveyed.

- b. *CAs shall not discuss, even among themselves or their supervisors, any names or specifics of any relay call, except as necessary in instances of resolving complaints, bill processing, emergencies or for training purposes. CAs may discuss a general situation with which they need assistance in order to clarify how to process a particular type of relay call. CAs should be trained to ask questions about procedures without revealing names or specific information that will identify the caller.*

VISTA complies.

CAs will not discuss, even among themselves or their supervisors, any names or specifics of any relay call, except as required in instances of resolving complaints. CAs may discuss the general situation with which they need assistance in order to clarify how to process a particular type of relay call or in a counseling situation. CAs will be trained to ask questions about procedures without revealing names or specific information that will identify the caller. If a user is in an emergency or life-threatening situation or causes an emergency situation to exist by threatening the CA or relay center, the CA will disclose names and specific information to a supervisor to expeditiously address the situation.

- c. *Watching or listening to actual calls by anyone other than the CA is prohibited except for training or monitoring purposes or other purposes specifically authorized by the Commission. FPSC staff shall be permitted to observe live calls for monitoring purposes but shall also comply with the confidentiality provisions above.*

VISTA complies.

No one other than the CA will watch or listen to actual calls, unless for training and monitoring purposes, or for purposes specifically authorized by FPSC and consistent with Commission rules. Authorized VISTA technicians may occasionally also monitor calls to track technical performance. FPSC staff shall be permitted to observe live calls for monitoring purposes upon request to VISTA. All persons, including VISTA technicians and FPSC staff will be required to sign a Pledge of Confidentiality and Code of Ethics and must adhere to the Confidentiality requirements as described in this response.

- d. *A copy of the Confidentiality Policy shall be provided to a user upon request and at no cost.*

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay Users may request a copy of VISTA's Confidentiality Policy by calling the Customer Service department. A copy will be mailed to them free of charge.

18. Voice and Hearing Carryover

Provider shall provide both voice and hearing carryover upon request of the user. A TDD user may request voice carryover (VCO) which will allow him/her to speak directly to the telephone user and receive the message typed back on the TDD. Also, a TDD user may request hearing carryover (HCO) which will enable the TDD user to directly hear what the telephone user is saying and type back his/her message which will be spoken by the operator.

As part of its proposal the bidder should describe in detail how incoming 2-line VCO calls will be handled. As part of its proposal the bidder should also describe in detail how outgoing 2-line VCO calls will be handled.

The provider shall make provision for two persons who are hearing disabled to speak for themselves by means of voice carryover to voice carryover (VCO to VCO) and for two persons who are speech disabled to hear for themselves by means of hearing carryover to hearing carryover (HCO to HCO).

VISTA complies.

VISTA can provide standard Relay, Spanish-to-Spanish, voice and hearing carryover, voice-to-voice, text-to-text, three-way calling, and conference calling. The following sections detail VISTA's capabilities to provide these relay services.

Basic Relay

VISTA's basic relay service allows people who use voice telephones and people who use text telephones (TTYs) to communicate easily through a Communication Assistant (CA). Acting as an invisible link between callers, the CA relays conversations by typing all spoken messages to the TTY user and speaking typed messages to the voice user.

Voice Carry Over

Voice Carry Over (VCO) is a relay feature allowing a person who cannot hear to voice their words for themselves. VCO calls are conducted on a direct connect TTY with a handset, or a "traditional" TTY/telephone setup. These calls allow standard telephone customers to hear the voice of the TTY customer they are speaking with, which makes the relay conversation more natural and comfortable. The VISTA Relay System consoles are configured to clearly transmit the end user's voice and clearly transmit the CA typed text back to the VCO caller.

VCO users may elect to establish a Customer Profile that will automatically connect all of their calls to relay with the VCO feature already turned on. With this profile, the CA user may use their voice immediately upon receiving the CAs relay greeting.

VCO calls may be completed using either a direct connect TTY with a handset or a separate telephone/TTY set up. VCO calls may be processed at the originating or terminating end of a relay call and may be initiated by either caller. All relay consoles support the VCO feature.

To initiate a VCO call, the call originator, upon connection with a Florida Relay CA, types "VCO Now". After confirmation that VCO is on, the party can voice the number to be dialed to the CA. Alternatively, the call originator can type the number to dial and "VCO Call". In this case, the CA will turn VCO on, dial the number and connect with the terminating party and announce that they are receiving a VCO call.

Once the VCO feature is turned on, the CA needs only type what the standard phone user is saying. This removes one of the components necessary in a standard relay call in which the CA types what the standard phone user says and verbalizes what the TTY user types. This fact significantly reduces the amount of time spent on VCO relay calls.

The call terminator may request the VCO feature as well. For example, if John is calling his mother and he knows that she prefers to talk via relay using VCO, John may inform the CA of this preference before providing his mother's number to dial. When John's mother answers the phone the VCO feature will already be set up.

VISTA believes callers deserve control of their calls. At any time during a call, a VCO user can request that the feature be turned off or on. In some cases, VCO users may not wish to voice their own words and in that case, they can merely inform the CA not to turn on VCO. If a hearing person places a call through Relay and does not realize they are calling a VCO user, the VCO user may request that VCO be turned on when they answer their phone. In this case, the CA will ask the originating caller if they are familiar with VCO. If the hearing person requires an explanation, the CA will inform the VCO user that they are explaining Relay. Once VCO has been explained, the CA will send the VCO user a GA and they may begin voicing their part of the conversation.

Hearing Carryover

Hearing Carry Over (HCO) allows a person who cannot speak, but can hear to be able to listen to what the other party says. The CA needs only to voice the TTY user's typed words. To initiate an HCO call, a TTY customer dials into and connects with Florida Relay and types "HCO call" to the CA. The CA then sets up HCO and dials the number requested. When a connection is made the CA announces an HCO relay call and offers an explanation to the called party if they are not familiar with this type of call. The call can then proceed, with the HCO user listening to the voice of the standard phone user and the CA verbalizing the typed words of the HCO user to the standard phone user.

HCO users often employ macros to expedite their relay calls. VISTA Relay equipment is conducive to this use. The HCO feature is available to either the originating or terminating ends of a relay call and may be initiated by either customer. All relay consoles support the HCO feature. Florida Relay customers may use HCO from a direct connect TTY, or a "traditional" separate phone/TTY setup. Both methods allow customers to complete HCO calls flawlessly.

HCO users may request that the CA turn on the HCO feature at the onset of the call, or they may elect to choose an HCO Customer Profile. Relay users with an HCO profile receive the benefit of having their relay calls arrive with the HCO feature already in place and the CA will voice the VISTA Florida Relay greeting to them.

The VCO and HCO features, as well as instructions for their use, will be promoted in the Florida Relay Website, VISTA Relay Service Outreach materials and Customer Service.

Two-Line VCO

The Florida relay system will be configured to handle enhanced VCO calls; therefore, no additional equipment or special arrangement is necessary. On the relay user's end, the user will need two lines, each having its own telephone number and one (the voice line) must have conferencing capability, in order to make a 2-line VCO call. Users may request that their preference for 2-line VCO be documented in a caller profile record. This way, incoming calls will alert CAs of the caller's likely intent to use the 2-line VCO feature.

The 2-line VCO end user makes use of his/her own two separate phone lines, one of which is used to conference in the voice party. Since 2-line VCO calls involve one call coming into relay (text) and another call going out to the same location on a different phone line (voice) only one billing record will be produced for 2-line VCO calls.

The 2-line VCO user places a text call into relay and informs the CA what type of call they are placing. The user then instructs the CA to call the Relay user's voice line. The CA dials that number, and sends the Dialing and Ringing macro messages to the user's text line so that they are alerted that the voice line is ringing and can answer it. Once connected, the CA makes note of the VCO user's voice, so that once the third party is conferenced in, the CA will know which voice to type. The 2-line VCO user answers the phone and the CA then holds while the user conferences in the party they wish to speak to on their voice line. The CA will mute their keyboard and microphone, thus remaining silent throughout the call. As soon as the destination party answers, the CA will type everything they hear, to the best of their ability. The 2-line VCO user retains complete control of the call, and chooses whether or not to announce the call is being processed via Relay. There are no "go aheads" or typing pauses necessary in a 2-line VCO call and often the terminating caller is unaware that the call has been a Relay call. The 2-line VCO user controls the pace and content of the call, with the CA continues to type. If the terminating caller is speaking too quickly for the CA to be able to type verbatim, the CA will use ellipses (. . .) to indicate to the 2-line VCO user where words are missing. The 2-line VCO user may then choose to ask the hearing party to repeat or clarify any information necessary. Some Relay users find that the 2-line VCO feature makes their telephone calls feel more comfortable and natural and they enjoy the transparency of the CA.

REVERSE Two-Line VCO

VISTA will offer reverse two-line VCO calls in order to solve a very real problem for VCO users who receive a call from a standard telephone user. The use of reverse two-line VCO can greatly reduce the frustration of a person who cannot hear but can speak receiving a call and not being able to understand what is being said.

When their phone rings, the two-line VCO user answers normally with their voice and asks the caller to please hold a moment. The two-line VCO user then speed dials the Florida Relay Service and conferences the CA into the call. The VCO user informs the CA that they are a 2-line VCO user and gives the CA their text (ASCII or TTY) number to dial. The CA will mute their keyboard and microphone immediately dial out to that number and the 2-line VCO user answers. The CA sends them a text greeting, "FL Relay, CA 1234 completing your 2-line VCO call". The 2-line VCO user may then begin their conversation with the hearing individual who has been holding. All of this occurs in a matter of seconds, and from that point on, the CA focuses on typing what the voice

caller is saying. Again, as with the regular two-line VCO call, the CA and the relay are invisible.

Voice to Voice (VCO to VCO)

VISTA can offer the Florida Relay users Voice Carry Over to Voice Carry Over calls (or VCO to VCO). All CAs are currently trained to handle VCO to VCO calls. This process allows two people who are hard or hearing or deaf to use their own voices while talking to one another on the telephone. No additional equipment or telephone lines are required for the Relay user, other than those needed to place a normal VCO call (a direct-connect TTY with handset or a telephone/TTY setup).

The initiating caller calls into the Florida Relay and requests VCO to VCO from the CA. This CA dials into relay to connect to a second Florida Relay CA who then dials the second VCO user's telephone number. Each CA types to the respective VCO user that they have on the line, while both VCO users are free to voice their own conversation.

For customers who perhaps grew up using standard telephones and are more comfortable with them, a type of TTY without a keyboard but with a visual display, such as the Ameriphone, can be used for participating in VCO to VCO calls.

VCO to VCO calls are ideal for persons who never learned to type or for whom typing is too difficult. For example, two elderly, hard of hearing friends can chat with one another via Florida Relay, each using their own voice and reading their friend's part of the conversation on their own visual display. Neither caller needs to type. The VCO to VCO feature is available from all relay consoles.

Billing of a VCO to VCO call is for the call coming into relay only, and only one billing record is utilized for billing purposes despite requiring two operators to process the call. A billing record is created when the CA hits the key on their console keyboard designated as the "relay timer". This relay timer is activated when the terminating party answers, and measures the amount of actual relay (conversation) time, excluding call set-up and wrap-up.

With VCO to VCO calls, the procedure requires the first CA to activate their relay timer once they receive indication that the terminating party has answered this call. Because of the way VCO to VCO calls are connected, both CAs can hear both VCO users, making it easy for the originating CA to determine the appropriate time to begin timing relay. The second CA never activates the relay timer during the call, so only one billing record is generated that is utilized for billing purposes.

HCO to HCO (Text to Text)

All VISTA Relay consoles and VISTA CAs will be capable of handling HCO to HCO (or hearing to hearing) calls. The call process is nearly identical to the call process described above for VCO to VCO. However, the CAs do not type. Each HCO user types their responses, and the CA voices the response so that the other HCO user can hear it. Slight delays may occur, because the CA must wait until the HCO user is finished typing before they begin voicing the words to the other HCO user. As in the VCO to VCO calls, only one billing record will be generated, even though two CAs are required to handle the call.

VISTA is pleased to offer the Florida Relay the following enhanced call types in addition to those required by this RFP.

Conference and Three-Way Calling

Custom calling services such as three-way calling and conference capabilities are enhancements available from the relay user's local exchange carrier. The Florida Relay user may conference additional parties onto the call when and if desired.

CAs are capable of handling three-way and conference calls. The Relay user informs the CA that s/he will participate in a conference call (either by calling into a conference call bridge for a TTY to Voice call, or placing the CA on hold while s/he conferences in the third party). In either case, the CA will, to the best of their ability identify the different voices heard to the text user by indicating gender, either (M) for male or (F) for female for each voice heard. If the voice parties announce themselves by name, the CA will type the name, for example "BOB WHAT TIME SHOULD WE GO QQ MARY 430PM". Conference calls can sometimes be challenging because the voice persons on the call do not use GA to indicate that the TTY user can now respond. CAs will explain to all callers how relay works, unless instructed by the TTY user not to do so, in order to help smoothly facilitate the call. Only one billing record, to the originating relay caller, will be created in these calls.

Two-Line HCO:

The two-line HCO feature is designed specifically for customers using ASCII and who also want to use HCO. Two-line HCO allows a person who is speech disabled to hear what the voice customer is saying. The CA is needed only to verbalize the ASCII user's typed responses.

Two independent phone lines, one a regular voice line and the other an ASCII (modem) line, along with conference calling ability are required by the HCO user for this feature. The ASCII user connects with relay via modem, requests that the CA call their second (voice) line and then conferences in a third party who they wish to converse with. The CA will explain relay and will voice only what the ASCII user types. This type of call allows the customer who is speech disabled more control over their call, the ability to use a computer to speed up communication and to use their hearing as well.

All VISTA CAs are trained to handle two-line HCO calls and all VISTA Relay consoles are capable of processing such calls upon request of the user.

VCO to TTY, TTY to VCO

VCO to TTY and TTY to VCO calls allow two Relay users, one who is Deaf and one who has a hearing disability and chooses to speak, to converse with one another. The originating caller informs the CA that they wish to place a VCO to TTY call and gives the CA the number to dial. These calls require only one CA to process the call, and all CAs are trained to handle such requests. The CA will then dial the TTY user's number and inform them that they are receiving a VCO to TTY call. The VCO user will voice their words, which the CA will then type to the TTY user. Once the TTY user has typed their response, the CA will then retransmit the typed message to the VCO user. Some VCO users do not wish to, or do not have the capability of typing on a TTY. Additionally, some VCO phones do not have keyboards. The VCO-to-TTY and TTY-to-VCO calls allow two persons to communicate even though neither can hear and only one party owns a standard TTY. The TTY user experiences the call like a standard relay call. The VCO user also gets to experience a standard VCO call, using their own voice to

speak and receiving a typed transmittal of the other parties' portion of the conversation. All CAs are trained to handle both types of these calls from any relay console.

19. Obscenity Directed at the Operator

CAs do not have to tolerate obscenity directed at them. A proposal should specify how the provider will handle these situations.

VISTA complies.

VISTA CAs are trained to handle a wide variety of calls, including difficult situations. CAs are not expected, however, to tolerate obscenity directed at them. CAs encountering open hostility or obscenity directed to the CA may call a Supervisor for assistance. The Supervisor will assess the situation and request that the caller refrain from using profane language toward the CA. The caller or Supervisor may choose to have the Supervisor handle the call or return the call to the CA. If the caller refuses to stop using profanity towards the CA, the Supervisor will inform the caller that the relay call cannot continue until the behavior stops. Supervisors are instructed to warn the caller a minimum of two times that the call will be disconnected if the abuse continues. If a caller persists after the warnings, the Supervisor will inform the caller that the call must be discontinued and will disconnect the call.

20. Emergency Calls

Although most of Florida is covered by 911 communication centers prepared to handle TDD calls directly, the bidder shall develop and follow a policy for handling and referring emergency calls. The policy may include procedures for referring callers to emergency services and numbers other than 911.

VISTA complies.

VISTA recognizes the importance of swift, accurate handling of emergency calls. CAs are trained to handle any "emergency" calls completed via the Relay System quickly and professionally. An emergency call is defined by the caller requesting emergency assistance. The caller may request emergency assistance in several ways: call 9-1-1, this is an emergency, need fire, need police, need ambulance or etc. CAs are trained not to assume an emergency request, the caller must request service.

Through our continuing consumer education and outreach efforts, VISTA encourages TTY users to call emergency-service providers directly, either via 9-1-1 (if available in their area) or a 7-digit TTY accessible emergency number. Even with extensive education and outreach efforts, however, there will be occasions when emergency calls are processed through Florida Relay Center. If the caller provides a 7-digit number, the CA dials it and proceeds with the call, staying within strict CA guidelines (as much as possible). If no 7-digit number is given (perhaps due to confusion or panic on the caller's part) or if the caller simply says "help!", "emergency" or "call 911", the CA will press the EMERGENCY key on the console. The console instantly and automatically cross-references the caller's telephone number (automatically delivered by the telephone network) with a database containing the emergency numbers serving their location. This

is presented in a "pop up" list form on the CA's screen. (Sometimes the town that is listed on a consumer's ANI is different than their actual location, therefore, the CA is instructed to verify the caller's town information.) Additionally, the CA summons a Supervisor (by both audio and visual signals), who will promptly come to assist throughout the call. (If the caller's actual location is different than information received on the console, the Supervisor will provide the CA the correct emergency service provider number to dial from a printed list.)

Without instructions from the caller, the CA will press ENTER from the database list which will immediately dial to the central dispatch point for the caller's area as determined by their ANI. The pre-programmed 10-digit numbers on the list appearing on the CA console accesses the same emergency services provider as though the user had dialed 911. The CAs dial the 10-digit number corresponding to the caller's location. (If the CA were to dial "911", the nearest emergency provider to the physical location of the relay center would be reached.) VISTA will maintain a comprehensive database of NPA-NXX locations and their associated emergency services. In some situations the CA may need to ask some questions of the caller. These questions could include inquiries as to the caller's name, address, phone number (if no ANI is received for some reason), nature of the emergency, etc. VISTA's Florida Relay will feature true Caller ID, allowing the originating ANI to automatically be passed to the emergency dispatcher. In areas with enhanced 911 service the emergency service dispatcher's system will automatically provide the caller's name and address. In situations where this information is not available at the dispatcher's end, the CA will prompt the caller for vital information and provide that to the emergency service. This pertains to only a small percentage of emergency calls but is a reasonable difference from standard call handling since the caller is limited technologically from connecting directly with the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and having their information on the dispatcher's screen.

When contact is made with an emergency service provider or dispatcher, the CA will announce the call as " This is the Florida Relay Center CA # with a relayed emergency call, do you know how to use Relay?" The CA will quickly relay any information already provided by the caller. The CA will stay within their role as much as possible, relaying the call in the same manner as they would a non-emergency call. However, based on the caller's responses (or non-responses), it may become necessary for the CA to transmit critical information from any preceding communication with the caller (name, address, phone number), to the emergency service provider, with guidance from the CA Supervisor. The Supervisor will remain present throughout the call but will under no circumstances assume the duties of an emergency service technician, or offer any emergency advice.

VISTA Florida Relay Customer Service and Outreach will continue to work with Emergency Service Providers throughout Florida to assist and educate them about TTY users in general and how to successfully handle an incoming relay call.

VISTA provides emergency service, as required by the Federal Telephone Operator Consumer Services Improvement Act (TOCSIA), by maintaining a database of every emergency dispatch phone number in the US. The numbers allow CAs to connect callers with the appropriate police, fire, EMS, poison, and bomb squad for the locality of the emergency. Each number in the database is checked for accuracy a minimum of once per year. The top 100 metropolitan areas of the country are checked twice per year. A contracted research firm, Decision Data Collection calls each number and verifies the localities for which the dispatcher can provide assistance.

21. Blockage

Provider is responsible for ensuring that 99% of calls reaching the relay center per day are either answered or continue to receive a ringing signal.

Calls that are blocked must receive a network blockage signal of 120 impulses per minute.

VISTA complies with the amended requirement. VISTA notes that the State of Florida Commission's letter of October 26, 1999, amends the second paragraph of this requirement to read, "To the extent the relay provider has control of the network blockage signal and the ability to do so, caller that are blocked must receive a network blockage signal of 120 impulses per minute."

Florida Relay Service will operate under a key industry standard constraint, P.01 blocking (blocking no more than 1% of all incoming calls). VISTA will not block calls at the automated call distributor. Should network level blockage occur, callers will receive a network blockage signal of 120 impulses per minute.

22. Answer Time

Provider is responsible for answering 90% of all calls per month within 10 seconds of reaching the relay switch. Elapsed time is calculated from the time inbound calls reach the relay switch. In calculating the percentage of calls meeting the answer time standard, the numerator shall be the total number of calls per month that are answered (with a CA ready to serve) in 10 seconds or less. The denominator shall be the total number of calls per month reaching the relay switch except that the total shall not include calls abandoned within 10 seconds after reaching the relay switch. However, calls abandoned after 10 seconds shall be included in the denominator. (Exception: If the Provider is unable to differentiate between calls abandoned within 10 seconds and those abandoned after 10 seconds of reaching the relay switch, then all abandoned calls shall be included in the denominator.)

VISTA complies.

VISTA will answer 90% of all calls arriving at the Florida Relay switch within 10 seconds of reaching the switch. VISTA understands FPSC's calculation for this requirement to be: "The numerator shall be the total number of calls per month that are answered by a CA in 10 seconds or less. The denominator shall be the total number of calls per month reaching the relay switch, excluding the total number of calls abandoned within 10 seconds of reaching the relay switch. All calls that are abandoned after 10 seconds will be included in the denominator." VISTA's reporting systems include the ability to determine the time a call is in queue before abandonment. This commitment will ensure both efficient operation to FPSC, and responsive service to the users.

VISTA's Relay service is designed to allow for maximum efficiency in call answer speeds. Upon receipt of a call into the relay center, the system gives the CA approximately 500 milliseconds of tone before the call is connected. The CA does not take any specific action to accept the call (such as answering a ringing line); the call is delivered automatically and the CA can send their greeting using two keystrokes (or voicing their greeting immediately).

VISTA will monitor relay center traffic on a thirty (30) minute interval. On each hour and half hour, the switching equipment generates a summary of the preceding thirty (30) minute period. This summary includes:

- Number of Calls Offered (calls arriving at the Relay switch)
- Number of Calls Handled
- Number of Calls Abandoned
- Number of Calls Blocked (NOTE: VISTA will not block calls at the Relay switch)
- Average Speed of Answer
- Average Session Time
- Average Talk Time

Also, at midnight, the entire traffic activity for the day is summarized showing each 30-minute interval plus consolidated daily averages for the above listed items.

Using these reports and specialized work force management software, VISTA is able to accurately predict and schedule the necessary CA staff levels to meet the targeted Average Speed of Answer Time of 90% of all calls answered within 10 seconds.

23. Equipment Compatibility

It is necessary for the system to be capable of receiving and transmitting in both Baudot and ASCII codes as well as voice. It is also required that relay systems be capable of automatically identifying incoming TDD signals as either Baudot or ASCII. All equipment shall be compatible with the basic protocol of TDDs distributed in Florida through the Administrator (Ultratec Model Nos. 100, 200, 400, 425, 1140 and 4425 and Ameriphone Dialogue VCO).

VISTA complies.

VISTA will provide relay call center software that will handle calls at the relay console, will handle billing processing and will handle overall call center traffic management. All of VISTA's relay equipment is capable of receiving both Baudot and ASCII codes, and can automatically identify incoming calls as ASCII or Baudot. The equipment automatically adapts to the signal of the user, regardless of whether the user calls the TTY number or the voice number to reach the Relay center.

VISTA's relay consoles automatically connects with text users using either Baudot or ASCII. To enhance this capability, VISTA offers users the ability to complete a profile for use with the relay call center; a user can register the originating number, and can register the type of equipment used. When a registered user calls the center, the relay console will recognize the ANI (caller's telephone number), and will set up the appropriate communication parameters.

Even if a user has not completed a profile, the VISTA system is capable of determining the proper communication parameters. When a user calls the relay center using the TTY number, the console examines the ANI to determine if the line is pre-registered. If the user is not pre-registered, and if the caller has reached the relay using the TTY number, the console answers with a Baudot greeting and waits for a response. If the

system does not detect Baudot, the console then applies ASCII answer tone to the line and waits for an ASCII connection. If the ASCII tone results in no connection, the operator will be prompted to voice a greeting to a potential voice user. If there is no voice answer, the console again greets in Baudot and the cycle repeats, this cycle of sampling takes 600ms or just over one half of a second to complete and start again.

Similarly, if a caller reaches the relay using the voice number, the caller is greeted in voice. However, if there is no response, the console will then greet with a Baudot greeting. If there is still no answer, then ASCII answer tone is applied to the line. If no ASCII connection is established, the cycle repeats, beginning again with voice, again the cycle of sampling takes only 600ms to complete.

Normal ASCII answering is initially at 300 baud, eight data bits, no parity, and one stop bit (8N1), this is standard for most PC devices. The console examines the TTY or Personal Computer connect tone and, if necessary, shifts from 300 baud to 1200 or 2400 baud depending on end user equipment and LEC line conditions. Characters typed by the TTY or Personal Computer user will be analyzed and the console automatically shifts to seven data bits, even parity, and one stop bit (7E1), or seven data bits, odd parity, and no stop bits (7O1).

For calls by voice users to TTY or Personal Computer users, the console responds in a similar fashion when connecting to the terminating party. If the terminating user's TTY or Personal Computer answers in ASCII, the relay console connects in ASCII at the baud rate indicated by the TTY or Personal Computer. The console then automatically examines the first few characters transmitted by the TTY or Personal Computer and determines the data, parity, and stop bits (8N1, 7E1, or 7O1) to use in communication.

At any point in the call, the Communication Assistant (CA) will have the ability to override the console and change the connection parameters should this be required. The Florida Relay console is designed to assist the CA in the connection process and to ensure fast, accurate connection.

The workstation equipment and software will support a wide range of TTYs including all the manufacturers' models that will be distributed throughout State of Florida.

24. Transmission Levels

Transmission levels must be maintained within industry standards as outlined in the American National Standards Institute - Network Performance - Switched Exchange Access Network Transmission Specifications (ANSI T1.506-1997). Provider must provide updates to those standards as amended by ANSI during the term of the contract and must meet the amended standards.

VISTA complies.

The transmission circuits will meet or exceed FCC and Commission inter-exchange performance standards for circuit loss and noise. VISTA's support staff will continually monitor and test the communications facilities required to support relay services to insure that these facilities satisfy and/or surpass FCC and inter-exchanges performance standards.

Additionally, VISTA's engineering support groups conduct ongoing reviews of industry accepted standards for telecommunications, including Bellcore specifications. This

review ensures that VISTA continues to adhere to its high quality standards, and it simplifies the compliance verification procedures.

25. Measuring Equipment Accuracy

Every meter, recording and ticketing device used to capture call details for billing subscribers or the FPSC/Administrator as well as for providing traffic information shall be tested prior to its installation and shall be accurate 97 percent of the time to within a 1 second grace period. All equipment shall be maintained in a good state of repair consistent with safety and adequate service performance.

VISTA complies.

All Florida Relay equipment used to capture call details for billing subscribers or the FPSC/Administrator as well as for providing traffic information shall be tested before its installation and shall be accurate 97 percent of the time to within a 1 second grace period. VISTA's technology support staff will periodically evaluate and perform maintenance on all equipment to ensure proper and efficient functionality.

26. Emergency Operations and Uninterruptible Power

In addition to a minimum of thirty (30) minutes battery capacity sufficient to operate each relay center processing Florida relay traffic at busy season busy hour load, each relay center shall have installed emergency power generating equipment capable of maintaining the relay center's operations for extended periods of time. The uninterruptible power system shall support the switch system and its peripherals, switch room environmental (air conditioning, fire suppression system, emergency lights and system alarms), operator consoles/terminals, operator work site emergency lights, and Call Detail Record recording. Provisions shall be made to meet emergencies resulting from failure of power service, sudden and prolonged increases in traffic, storms, lightning, etc. Employees shall be instructed as to the procedures to be followed in the event of emergency in order to prevent or mitigate interruption or impairment of relay service.

The bidder shall describe its plan for dealing with all types of natural and man-made problems (e.g., hurricanes, lightning strikes, fires, etc.) which either isolate the relay center and prevent calls from reaching the center or cause the center to be unable to operate. In addition, the plan should detail the steps which will be taken to deal with the problem and restore relay service.

The provider shall inform the contract manager of any major interruptions to the operation of the relay center extending beyond five minutes duration. The contract manager shall also be informed when it becomes known to the relay center that any portion of the state is isolated for more than five minutes from the relay center. The provider shall also provide a report after restoration of service.

VISTA complies.

VISTA will provide and implement a disaster recovery plan for dealing with all types of natural and man-made problems. The company has disaster recovery plans for its switched voice network, as well as a relay-specific disaster recovery plan. VISTA will notify FPSC's Contract Manager of any service disruption extending beyond five minutes duration within three hours, or, at the beginning of the next business day. In addition, VISTA will provide to the Contract Manager, within 24 hours of the occurrence of any service disruption extending beyond five minutes duration, a detailed written report of the service disruption. The report will include, at a minimum, the time of occurrence, extent,

cause, remedy, and time of resumption of service. In addition, VISTA's disaster recovery plan will detail the levels of escalation that it will employ to deal with each service disruption and to restore service.

VISTA's relay services employ a nationally dispersed network of six DMS-100 ACDs, each of which is capable of handling the Florida Relay call traffic. The principle ACD supporting FRS will be located in Tennessee. The network is configured for directed next-available-agent call distribution. The specific configuration for the Florida Relay directs call traffic to available Florida Relay Communication Assistants first. In the event of reductions in staff caused by emergency situation, the network will automatically reroute calls to available agents in VISTA's Massachusetts Relay center. In the event of a loss-of-center occurrence, the ACD will reroute calls to next available agent in VISTA's relay network. In the event of a failure of the Tennessee ACD, the inbound Florida Relay calls are automatically processed through another of the six network ACDs. All VISTA relay consoles in its centers auto-configure to accept and process Florida Relay calls as they are received and its operators are pre-trained in Florida Relay call handling protocol.

Uninterruptible Power

The Florida Relay will have adequate redundancy features functionally equivalent to the equipment in normal central offices, including uninterruptible power for emergency use. VISTA will provide battery and generator emergency power systems that exceed the thirty-minute RFP specification. Combined, the battery and the generator will have the potential of maintaining emergency power for an unlimited duration in the event of a power outage.

VISTA will protect the Florida Relay Center from power outages with an uninterruptible power supply (UPS), a battery system, and a back-up diesel generator. This equipment will be located on-site. In the event of an outside power loss to the center, the battery system and UPS alone will be capable of maintaining power for up to two hours (this may vary depending on load) or up to the time the diesel generator would take over. The diesel generator will take over in approximately 2 minutes or less, thereby providing long term power for a minimum of 8 hours. The long-term generator backup can maintain operations as long as need by refueling.

VISTA's technical support staff will perform weekly maintenance and testing of this equipment to ensure availability of this alternate power source in the event of a power failure at the Florida Relay Center.

The uninterruptible power supply / generator set will support all critical functions at the center, including:

- Transmission equipment (channel banks, protection switches, radio equipment, ACD, channel service units, etc.)
- Local PBX and peripheral systems
- LAN and WAN connected devices including operator consoles and terminals, servers, gateways, Call Detail Record recording and collection systems, and communications elements
- Environmental systems including air conditioning, fire suppression, system alarms, emergency lighting systems including operator work site emergency lights.

The UPS provides support to these critical functions in the following way. All outside power runs directly through the UPS and battery system, and once it has flowed through

the UPS, the outside power energizes the center. If there is a disruption in outside power, the UPS detects the disruption, and continues powering the center through the battery system, avoiding any interruption. Once the UPS begins delivering power to the center, it immediately utilizes the automatic transfer switch to activate the diesel generator. It takes approximately 2 minutes for the generator to start up and stabilize its output, and at that point the generator supplies power to the center in support of critical functions.

Switched Voice and Digital Transport Network Disaster Recovery Plan

VISTA's support service has developed, and can immediately implement, comprehensive disaster recovery plans to support its switched voice and digital transport networks. A large part of the Florida Relay System will use these networks, VISTA has included the procedures for protecting these resources in disaster recovery plans for the Florida Relay System. These networks provide the essential switched voice services, which will be used for call access and call termination.

Relay Specific Disaster Recovery Plan

In addition to the VISTA network disaster recovery plan, the Florida Relay System has its dedicated relay center, including access facilities between the center and the switched voice network. VISTA's support services considered all system components during the relay system design process, so that the final configuration is as resistant as possible to all types of natural and man-made disasters.

VISTA proposes to relocate the FRS center from its present location in downtown Miami to a facility, which is less likely to be subject to government-mandated evacuation in the event of severe weather. VISTA is acutely aware of the difficulties posed to the user community when the existing facility has been mandated to evacuate its staff from the existing Miami facility that overlooks Biscayne Bay. In light of those past events, VISTA believes it only prudent to locate to a less exposed position.

If the Relay System experiences a major disaster that affects relay operations, VISTA will immediately notify FPSC. VISTA will also provide escalation schedules for use by FPSC in resolving problems associated with the relay system.

VISTA has developed several individual disaster recovery plans to support a number of specific disaster scenarios that potentially affect relay service operations. These plans are very detailed and include all steps required for both relay center personnel and network operations personnel to restore facilities supporting the relay system. Examples of information contained in the plans include emergency personnel notification and escalation lists as well as facility patching and database reconfiguration instructions.

In the event of an outage of the ACD serving the Florida Relay Center, VISTA uses a network that is configured to automatically route calls to other VISTA Relay Centers served by a network of ACDs. This provides the capability to allocate staff at other VISTA Centers to handle traffic during an ACD outage. VISTA has procedures in place at its other Relay centers to augment staffing quickly and efficiently in order to assist in call coverage should an emergency arise at the Florida center.

In the paragraphs that follow, VISTA has highlighted several disaster scenarios, and has outlined corrective actions. VISTA's disaster recovery plan for the following scenarios would include the action plans, reporting process, and levels of escalation. VISTA has

given disaster recovery special consideration in its network architecture, and it has been designed for fast and efficient rerouting capabilities.

The specific disaster recovery scenarios that VISTA specifically addresses in this proposal section are:

- Service Affecting Outage- Center Compromised
- Service Affecting Outage, Center in Service
- LEC Outage

Service Affecting Outage, Center Compromised

This kind of major outage would consist of the Relay Center destruction, due to tornado, flood, earthquake, hurricane or landslide. It would also apply where the center has been made unsafe for occupancy due to fire (within or without), hazardous material leak or spill, bomb threat, significant damage to or collapse of structure, act of war or terrorist aggression.

The nature of the possible destruction are a partial or complete loss of the center, a partial or complete loss of network serving the Center, a partial or complete loss of utilities necessary for safe operation of the Center, or forced evacuation of the Center.

Initial Actions

- 1) Reroute all traffic to an alternate Center(s) as soon as threat is recognized. Traffic only to be rerouted if the Center is unable to process any calls.
- 2) Notify: All Program Managers
All Emergency Managers, if not the Program Managers
Regional Account Managers
Network Solutions Manager
VISTA Relay Vice President
- 3) Protect personnel and assets of the Center
 - A) Contact civil authorities as appropriate for emergency plan.
 - B) Notify all site personnel of the situation and inform non-critical personnel of evacuation procedure to be followed.
 - C) Secure critical systems ONLY IF TIME AND SAFE EVACUATION PERMITS
- 4) Ensure that all personnel have evacuated the building or have moved to local, safe quarters per instruction of civil authorities.

As soon as area can be reentered:

- 1) Assess Center condition
 - Program/Emergency Manager
 - Network Support Engineer
 - Network Engineer
 - A) Contact building manager to notify of intent to examine the facility
 - B) Initial determination of condition of facility.
Physical integrity and security

- Condition and availability of critical utilities, electricity, water, sewage, communications.
- C) Report initial findings to VISTA Relay Vice President.
 - 2) Obtain and report area conditions and limitations of access as defined by civil authorities
 - 3) Examine and report on condition of Center assets. Provide assessment to VISTA Relay Management of impacted areas to facilitate dispatch of repair personnel.
 - 4) Perform Start-up Integration Testing. Coordinated by VISTA Network Engineer on site.
 - 5) Perform Finance Certification Review. Coordinate by VISTA Network Engineer on site.
 - 6) Restore traffic to the Center.

Service Affecting Outage, Center In Service

This kind of major outage would consist of a partial or complete loss of center switching, a partial or complete loss of networks serving the center, or a partial or complete loss of utilities necessary for safe operation of the center.

Initial Actions

- Assess level of impact to continue center operations. Program/Emergency manager will contact all appropriate personnel.
- Reroute traffic to alternate center(s) as necessary to meet service level.

Upon completion of repairs

- Perform service verification testing.
- Restore traffic to center.

LEC Outage

VISTA has designed the Florida Relay so that there will be LEC to relay network POP access diversity. VISTA will locate the Florida relay center in a building that has DS-3 diverse access facilities. Having physically diverse DS-3 access from the network POP to the relay center will help ensure that a facility outage such as an LEC cable cut will not isolate the relay center. This is accomplished through the use of DS-3 protection switching equipment that automatically switches from a failed DS-3 path to a protected DS-3 path. Diverse LEC access coupled with 800 routing features will ensure that the relay center is able to provide the highest level of service availability to the Florida relay community.

27. Intercept Messages

Intercept messages as appropriate shall be provided if a system failure occurs.

VISTA complies.

VISTA will construct the Florida Relay System from a highly distributed and reliable set of components. However, in the extremely unlikely event that a traffic-affecting failure results in inbound or outbound call blockage, callers will receive an intercept announcement indicating that their call cannot be completed. The type of intercept

message will vary depending on the point of failure. Within the relay system, there will be four potential points for intercept messages.

- **Inbound, LEC Switch Failure:** Callers will normally receive a fast busy signal, and in rare instances, a voice recording will ask the caller to hang up and try again later.
- **Inbound, Relay Network Failure:** Callers will receive a fast busy signal.
- **Inbound, Relay ACD Failure:** When possible, callers will receive an intercept announcement in either a voice or TTY as determined by the 800 access numbers.
- **Outbound, Network Failure:** Upon hearing a fast busy signal, the CA will inform the caller of the status of the call (i.e. typing (FAST BUSY CIRCUITS BUSY) or stating "The circuits must be busy"). If the intercept message use a voice recording, the operator will relay the message to the caller.

28. Service Expansion

Bidder shall show the capability of expanding services in response to increasing demand. Bidder shall develop and illustrate in its proposal a detailed plan of how this expansion will be accomplished. The plan shall include, but not be limited to, trunking capacity, CA work stations, personnel staffing and equipment capacity. The plan shall also indicate how any time lag shall be avoided to meet any increased call volume. The above plans shall allow the provider to be able to maintain all standards listed in the RFP.

VISTA complies.

In order to provide the best service to Florida Relay users, VISTA has the ability to quickly expand the Relay Service in response to growth in demand. Any expansions will be at no additional cost to FPSC other than the contracted cost per Billable Minute.

VISTA has designed its Florida Relay so that it may expand the network, hardware and software requirements in no more than 30 business days, often in less time. VISTA will base its initial equipment and trunking configurations on estimated volume. With this estimated volume information as a base, VISTA will identify the average call duration, routing, call volume and call handling requirements.

VISTA will continuously monitor and evaluate the performance of its relay service through a number of trend analysis systems. This evaluation process is used to track system performance as well as provide service expansion forecasts. The following four elements will be addressed when service expansions are required:

- Network Trunking Requirements.
- Relay Center Access Facilities / Equipment
- Workstations, Relay Consoles and other Equipment
- Personnel Staffing

Switched Network Trunk Requirements

VISTA can expand its access facilities to support additional relay traffic in less than four weeks. VISTA will use a pair of DS-3s to connect the Relay Center to the network

POPs. These common access facilities include the DS-3, their attendant multiplexing systems, protection switching equipment, and site wiring systems.

If new access facilities are required, the installation typically requires a three to four week lead-time. However, new access facilities do not need to be installed each time new relay consoles are added to the Relay Center.

VISTA will monitor the access capacity, and can order additional access before it is needed.

Work Stations, Relay Consoles and other Equipment

The proposed relay consoles utilize off-the-shelf hardware. VISTA will keep sufficient spare hardware on hand. If relay workstations are needed in addition to the spares already on hand, the off-the-shelf units do not represent a long lead-time.

VISTA can rapidly expand its workstation and relay console capacity. There normally is no more than a four (4) week lead-time required in the procurement of additional relay consoles. Through the use of effective forecasting techniques, this should provide ample time to respond to increased call volumes supported by the relay center. As additional consoles are added to the relay centers, VISTA's technical support services will configure a corresponding number of switch ports to support these stations.

The Florida Relay center call handling capacity will be designed to handle more than twice historical average call loading and up to 133% of peak call loads. Comparing year-to-year call history (June 1997 – May 1998 with June 1998 – May 1999), a 5% decrease in call minutes was encountered. Should a negative growth trend continue, the FRS center would obviously not need expansion. Should the trend reverse to an annual increase of 5%, the planned capacity would be sufficient for up to 5 years of like increases.

Personnel Staffing

VISTA uses sophisticated forecasting techniques to determine staffing requirements. VISTA utilizes half-hourly ACD data to establish its call volume and staff requirement forecasts. Additionally, VISTA will maintain a detailed record of significant events associated with call history, such as special events occurring in Florida, weather events, holidays, and other instances that exhibit call volumes or patterns out of the ordinary for similar day-of-week and week-of-month circumstances.

VISTA will combine all of this information with computer-based forecasting software to develop half-hourly, day-by-day predictions of call volume and call arrival patterns. This data will allow VISTA to make the necessary CA staffing arrangements required to meet or exceed the service level specifications and to provide sufficient flexibility to absorb sudden increases in call volume.

VISTA will perform monthly reviews of long-term trend indications from period-to-period comparisons of call volume data. It will use this information to formulate three, six and nine month forward staff planning, recruitment, training plans, and to determine the availability of certified CAs to meet expected growth of service demand.

To meet intra-day surges in demand, VISTA has developed methods of augmenting and extending CA staffing on short notice that include, but are not limited to:

- Rescheduling supplemental CA training sessions to return CAs to production
- Rescheduling CA's break and lunch sequencing
- Calling in scheduled-off CAs
- Offering flat-rate premiums for extended shifts and otherwise off-duty CAs
- Rescheduling Supervisor activities to reassign for call handling
- Reassigning CA-certified administrative staff to short-term call handling

29. New Technology

The users should be allowed to benefit from advancing technology. Bidder should describe the methodology and process it will use to keep abreast of technological changes in the provision of relay service, to inform the FPSC and Administrator that new enhancements are available and at what price, and to provide the FPSC the opportunity to purchase such enhancements or upgrades to the service.

VISTA complies.

VISTA works to stay abreast of present and future capabilities for its Relay centers. VISTA, in cooperation with various vendors, may develop and install upgrades at its discretion to its relay system at no charge to FPSC. VISTA's commitment to offering the latest in technology means that from time to time, VISTA may propose updates or upgrades to the system proposed herein, for the purpose of incorporating then-existing, state-of-the-art technology. FPSC's acquisition of any such updates or upgrades will be subject to the parties' mutual written agreement as to the applicable rates/price, terms, conditions and other provisions.

VISTA will employ the following method for incorporating changes to the relay system. These methods include stress testing in all phases to ensure minimal impact to the relay users. Testing and implementation cycles will generally follow the pattern of:

- Development and Testing
- Florida Relay Service Staff Test
- Operator Training
- Control Group Test
- Implementation

Each of these stages allows an opportunity for modification prior to complete center implementation. It is VISTA's practice to assign a development tracking team to each testing and installation project. This team is responsible for daily tracking of the upgrade performance, proposals of modifications of the product and implementation of quality assurance practices for the new feature.

As new technology becomes available, VISTA will work with FPSC to determine the feasibility and necessity of the new technology. VISTA is committed to meeting any FCC mandated service expansions. However, it must be recognized that the FCC has under consideration relay features such as Speech to Speech and Video Relay which carry a per minute cost significantly higher than basic relay service. VISTA would not be able to deliver such high cost features at no charge to FPSC if the FCC should order such features mandatory to relay service. VISTA will review any requirements imposed

by FCC or the Commission after contract award, and will enter into good faith negotiations with FPSC regarding the terms and conditions required to incorporate such features into Florida Relay Service.

30. Consumer Input and Participation in Advisory Committee and FPSC Proceedings

The telephone users shall have input on the quality of the delivery of service. Bidders shall develop a plan to include the Commission and its Advisory Committee in any evaluation of the system. A bidder shall not include travel or per diem costs of the FPSC or its Advisory Committee in its bid price since those costs will be funded by the State. An outline of this plan shall be included with the bidder's proposal. The plan should explain methods for consumer input and how the recommendations from these evaluations will be incorporated into the policies of the relay center. This does not preclude the provider from conducting additional internal evaluations which use relay staff. The results of any service quality evaluation shall be reported to the FPSC office within 15 calendar days after the last month in each quarter.

Bidders are encouraged to include in the consumer input plan methods for working with organizations serving hearing and speech impaired individuals statewide to conduct periodic community forums. The community forums shall be for the purpose of gaining user input on the quality of relay service and for responding to user questions and problems on use of the relay service. The community forums shall be planned and conducted in conjunction with organizations serving people with hearing and speech impairments.

The provider shall participate in all meetings of the Advisory Committee and all FPSC workshops and hearings relating to relay service unless excused by the contract manager.

VISTA complies.

VISTA believes that the success of the Florida Relay Service depends on pro-active, continuing involvement with the Relay users' community and the general public as well. VISTA's Consumer Involvement Program, under the management of VISTA's National Outreach and Quality Assurance Director, for the Florida Relay Service is predicated on aggressively soliciting, thoroughly analyzing and expeditiously incorporating consumer input into direct service. Specific methods for soliciting consumer input shall include but not be limited to:

- VISTA will hold periodic community forums as Town Meetings and Open Houses for all interested parties in order to provide venues for consumer feedback and concerns. These will also serve to promote learning and understanding of relay services and the deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind and speech-impaired communities' needs. The meetings will be held at strategic geographic locations throughout the state of Florida to ensure that VISTA reaches out to the greatest number of relay users. VISTA will coordinate and plan these meetings with the Florida Association of the Deaf (FAD) and its local affiliates, the Florida Deaf Service Center Association (DSCA) and individual deaf service programs throughout the state, Florida chapters of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) and the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA), centers for independent living, educational programs serving user (including hearing) communities, the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB) as well as other organizations who work with relay consumers.
- VISTA is committed to developing a close working relationship with Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. in order to supplement and support their outreach responsibilities for the Florida Relay Service. VISTA believes that close cooperation

with the State Distribution Program is a valuable avenue for interacting with Relay users and providing them with a direct input link. VISTA is proud to have developed a mutually supportive relationship with the Massachusetts Equipment Distribution Program. The joint activities planned, including website links, will be valuable for development in Florida as well.

- VISTA will develop a Florida Relay Website with direct links to associated organizations' websites such as the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI) and FAD, as well as other user community organizations. VISTA believes that the Florida Relay belongs to the people who use it. As such, the Florida Relay Website will be a *public domain* site, and feature important Relay information for regular Relay users as well as individuals and businesses who may not have used the service before. VISTA is committed to establish the website in such a way that it is portable to another provider should one be chosen in the future to provide Florida Relay service. Members of community service organizations will have free access to the site for public announcements and educational information. Members of the community will also be able to email VISTA's Florida Relay Customer Service department directly from the website.
- VISTA will provide Florida Relay users with Customer Service available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. A separate Customer Service 800 number will be provided. Specially qualified and trained Customer Service agents will be utilized. These agents' sole responsibility is Relay Customer Service. They are well familiar with Relay practices and procedures as well as ASL. VISTA's Customer Service focuses on Relay issues and Relay consumers, rather than routing calls to a general Customer Service Telecom division. VISTA believes this ensures that Relay users will reach a representative that can understand and intelligently respond to their needs. Customer Service will be available to provide users with pertinent Relay Community telephone numbers, establish Customer Profiles, answer questions and provide instructions on how to use various Relay features, and take requests for informational brochures as well as educational outreach visits.
- VISTA is committed to working closely with speech-disabled users of the relay service and will coordinate forums specifically designed for these consumers. Coordination and planning will be done with the United Cerebral Palsy Association (UCPA), The Florida Speech-Language-Hearing Associations (FLSHA), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, centers for independent living, hospitals and rehabilitation centers.
- VISTA's Quality Assurance program includes in-house staged test calls, live call monitoring by Shift Supervisors, and technical issues tracking on a monthly basis. VISTA will provide FPSC with quarterly reports detailing CA and center performance. The results of the program are used to modify training, develop and implement new procedures and develop and provide CAs with targeted supplemental training. VISTA will enlist the help of various organizations for input as to the various features and call-handling procedures they would like to see tested.
- VISTA will provide FPSC with reports of all Customer Service contacts including suggestions and recommendations received by members of the Relay user communities. These suggestions are reviewed for efficacy and feasibility by VISTA's Quality Assurance team. When suggestions prove to be workable and offer improvement to the Relay service, they are tested and implemented according to the guidelines discussed in Section B.29 of this proposal.
- VISTA will ensure participation in deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind and speech-disabled community activities and conferences in order to provide significant one-on-

one interaction among key FRS Customer Service and Quality Assurance staff and these user groups. VISTA will also use these forums to solicit feedback on the Relay service and CA performance issues.

- VISTA will invite members of the various Relay user communities groups, or contract with a broadly based agency experienced in serving the deaf, hard or hearing and speech-impaired communities to assist in the development and implementation of a test call evaluation program. Evaluation reports and summaries would be regularly reviewed for applicable procedure and training applications as well as submitted to FPSC.
- VISTA recognizes that one of the greatest frustrations for relay consumers lies in the lack of knowledge and understanding about relay in the general public. The success and efficiency of each relay call depends on the awareness and comfort of every user of the relay service. VISTA will, therefore, also conduct meetings with hearing relay user groups to ensure their needs are best met. VISTA will work with Chambers of Commerce, Vocational Rehabilitation Offices, Social Security Offices and other local agencies serving user populations to target audiences and plan appropriate meeting sites. VISTA will also include a Business section on the Florida Relay website, promoting "Relay-friendly" practices in the Florida Business community.
- VISTA Customer Service staff will be available by phone (both TTY and voice), fax, email and postal mail for any suggestions or issues consumers wish addressed.
- VISTA will consistently solicit input and advice from the Advisory Council.

Vista believes that all relay consumer input should be respectfully reviewed for feasibility and effectiveness. The ideas, suggestions, needs and requests received through all consumer input channels will be reviewed by management and training staff and used to drive changes and refinements of center procedures and staff training. Trends may quickly pinpoint refresher training needs and some changes may be effected quickly. Any changes which involve contractual language of policy or procedure would be presented to the Advisory Council and FPSC for approval prior to implementation.

Results of any service quality evaluations, including in-house evaluations, will be reported to the FPSC within 15 calendar days after the last month in each quarter.

VISTA Customer Service and Quality Assurance staff will participate in all meetings of the Advisory Committee and all FPSC workshops and hearing related to the Relay service unless excused by the contract manager.

31. Complaint Resolution

The provider shall establish procedures regarding complaints, inquiries and comments regarding system services and personnel. The provider shall ensure that any caller to the relay center having a complaint will be able to reach a supervisor or administrator while still on line during a relay call. All complaints received by supervisors or in writing shall be documented, including their resolution, and kept on file and available to the Commission upon request. In addition, the relay center shall have a toll-free Customer Services telephone number available and accessible to the public statewide for the purpose of reporting service or other deficiencies. Records of such reports and copies of written reports regarding service or other deficiencies shall be maintained for the life of the contract and for twelve (12) months after conclusion of the contract period. This record shall include the name and/or address of the complainant, the date and time received, the CA identification number, the nature of the complaint, the result of any investigation, the disposition of the complaint and the date of such disposition. Each signed

letter of complaint shall be acknowledged in writing or by contact by a representative of the provider. The necessary replies to inquiries propounded by the Commission's staff concerning service or other complaints received by the Commission shall be furnished in writing within fifteen (15) days from the date of the Commission inquiry.

VISTA complies.

VISTA's proven track record for superior Customer Service resolution and quick response at the Massachusetts Relay Service has laid the groundwork for the highest quality complaint resolution process for the Florida Relay Service. In the event of complaints regarding the Florida Relay Service, VISTA Customer Service personnel will follow an established procedure for complaint resolution. The process varies depending on the gravity of the situation but is based on the commitment to quick, respectful response to every consumer's needs.

VISTA believes that all relay users should be able to access FRS personnel easily and at any time in order to file a complaint of compliment. VISTA personnel are available 24 hours per day, seven days per week to answer customer service toll-free lines. FRS users may also request, while still on line with the Relay, to be transferred to a Supervisor without having to hang up and call back into Relay. VISTA is dedicated to providing prompt responses to all concerns and, although specific situations will vary, *our goal is to provide resolution or response within 24 hours.* All customer contacts, be they compliments or complaints are reviewed daily by VISTA's Quality Assurance management staff who provide additional support to the Customer Service staff, as well as direct personal involvement in the resolution process.

VISTA will develop a Florida Relay Website with direct links to associated organization's websites such as the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI) and FAD, as well as other user community organizations. VISTA believes that the FRS website should be a public property, accessible to all. The Florida Relay Service website developed by VISTA will be available for transfer to a successor or FTRI at the conclusion of VISTA's contract to provide Relay Service for Florida. VISTA will publish complaint procedures and Customer Service contact information on the website. VISTA will work with FTRI to ensure complaint procedures and Customer service information is included on all outreach materials and in fully accessible formats, including Braille, large print, electronic media and audio tapes. VISTA will ensure easy electronic mail access to Customer Service management staff. VISTA invites you to visit the Massachusetts Relay Website at www.MassRelay.org as an example of this public access service to be provided.

Customer Service staff members are responsible for researching and resolving complaints immediately whenever possible. Supervisors are also trained in conflict resolution and trouble-shooting strategies and are often able to resolve the situation while the FRS user is still on the telephone. Complicated or critical complaints, if they cannot be resolved by front line Customer Service and Operations staff, will be forwarded immediately to Center Management and VISTA's Director of Outreach and Quality Assurance, who will conduct any necessary research or investigations and direct prompt resolution. VISTA Customer Service or Management personnel shall acknowledge in writing or by contact each signed letter of complaint.

Replies to inquiries propounded by the Commission's staff concerning service or other complaints received by the Commission will be furnished in writing within fifteen (15) days from the date of the Commission inquiry.

Compliments will be shared with CAs via their primary supervisors, a process that has proven to be a great motivator to continued good performance.

All complaints received by VISTA are treated with respect and professionalism. Response to Relay consumer is critical to the successful operation of the Florida Relay Service. VISTA is a service provider and our commitment to excellence in service and responsiveness is evident from the top management all the way to the newest recruit. All customer contact information, both positive and negative, will be reviewed on a daily basis to ensure quick response and resolution.

Customer Service personnel will be responsible for future follow-up contacts to consumers who file complaints to secure their on-going satisfaction and solicit their input regarding Relay performance. At all times, however, VISTA will respect the consumer's right to confidentiality and further contacts are only made with the consumer's permission. Customer Service agents will also invite all Relay users who contact them to be added to the Florida Relay mailing list.

All complaints and compliments received by Customer Service or Supervisory personnel will be entered into the VISTA customer contact database and tracked closely. Once a situation has been researched and/or resolved and the consumer has been given a follow-up response, the results of the inquiry and action are logged into the database. All reports shall include name, contact number(s) and/or address of the complainant (only with the complainant's permission), the date and time received, the CA identification number (if applicable), the nature of the complaint, the result of any investigation, the disposition of the complaint and the date of the disposition. All such records and copies of written reports will be maintained for the life of the contract and for twelve (12) months after the conclusion of the contract period.

VISTA is fully committed to working with FRS consumers, FTRI and with the FPSC and its Advisory Committee to provide the best service possible and to resolve problems and complaints swiftly and professionally.

32. Charges for Incoming Calls

The Provider shall make no charge to the users for making calls (incoming) to the relay service.

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay users will not be charged for accessing the Florida Relay Service. Toll-free numbers will be provided and will access the service from both in-state and out-of-state at no charge to the user.

33. Billing Arrangements

Provider shall bill for charges for collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms and pay telephones, and calls charged to a third party. Provider shall also arrange for billing

to any industry standard local exchange company or alternative local exchange company calling card. For calls billed by or on behalf of the provider, the bidder shall include a complete description of how users will be billed for all calls. This description shall include the bidder's procedures for obtaining billing information from the local exchange and alternative local exchange companies, whether the billing will be performed directly by the provider itself or contracted, specific credit cards or telephone calling cards to which calls can be billed, and a sample bill format. The bidder shall also explain how it will respond to customer inquiries about erroneous bills and how credits will be issued or refunds made.

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA will provide for collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms, and calls charged to a third party. VISTA will also provide for billing to any Florida local exchange company calling card and to inter-exchange company calling cards and other major credit cards. VISTA will comply with FCC and Commission requirements regarding billing for coin sent-paid calls. VISTA understands that it is permitted to decline to complete a call because credit authorization is denied.

The relay console automatically generates a call detail record (CDR) for each call processed whether or not that call is completed. All records are stored immediately on protected network file servers and, at the end of each day, are archived using a tape storage system. VISTA will receive raw CDR data from its vendor and will process the data to develop compliant billing information. At the end of each month, all call billing data is assembled and used in report generation and billing systems.

VISTA, using the data feed from its vendor, will accomplish all billing processing and report generation. Actual customer invoicing is processed and presented to the user by their pre-arranged billing method with their LEC, credit card and/or calling card vendor.

Each call record contains a comprehensive set of data including:

- Billing telephone, calling card or credit card number
- Originating (calling) telephone number (area code – prefix – line number)
- Terminating (called) telephone number (area code – prefix – line number)
- Incoming call received date and time (when the incoming or originating call is first received at the relay console)
- Outgoing call attempt date and time (when an outgoing call to from the Relay is attempted)
- Relay call connection date and time
- Relay call disconnection date and time
- Incoming call disconnection date and time (when the original incoming caller disconnects from the CA)
- Call type (local, toll, intrastate, interstate, international)
- Card validation number (if applicable)
- Call disposition (reason for disconnect, i.e. normal disconnect, invalid card number, the called party would not accept collect charges, etc.)
- Call duration

VISTA will use two different invoice delivery systems for the Florida Relay. The first supports station billed calls including collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms, calls charged to a third party and local exchange carrier (LEC), regional operating bell company (RBOC) and non-proprietary inter-exchange (IXC) calling cards. Call records and billing data records (BDR)s will be formatted and delivered to the

appropriate LEC for inclusion in the LEC's monthly customer invoice. Such records will be clearly indicated as Relay call data, ensuring that the LEC or other billing agency is so notified.

The second system supports calls charged to commercial credit cards. Rated call records (intra-lata and inter-lata) are delivered to the appropriate credit company for inclusion in their normal monthly customer invoice.

VISTA is not a telephone company, local or long-distance telecommunications carrier and, therefore, VISTA has no financial interest in which long distance carrier a Relay user chooses for their calls. VISTA is a service organization, entirely focused on providing excellent responsive service to our consumers. This fact benefits Relay users by ensuring that there is no long distance carrier default utilized in the VISTA Relay system. Callers choose their own long distance company and their calls will only be processed when a long distance carrier has been chosen. VISTA will offer Florida Relay users a Caller Profile option that will automatically inform the CA of that caller's long distance service at the beginning of each Relay call. Carrier of Choice calls are billed to the user, as applicable, by that carrier's tariff rates. VISTA will relay the call but will not bill users for calls completed. The user's LEC or carrier of choice will perform all billing.

Prepaid calling cards will be treated similarly to regular calling card calls. The CA will prompt the consumer for the 800/888/877 number on the card and the prepaid PIN or designated passcode. Using the DTMF function of the Florida Relay software, the CA will dial through the Prepaid Card Company's automated system to process the call. When the call connects, the CA will begin the relay process. The CA will advise the originating caller of any message heard from the automated system during the call, i.e. "You have four prepaid minutes remaining on your card".

Questions from consumers regarding erroneous bills and/or charges on their phone bill will be handled by Customer Service. VISTA will refer those consumers to their LEC and/or Inter-exchange Carrier and will cooperate as needed to resolve any problems.

34. End User Billing for Intrastate Calls

Intrastate toll calls placed through the relay system and billed by or on behalf of the provider shall be billed to the voice or TDD caller at 50% of the provider's rate for non-relay calls. An additional 10% discount (60% total discount) shall apply to calls to or from the dual-sensory impaired; the provider shall develop a system for identifying such users and applying the discount to their calls. Timing for timed intrastate call billing shall begin when the relay operator advises a party to proceed with the call and shall not include any initial time by the operator to explain how relay service works.

The bidder shall explain how its discount toll plan subscribers would be billed for relayed calls billed by or on behalf of the provider. For example, if a bidder offers a discount for over 5 hours of usage per month, the bidder should explain how a subscriber to that service would be billed for any relay calls made during the month.

The provider shall not charge the end user more for non-message toll relay calling than would be charged for the same call if billed by the end user's local exchange or alternative local exchange company. The provider can accomplish this by obtaining necessary billing information about the end user's local company in order to ensure that it does not bill in excess of those rates (e.g., extended area service calls, extended calling service calls, etc.)

In the alternative, the provider can collect necessary billing information and turn that billing information over to the end user's local company so that the end user's local company can bill for relay calls under the local company's rates. If this alternative approach is taken, the provider shall submit the billing information to the local company in an industry standard format and the provider shall incur whatever costs are required to correctly format the billing information so that the local company can bill the calls.

Of the two approaches described above, the bidder should indicate how it will initially bill calls and the provider shall advise the contract manager whenever it changes billing methodologies.

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA will process raw Call Record and Billing Record data from its vendor, as described in the response above and provide industry-standard billing information to the Relay user's LEC and/or Inter-exchange Carrier so that carrier may bill the user according to the arrangements the Relay user has made with his or her telephone company.

Billing information supplied to the carriers will include the following information:

- Billing telephone, calling card or credit card number
- Originating (calling) telephone number (area code – prefix – line number)
- Terminating (called) telephone number (area code – prefix – line number)
- Incoming call received date and time (when the incoming or originating call is first received at the relay console)
- Outgoing call attempt date and time (when an outgoing call to from the Relay is attempted)
- Relay call connection date and time
- Relay call disconnection date and time
- Incoming call disconnection date and time (when the original incoming caller disconnects from the CA)
- Call type (local, toll, intrastate, interstate, international)

- Card validation number (if applicable)
- Call disposition (reason for disconnect, i.e. normal disconnect, invalid card number, the called party would not accept collect charges, etc.)
- Call duration

VISTA will work with the Florida LECs to ensure that the billing records submitted to them are in industry standard format. VISTA shall submit sample billing records to FPSC prior to start-up of the Florida Relay contract. Any changes in billing methodology will be discussed with FPSC prior to implementation.

35. Relaying Interstate and International Calls

The provider shall be required to relay interstate and international calls that originate or terminate in Florida. The provider shall not include in its bill for Florida relay service any charges or time associated with interstate or international calls.

If relayed interstate or international calls are to be billed by the provider to the end user at a rate higher than the rate for a nonrelay call, the provider shall quote the rate to the party to be billed before beginning the call. The bidder should indicate how its rate for interstate and international calls will compare to the rate for nonrelay calls and whether any discounts or additional charges will apply to interstate and international relay calls.

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA's Florida Relay Service will process interstate calls originating in Florida and terminating in another state. Likewise, FRS will process calls originating outside of Florida and terminating in Florida. VISTA will process international calls in the same manner as interstate calls. There is always a potential of incompatible text-based equipment outside of the U.S.A. that would not successfully connect to the Florida Relay Service. Carrier of Choice calls with international termination can be accomplished through the Florida Relay, however it will require that the selected carrier's operator dial the terminator. Callers will be informed that their Carrier's Operator Services will be necessary to process the call. The caller's carrier will bill the user directly, according to the arrangements made between the Relay user and their chosen carrier.

VISTA will provide billing data for intrastate, interstate and international long distance services to a user's choice of carrier. If the user desires, the call will be billed to the selected carrier's calling card or other major credit card. This rate will not affect any applicable discounts offered to Relay users by their carrier. VISTA will pass through to the user's chosen carrier all data and information digits, as described above in response B.37, for accurate billing.

VISTA is not a common carrier and, therefore, VISTA will not provide any billing to direct users of the Florida Relay. While VISTA will make every effort to ensure that common carriers (requested by the Relay callers) include the TRS discount in their billings, VISTA is not in a position to enforce this requirement. VISTA is willing to work with FPSC and the Florida LECs to develop means to maximize the use of TRS discounts by all carriers in Florida.

The VISTA Florida Relay billing system will separate all interstate and international calls from intrastate calls for billing to the interstate fund administrator. VISTA agrees that

FPSC will not be required to reimburse VISTA for any costs or charges associated with the provision of Basic Relay services for interstate and international calls. Compensation for interstate and international calls will be according to FCC guidelines. FPSC will only be responsible for Florida Relay in-state calls, both local and toll, and the State's portion of charges for 800/888/877 and other toll free services as provided for by the FCC. VISTA will provide reports to FPSC that show the division of traffic.

36. End User Selection of Carrier

The provider shall allow a caller to select an available interexchange company other than the provider for billing purposes. The provider must meet current and subsequent requirements of the Network Interconnection Interoperability Forum for handling end user requests for a carrier other than the provider. The bidder should include a copy of the current standard along with its proposal and the provider shall provide to the FPSC any subsequent updates in the standard as soon as they are adopted.

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA is not a telephone company, local or long-distance telecommunications carrier and, therefore, VISTA has no financial interest in which long distance carrier a Relay user chooses for their calls. VISTA is a service organization, entirely focused on providing excellent responsive service to our consumers. This fact benefits Relay users by ensuring that there is no long distance carrier default utilized in the VISTA Relay system. Callers choose their own long distance company and their calls will only be processed when a long distance carrier has been chosen. VISTA will offer Florida Relay users a Caller Profile option that will automatically inform the CA of that caller's long distance service at the beginning of each Relay call.

VISTA's vendors shall meet current and subsequent requirements of the Network Interconnection Interoperability Forum for handling end user requests for a carrier. A copy of the current standard can be found with this proposal in **Attachment _____**. Subsequent updates in the standard will be provided to FPSC as soon as they are adopted.

37. Recipient of Toll Revenues

The relay provider or its underlying telecommunications provider shall be allowed to retain the toll revenues for all long distance calls billed by or on behalf of the relay provider or its underlying telecommunications provider.

VISTA complies. While VISTA will not generate any toll revenues for itself for any calls placed through the Florida Relay, it is understood that VISTA's telecommunications provider, MCI WorldCom may retain those toll revenues for calls placed at the Relay user's request via MCI WorldCom's as their carrier of choice.

38. Long Distance Call Billing

Operator-handled calls shall be carefully supervised and disconnects made promptly. A check of the timing clock shall be made at least once each twenty-four (24) hours to ensure that the clocks are synchronized and that the time is correct. Clock deviations shall not be in excess of 12 seconds. Bidders shall specify the record system for identifying and documenting long distance and toll calls for billing purposes. The record shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:

- a. telephone number or credit card number to be billed (NPA-prefix-line number)*
- b. originating and terminating telephone number (NPA-prefix-line number)*
- c. originating and terminating exchange name*
- d. date*
- e. start time*
- f. call duration to the full second (the time in between start time and end time)*

Long distance calls billed to subscribers shall be listed chronologically and reflect the connect time of such calls based on the appropriate time zone. Bidders shall also fully describe the billing system and billing process that will be used, including identification of any subcontractors, specific duties of the subcontractors, and how the billing record detail will be transmitted to the billing agent (if any).

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA CAs are trained to promptly disconnect calls following their completion. VISTA supervisory staff to ensure this practice is followed monitors CAs. The clocks on VISTA Relay consoles, and hence the billing records, are synchronized a minimum of once every 24 hours. The consoles are also synchronized daily with the ACD's which are configured together to a highly accurate and sophisticated Atomic Clock.

VISTA will provide for collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms, and calls charged to a third party. VISTA will also provide for billing to any Florida local exchange company calling card and to inter-exchange company calling cards and other major credit cards. VISTA will comply with FCC and Commission requirements regarding billing for coin sent-paid calls. VISTA understands that it is permitted to decline to complete a call because credit authorization is denied.

The relay console automatically generates a call detail record (CDR) for each call processed whether or not that call is completed. All records are stored immediately on protected network file servers and, at the end of each day, are archived using a tape storage system. VISTA will receive raw CDR data from its vendor and will process the data to develop compliant billing information. At the end of each month, all call billing data is assembled and used in report generation and billing systems.

VISTA, using the data feed from its vendor, will accomplish all billing processing and report generation. Actual customer invoicing is processed and presented to the user by their pre-arranged billing method with their LEC, credit card and/or calling card vendor.

Each call record contains a comprehensive set of data including:

- Billing telephone, calling card or credit card number

- Originating (calling) telephone number (area code – prefix – line number)
- Terminating (called) telephone number (area code – prefix – line number)
- Incoming call received date and time (when the incoming or originating call is first received at the relay console)
- Outgoing call attempt date and time (when an outgoing call to from the Relay is attempted)
- Relay call connection date and time
- Relay call disconnection date and time
- Incoming call disconnection date and time (when the original incoming caller disconnects from the CA)
- Call type (local, toll, intrastate, interstate, international)
- Card validation number (if applicable)
- Call disposition (reason for disconnect, i.e. normal disconnect, invalid card number, the called party would not accept collect charges, etc.)
- Call duration

VISTA will use two different invoice delivery systems for the Florida Relay. The first supports station billed calls including collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms, calls charged to a third party and local exchange carrier (LEC), regional operating bell company (RBOC) and non-proprietary inter-exchange (IXC) calling cards. Call records and billing data records (BDR)s will be formatted to TELCO billing tapes for intraMSA and local calls and delivered to the appropriate LEC for inclusion in the LEC's monthly customer invoice.

The second system supports calls charged to commercial credit cards. Rated call records (intra-lata and inter-lata) are delivered to the appropriate credit company for inclusion in their normal monthly customer invoice.

39. Special Needs

The provider will not be required to provide Special Need services. However, consideration will be given for additional evaluation points for proposals that include Special Need services (beyond any other services for basic relay described elsewhere in this RFP) as a part of the basic relay service.

Special Needs is defined as limiting factors of a physical or literacy nature that preclude a person who is hearing, speech or dual-sensory (both hearing and visually impaired) disabled from using basic relay service. Special Needs includes: (1) physical limitations, either temporary or permanent, which preclude use of a TDD with or without adaptations for persons with manual dexterity limitations (e.g., paralysis, severe arthritis, broken fingers) and (2) markedly limited ability either to read or write English or Spanish which precludes user from being able to use the relay service. (It should be understood that relay service does not include translation from one language to another for the Special Needs population or for any other consumers.) Special Needs does not include (1) unavailability of telephone service at the caller's home or business, (2) inability to communicate in either English or Spanish (i.e., where caller can only communicate in a language other than English or Spanish), or (3) handling complex calls (e.g., intervening in a call with a doctor to explain a medical procedure.)

The bidder shall describe what steps will be taken to provide telecommunications assistance to persons with hearing, speech and dual-sensory impairments who have special needs. This description shall include the types of services that would be provided, the prices to end users (if any) for those services, how those services would operationally be provided, how parties other than the provider

would be involved in providing Special Needs services and how the provider would assure that those parties would fulfill their portion of the service obligation.

VISTA understands and complies as follows.

VISTA understands that certain Relay user communities have special needs in addition to those of a standard Relay user. VISTA, working with members of the Relay communities, has developed and will offer to Florida Relay users a Caller Profile option called, "Slow Typing/Long Hold". This profile was designed particularly with deaf/blind or deaf individuals with other physical limitations in mind in order to provide them with better Relay service. This profile, if chosen, automatically informs the CA that this is a Special Needs caller. The CA will type more slowly, thus allowing a Braille reader or person with other visual limitations, to more easily read the transmission. VISTA CAs are normally instructed to hold for one minute between out-going calls to allow the originating caller to provide the next number they wish to dial. For callers with the Slow Typing/Long Hold Profile, CAs will allow the caller a longer period of time between calls to locate and communicate their instructions for their next call. VISTA CAs are trained to be respectful and professional at all times and participate in Disability Awareness classes to promote their understanding of Special Needs callers. A caller who may not choose to have such a profile, can request that the CA type slower and/or permit longer holding times at the beginning of their call. VISTA CAs are trained to honor all such requests.

VISTA recognizes the broad range of exposure and training in English grammar that exists in the Relay communities. VISTA provides Florida Relay users with another Caller Profile option, "Grammatical Changes Requested". This profile informs the CA automatically that the caller wishes for assistance in transliterating typewritten ASL into grammatically correct English. VISTA shall train Supervisors and CAs to apply best effort standards in assisting callers who request translation. The role of the Supervisor or CA is to reword ASL like typed messages into a conversational English word order and to modify spoken words from English grammar into an ASL like typed message. VISTA will provide classes specifically dedicated to training CAs on the grammatical structure and syntax of ASL in written form, as well as how to properly translate those expressions in grammatically correct spoken English. Upon completion of these training sessions, participating CAs and Supervisors will be required to pass skills test to evaluate their abilities to assist on these types of calls. CAs must successfully complete this training in order to process requests for communication assistance in the form of grammatical correction. A list of qualified CAs will be available to all Supervisors so those Relay users requesting assistance can be provided with a specially trained CA.

Both of the above services are offered to the Florida Relay at no additional cost. VISTA is committed to working with the FTRI and Commission to identify and develop other Special Needs profiles and procedures to provide to the Florida Relay communities.

VISTA also offers to the Florida Relay Service, at no additional charge to FPSC or the end user, Speed Dialing capabilities. This feature is more fully described in the following section of this proposal. Speed Dialing is especially useful for Special Needs Relay users who have a difficult time speaking or typing numbers. With this feature, the caller merely needs to communicate the name of the person they wish to call to the CA who will then access that person's telephone number. Florida Relay users may choose to

pre-program their TTYs or PCs to send macro messages to the CA identifying the person they wish to call. This saves the Relay user from having to identify the caller by name or number during the actual Relay session.

VISTA's Florida Relay Service will be capable of supporting Speech-to-Speech Relay, should the FPSC elect to purchase this service. A detailed description of this service may be found in section B.42 of this proposal.

40. Custom Calling Type Features

The bidder should explain separately how the following features would be provided. An explanation should be provided of what actions a caller would have to take to use the services.

a) Speed Dialing

This feature allows a caller to prearrange to identify certain numbers by name. The system would know the number to call if the caller asked the CA to call a particular name.

VISTA complies.

Florida Relay users under the VISTA Relay system will have the option of setting up Speed Dial Caller Profiles. This profile option allows users to set up a list of up to 20 frequently dialed numbers that the CA will access for placing outbound calls. The user would simply type, for example, "call Mom" and the CA will select "Mom" from that caller's speed dial list and place the outbound call. Profile lists are strictly confidential and are configured with the caller's telephone number. No other hard copy lists of telephone numbers are kept at the relay. CAs may only access a Relay user's speed dial list while that user is on the phone with the CA. Florida Relay users can establish their Caller Profile and speed dial list through the Florida Relay Customer Service department, 24 hours per day, seven days per week. There is no additional charge to FPSC or the Relay user for this service.

An added benefit to the Speed Dial feature is that each user can access their Speed Dial list, even when away from home or work. Thus, Florida Relay users will always have their personal Speed-Dial lists available to them.

While the Speed Dial feature does not require the caller to conduct special procedures, there are several things that the caller must do to use and enjoy the feature:

- A. Florida Relay users must register with customer service to create their Speed Dial list. The speed dial list includes names and telephone numbers such as "mom" @ 202-987-6543. The list is associated with the user's one or two primary telephone numbers, at home and/or at work. This information is usually entered into the database within 48 hours after receipt of the registration.
- B. When the user calls the relay service from his/her primary telephone, the user requests the CA to call "name." The CA, with two keystrokes, can access the caller's Speed Dial list based on the incoming telephone number. After simply choosing the name given, the console automatically dials to the outbound number.

- C. If the user is calling from a source other than his/her primary number, the user gives the CA their name and personal identification. The CA then uses this information to access the user's Speed Dial list, selects the name, and proceeds with the call.

b) Last Number Redial

This would allow the caller to have the system dial the last number called via relay without the caller having to give the number to the CA.

VISTA understands and replies as follows.

During any given Relay session, a caller may request that the CA dial the last number called during that session. The CA will scroll up the screen to the previous number dialed and place another out-going call for the user. At this time, VISTA is unable to offer last number redial service for previous Relay sessions. This capability is currently under investigation and VISTA will contact FPSC to discuss this option if and when it becomes available.

41. Unsolicited Features in Basic Relay Service

The provider will not be required to provide unsolicited features in its basic relay service. However, consideration will be given for additional evaluation points for proposals that include unsolicited features. The cost to the state for these unsolicited features must be included within the basic relay service price proposal.

Any additional features not described elsewhere in the RFP, and which the bidder is including in its basic relay service and price proposal, which a bidder would like to propose should be fully described indicating how the feature would work, how it would improve the system, which users would benefit from the feature and any other information which would allow the FPSC and PRC to evaluate the feature. Examples might include features such as: (a) providing a caller profile identifying to the CA the caller's preference regarding use of calling card, carrier of choice, use of HCO/VCO, descriptions of background noise; video interpreting; use of speech synthesis equipment instead of a CA to convert text to speech; use of voice recognition equipment instead of a CA to convert speech to text; (b) enhanced transmission speed and interrupt capability, etc.

VISTA understands and is pleased to offer the following unsolicited features to the Florida Relay Service.

Caller Profiles

With the Florida Relay User Preference Database (otherwise known as the Caller Profile Database), Florida Relay users will be able to benefit from shorter call set-up times and quicker answer times. Whenever a call comes into the relay system, the system will automatically search for any caller profile preferences associated with that caller's particular phone number (ANI). The call will then be answered and set up accordingly. Some preference options allow for automatic console set-up of their associated features, e.g., Automatic Connection in ASCII, Automatic Connection in Baudot (TTY) and Voice Carry Over.

For example, suppose the number 111/333-4444 is profiled in the database as Baudot and Voice Carry Over. Whenever a caller originates a Florida Relay call from that phone number (ANI), it will automatically be answered in Baudot mode and be set up in Voice

Carry Over. This saves connect time by pre-setting the CA console directly to the proper call answer protocol and saves set up time since the caller is not required to request VCO prior to giving the number to be dialed.

Fields presently in use for Customer Profile options:

- Automatic Connection in ASCII
- Automatic Connection in Baudot (TTY)
- Voice Carry Over (VCO)
- Hearing Carry Over (HCO)
- Carrier of Choice (COC)
- No Explanation of Service
- 2-Line VCO
- No Announcement of Relay
- Abbreviate Automated Message
- No Tone of Voice
- No Background Sounds
- Slow Typing/Long Hold
- Spanish Relay Requested
- Grammatical Changes

VISTA is pleased to offer, in addition to the above, a Speed Dial feature available to any Florida Relay user. Florida Relay, as provided by VISTA, will offer relay users the ability to expedite their calls by listing their "most frequently called" names and telephone numbers in a relay database and simply state a name when placing an outbound call.

An added benefit to the Speed Dial feature is that each user can access their Speed Dial list, even when away from home or work. Thus, Florida Relay users will always have their personal Speed-Dial lists available to them.

VISTA will work with FTRI, the Commission and community members to develop the Caller Profile form's presentation and language for maximum understanding and ease of use.

Caller Profile information is submitted by relay users in many ways; one method is through the VISTA Outreach and Quality Assurance personnel at meetings, presentations, conferences and other activities throughout the state. Another method is by calling Customer Service and informing the Customer Service agent of the person's preferred choices. Yet another method available to customers will be by visiting a newly established Florida Relay web site (site address to be determined after contract award).

The Florida Relay System will keep all information regarding telephone numbers with Caller Profile features associated with them absolutely confidential. If a customer desires to change or update the Caller Profile information attached to their number, this can be done easily by contacting Customer Service and requesting the change. Upon request to Customer Service, VISTA will provide the user with a copy of their established Caller Profile preferences by mail, fax or email in a clear understandable format.

Call Release

VISTA will offer "Call Release" to Florida Relay users. The feature enables the CA to release a call if the originating caller and the terminating called party are able to communicate without the need for Relay. For example, if a TTY user calls through relay and unexpectedly contacts a TTY user and desires the CA to leave the call, the CA would immediately do so leaving the calling and called parties to directly communicate with each other. Likewise, if a hearing caller unexpectedly reaches another standard telephone user, the CA will release the call so that the two parties may continue their call without the assistance of the CA.

Enhanced Protocol including Interrupt Capability

VISTA CA consoles operate with all TTYs using U.S. Standard Baudot and ASCII systems, as well as enhanced protocol such as UltraTec "TurboCode" and Ameritech "FastTalk" to connect with these faster TTY protocols and affording a higher speed of transmission over standard Baudot. Additionally, VISTA offers Florida Relay users Interrupt capability. This feature allows the TTY user to engage the interrupt command on their TTY. This command results in a flashing "Interrupt Requested" message appearing on the CAs console screen. This is particularly useful for caller's who may encounter long recordings and automated menu systems when calling through Relay. The user can interrupt the CA, who will immediately quit typing the recording and send the TTY user a GA. The TTY user is then free to instruct the CA, for example, "choose menu 2 savings accounts". The CA will then follow the TTY user's instructions and the call will proceed normally. The VISTA Relay console automatically identifies incoming TTY calls as Baudot, ASCII or enhanced protocol.

Three-Way Calling and Conference Calling

Custom calling services such as three-way calling and conference capabilities are enhancements available from the relay user's local exchange carrier. The Florida Relay user may conference additional parties onto the call when and if desired.

CAs are capable of handling three-way and conference calls. The Relay user informs the CA that s/he will participate in a conference call (either by calling into a conference call bridge for a TTY to Voice call, or placing the CA on hold while s/he conferences in the third party). In either case, the CA will, to the best of their ability, identify the different voices heard to the text user by indicating gender, either (M) for male or (F) for female for each voice heard. If the voice parties announce themselves by name, the CA will type the name, for example "BOB WHAT TIME SHOULD WE GO QQ MARY 430PM". Conference calls can sometimes be challenging because the voice persons on the call generally do not use GA to indicate that the TTY user can now respond. CAs will explain to all callers how relay works, unless instructed by the TTY user not to do so, in order to help smoothly facilitate the call. Only one billing record will be created in these calls.

Two-Line HCO:

The two-line HCO feature is designed specifically for customers using ASCII and who also want to use HCO. Two-line HCO allows a person who is speech disabled to hear what the voice customer is saying. The CA is needed only to verbalize the ASCII user's typed responses.

Two independent phone lines, one a regular voice line and the other an ASCII (modem) line, along with conference calling ability are required by the HCO user for this feature. The ASCII user connects with relay via modem, requests that the CA call their second (voice) line and then conferences in a third party who they wish to converse with. The CA will explain relay and will voice only what the ASCII user types. This type of call allows the customer who is speech disabled more control over their call, the ability to use a computer to speed up communication and to use their hearing as well.

All VISTA CAs are trained to handle two-line HCO calls and all VISTA Relay consoles are capable of processing such calls upon request of the user.

VCO to TTY, TTY to VCO

VCO to TTY and TTY to VCO calls allow two Relay users, one who is Deaf and one who has a hearing disability and chooses to speak, to converse with one another. The originating caller informs the CA that they wish to place a VCO to TTY call and gives the CA the number to dial. These calls require only one CA to process the call, and all CAs are trained to handle such requests. The CA will then dial the TTY user's number and inform them that they are receiving a VCO to TTY call. The VCO user will voice their words, which the CA will then type to the TTY user. Once the TTY user has typed their response, the CA will then retransmit the typed message to the VCO user. Some VCO users do not wish to, or do not have the capability of typing on a TTY. Additionally, some VCO phones do not have keyboards. The VCO-to-TTY and TTY-to-VCO calls allow two persons to communicate even though neither can hear and only one party owns a standard TTY. The TTY user experiences the call like a standard relay call. The VCO user also gets to experience a standard VCO call, using their own voice to speak and receiving a typed transmittal of the other parties' portion of the conversation. All CAs are trained to handle both types of these calls from any relay console.

True Caller ID

VISTA is pleased to offer Florida Relay users True Caller ID. When the Florida Relay places an out-going call for a Relay user, the originating caller's ANI (telephone number) will automatically be passed to the terminating party's Caller ID equipment (if that person has such service). VISTA's Caller ID feature honors blocks that the originating caller may have placed on their ANI through their LEC as well as recognizing the new "Caller ID block override" available through some LECs. This feature allows the originating caller to press "* 86" before dialing Relay. This code tells the system that, although the originating caller has a caller ID block on their phone, they wish to override that block for this particular call they are making through Relay. True Caller ID is particularly valuable for those infrequent but vital 911 calls placed through Relay. The originating caller's ANI information is passed automatically to the emergency services dispatcher. If that area of Florida has the benefits of Enhanced 911 capabilities, the emergency personnel will automatically receive the callers name and address information without the necessity of the CA having to relay it. The Caller ID feature of VISTA Relay functions for incoming calls to both the Voice and TTY Florida Relay numbers.

711

VISTA's Florida Relay Service will be able to support 711 service if and when the FCC and/or the State of Florida implement such service for Florida Relay Users. The 711

feature simplifies contacting the Florida Relay for both TTY and hearing Relay users. TTY users will no longer have to leave both their own phone numbers and the Relay voice number on messages to hearing persons. They may simply say, for example, "Call 711 and give relay operator my number to dial 111/222-3333". VISTA believes that 711 may help eliminate some of the difficulty Relay users experience in trying to get hearing individuals or businesses to return their call. Should the State of Florida decide to implement the 711 feature, VISTA will work closely with FTRI to promote the enhancement, as well as posting information on the Florida Relay website and in VISTA's outreach materials.

VISTA is committed to providing its Relay customers with the most up-to-date features and technologies whenever possible. Part of that commitment is seen in VISTA's continued involvement in research being done on Speech-to-Text technology. While current applications of this technology remain problematic for everyday Relay use, VISTA will continue monitoring the situation and will propose any workable solutions to FPSC for discussion in the future.

42. FPSC Optional Services Not Included in Basic Relay Service But Available to Provide at Additional Cost

The following services will not receive evaluation points for the purpose of determining which bidder will be selected to provide relay service. However, once a provider is selected, the FPSC will determine which of the following services it may wish to add to the basic relay service and negotiate the conditions under which these optional services may be offered. If a bidder offers a service in this section and the FPSC chooses to purchase the service, the provider must provide the service.

For each item, the bidder should include the price per billable minute (or other basis) which it would charge for the purchase of the optional service over and above the price for basic relay service. That price per billable minute (or other basis) should be listed separately in the price proposal. The proposal should also indicate how each feature would work, how it would improve the system, which users would benefit from the feature, any direct charges that would be billed to the user, and any other information that would allow the FPSC to evaluate the feature.

VISTA understands and offers the following for FPSC's consideration.

42.a. Other Custom Calling Type Services

The provider will not be required to provide custom calling type services unless required for certification by the FCC. No additional evaluation points will be awarded to a bidder based on a proposal to provide services which offer functionalities similar to those of one or more of the following custom calling services. The proposed charge to the Administrator for custom calling service should be separately stated in the price proposal.

The bidder shall explain how a user could receive functionalities similar to those of the following services in conjunction with a relayed call. The bidder shall also indicate what additional cost would apply to the relay user, if any. If no separate charge to the relay user is stated, it will be assumed there is no separate charge.

- a. Three-way calling which would allow a user with only one telephone line to conduct a conversation with two other parties at the same time.*

VISTA understands and complies.

Custom calling services such as three-way calling and conference capabilities are enhancements available from the relay user's local exchange carrier. The Florida Relay user may conference additional parties onto the call when and if desired.

CAs are capable of handling three-way and conference calls. The Relay user informs the CA that s/he will participate in a conference call (either by calling into a conference call bridge for a TTY to Voice call, or placing the CA on hold while s/he conferences in the third party). In either case, the CA will, to the best of their ability, identify the different voices heard to the text user by indicating gender, either (M) for male or (F) for female for each voice heard. If the voice parties announce themselves by name, the CA will type the name, for example "BOB WHAT TIME SHOULD WE GO QQ MARY 430PM". Conference calls can sometimes be challenging because the voice persons on the call generally do not use GA to indicate that the TTY user can now respond. CAs will explain to all callers how relay works, unless instructed by the TTY user not to do so, in order to help smoothly facilitate the call. Only one billing record will be created in these calls.

There is no additional charge from Florida Relay for using this handling 3-way or conference calls.

- b. *Call trace which would allow the caller to dial the relay center and have the CA provide the number of the last call made to the caller via relay.*

VISTA understands and although we are not at this time offering this feature, VISTA will continue to investigate future capabilities and at such time as these features become technically feasible, will discuss inclusion of "call trace" with FPSC.

42.b. Access to 900/976 Services

The provider will not be required to provide access to 900/976 service unless required for certification by the FCC. No additional evaluation points will be awarded to a bidder based on a proposal to provide 900/976 service. The proposed charge for 900/976 service should be separately stated in the price proposal.

The bidder should explain how it could provide relay service users with access to 976 and 900 number services. Bidders are to describe how such access can be provided, how callers can disconnect without being charged and a methodology for billing the user directly for any charges incurred from the 900/976 service. The bidder should describe how it would deal with denied 900/976 calls and high bill complaints for 900/976 calls. If this service is provided, before placing the call, the CA shall advise the caller that there will be a charge for the call.

The bidder shall explain in the proposal how interstate and intrastate 900/976 calls shall be separated for payment purposes.

VISTA understands and does not propose to offer access to 900/976 services under this proposal.

42.c. Enhanced Transmission Speed & Interrupt Capability

The provider will not be required to provide the enhancements described below unless required for certification by the FCC. No additional evaluation points will be awarded to a bidder based on a proposal to provide these enhancements. The proposed charge to the Administrator for the enhancements below should be separately stated in the price proposal.

Enhancements may include the ability both to send and receive typed communications at the same speed as typed or transmitted. Enhanced protocols may also include the ability to send and receive interrupt signals while another party is typing. The bidder should state what requirements would exist in order for the relay user to be able to utilize the above enhancements.

VISTA understands and provides this feature at no additional cost.

Enhanced Protocol including Interrupt Capability

VISTA CA consoles operate with all TTYs using U.S. Standard Baudot and ASCII systems, as well as enhanced protocols such as UltraTec "TurboCode" and Ameritech "FastTalk" to connect with these faster TTY protocols and affording a higher speed of transmission over standard Baudot. Additionally, VISTA offers Florida Relay users Interrupt capability. This feature allows the TTY user to engage the interrupt command on their TTY. This command results in a flashing "Interrupt Requested" message appearing on the CAs console screen. This is particularly useful for caller's who may encounter long recordings and automated menu systems when calling through Relay. The user can interrupt the CA, who will immediately quit typing the recording and send the TTY user a GA. The TTY user is then free to instruct the CA, for example, "choose menu 2 savings accounts". The CA will then follow the TTY user's instructions and the call will proceed normally. The VISTA Relay console automatically identifies incoming TTY calls as Baudot, ASCII or Enhanced Protocol.

42.d. Video Relay

The provider will not be required to provide video relay interpreting unless required for certification by the FCC. No additional evaluation points will be awarded to a bidder based on a proposal to provide video relay interpreting. The proposed charge for this service should be separately stated in the price proposal.

The bidder should explain how it will provide and bill relay service users for video relay interpreting. If this service is provided, before completing the call, the CA shall advise the caller of any user charge for the call.

VISTA understands and responds as follows.

VISTA's Relay Service has the technical capability to support Video Relay Service. However, VISTA cannot at this time provide pricing information as part of this proposal. The very nature of Video Relay involves a number of factors that must be discussed prior to pricing (i.e. location of centers, number of VRI sites in the State, hours of operation, number of VRI users, etc). Each of these factors has a very material affect on operational considerations, facilities and costs attached to it. Should FSPC decide it is interested in pursuing Video Relay for the State of Florida, VISTA will be happy to discuss these factors and develop a proposal for Florida Video Relay Service.

42.e. Speech to Speech Service

The provider will not be required to provide speech to speech service unless required for certification by the FCC. No additional evaluation points will be awarded to a bidder based on a proposal to provide speech to speech service. The proposed charge for this service should be separately stated in the price proposal.

The bidder should explain how it will provide and bill relay service users with speech to speech service. If this service is provided, before completing the call, the CA shall advise the caller of any user charge amount for the call.

VISTA understands and responds as follows.

Speech to Speech Relay

VISTA's Florida Relay Service will be capable of supporting this separately priced Speech-to-Speech Relay feature.

VISTA's Speech-to-Speech service will meet all of the minimum requirements of the basic relay service provided for in this RFP, except where Speech-to-Speech specific requirements supercede basic relay service. VISTA will provide a separate 800 number for Speech-to-Speech relay (which contains no zeros, threes or sixes in the number) and will publicize that number through FRTI, in VISTA outreach materials and on the Florida Relay website.

Special Speech-to-Speech customer profiles will be developed to meet the individual needs of the consumer, including frequently dialed numbers, with Speech to Speech users being allowed to request people by name, rather than having to voice the parties telephone number.

Florida Relay will support an open line with no switching necessary so that the STS CA, the caller with a speech disability and the other party can all hear each other at all times. All operator services supplied by Florida Relay will be available to Speech to Speech users including optional billing plans such as collect calls and third party billing.

VISTA Speech-to-Speech CAs, before consideration for the STS training program, will have their hearing tested by an Audiologist. VISTA understands that STS CAs must have sufficient hearing acuity to isolate and identify a variety of speech patterns and word pronunciations. VISTA will test Speech-to-Speech CA's hearing every six months to ensure the CA's continued ability to efficiently handle STS calls.

VISTA's Speech-to-Speech CAs will receive all of the training that Florida Relay CAs receive, plus intensive additional training required to adequately understand and process the Speech disabled person's calls.

Speech-to-Speech CAs will continue to handle the STS relay call, without replacement, except for cases of CA illness or natural disaster. It is understood that consistency is important for the Speech-to-Speech user to feel confident that their call is being handled correctly.

Florida Relay Speech to Speech training will include, but not be limited to, the following topics:

- History and background of Speech-to-Speech
- Video presentations from noted Speech Pathologists and Audiologists
- Speech to Speech specific terminology
- Confidentiality
- Listening skills
- Persons with Speech Disabilities
- Cultural sensitivity training
- STS call processing procedures
- Caller Requests and Profiles
- Techniques for Understanding and Re-voicing
- Customer Service and Problem Resolution
- STS Directory Assistance

VISTA will work closely with Speech to Speech Relay users, FSPC and FTRI to develop and refine its STS training program. All traffic reports required under this RFP will be provided separately for the Speech-to-Speech program. A separate price proposal for the Florida Speech-to-Speech Relay option is contained with the Price Proposal of this document.

42.f. Other Optional Features Not Included in Basic Relay

Any additional features not described elsewhere in the RFP which a bidder would like to propose should be fully described.

No additional evaluation points will be awarded to a bidder based on a proposal to provide these unsolicited features. The proposed charge for any unsolicited features offered under this section should be separately stated in the price proposal. After a bidder is selected to be the provider, the FPSC may contract for not only basic relay service but also for other optional features.

VISTA has described the additional features it will offer, at no additional cost to the Florida Relay in Section B.41 of this proposal. Additionally, VISTA is capable of offering Florida Relay Speech-to-Speech service as described above and has provided separate pricing for Speech-to-Speech Relay. Additionally, the VISTA relay system is capable of supporting Video Relay.

VISTA is committed to participating in the on-going investigation of new Relay technology. As additional features become feasible for Relay application VISTA will be happy to discuss these features with FSPC.

43. Performance Bond

The Provider will be required to furnish an acceptable performance bond, certified or cashiers check or bank money order equal to the estimated total first year price of the contract. The bond shall be in effect for the entire duration of the contract and provided to the FPSC upon execution of the contract.

To be acceptable to the FPSC as surety for performance bonds, a Surety Company shall comply with the following provisions:

- A. The Surety Company shall be admitted to do business in the State of Florida.*
- B. The Surety Company shall have been in business and have a record of successful continuous operations for at least five (5) years.*
- C. The Surety Company shall have minimum Best's Policy Holder Rating of A and Required Financial Rating of VIII from Best's Key Rating Guide.*
- D. All bonds shall be signed by a Florida Licensed Resident Agent who holds a current Power of Attorney from the Surety Company issuing the bond.*

VISTA understands and will comply.

44. Submission of Monthly Invoice

By the 14th calendar day of the month (or the subsequent business day if the 14th falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday), the provider shall submit a detailed invoice (showing billable minutes and rates) to the Administrator [defined in s.427.703(1)] at the contracted price for the previous month's activity. The accounting period used to prepare monthly invoices shall be the calendar month. Payment shall not exceed the prices contained in the contract. The invoice and supporting documentation shall be prepared in such a way as to allow the Administrator or the FPSC to audit the invoice. A copy of the monthly invoice shall be submitted to the contract manager at the same time it is submitted to the Administrator.

VISTA understands and will comply.

45. Travel

The Provider will not be entitled to a separate payment from the FPSC or the Administrator for any travel expense which occurs as a result of this contract.

VISTA understands and will comply.

46. Reporting Requirements

The provider shall provide to the Commission's Division of Communications and the Administrator the following written reports by the 25th calendar day of each month reporting data for the previous month. (More frequent or more detailed reports shall also be provided upon request.)

- a. Total daily and monthly
 - i. number of incoming calls (separately stating whether incoming calls originate as Baudot, ASCII or voice calls and also separately stating whether each type of call is English,**

Spanish or other foreign language calls .) The number of incoming calls which are general assistance calls shall be footnoted on the report.

ii. *number of incoming call minutes associated with each of the categories of incoming calls in a.i. above*

iii. *number of outgoing calls (provide two breakdowns of this total: one separately stating completed calls and incomplete calls, and one separately stating whether calls terminate as Baudot, ASCII or voice calls)*

iv. *number and percentage of incoming Florida calls received at each relay center handling Florida calls (Total should equal the number of incoming calls in item a.i. above.)*

b. *Average daily and monthly blockage rate.*

c. *Range of answer times for the month and daily and monthly number and percent of incoming calls answered within 10 seconds.*

d. *Total daily and monthly number of outgoing calls (including both completed and incomplete) of the following lengths:*

- *0 - 10 minutes*
- *>10 - 20 minutes*
- *>20 - 30 minutes*
- *>30 - 40 minutes*
- *>40 - 50 minutes*
- *>50 - 60 minutes*
- *>60+ minutes*

Total of d. should equal total of a.iii.

e. *On a daily basis for the month, number of outgoing calls and average length of calls by hour of day. (Total should equal total of a.iii.)*

f. *Number of outgoing local, intraLATA toll, intrastate interLATA, interstate and international calls for the month. (Total should equal total of a.iii.)*

g. *Number of outgoing calls and average length of completed outgoing calls originated by TDD users and voice users (identified separately). (Total number of calls should equal total in a.iii.)*

h. *The provider shall provide monthly summary reports to the FPSC and the Administrator regarding number of complaints received categorized by topic areas.*

i. *The provider shall report monthly to the FPSC and the Administrator the results of any user evaluations conducted.*

j. *The provider shall report monthly on new subcontractors being used to assist in providing relay service and shall identify the scope of their role in the process and the relationship of the subcontractor to the provider.*

k. *By March 1, the provider shall provide to the Administrator and the contract manager forecasted relay usage figures and costs to the Commission for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).*

The provider shall include information on its capability and willingness to provide ad hoc reports including new information in the bidder's database or new formats for existing information.

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA is able to tailor the reports prepared for the Administrator, Contract Manager and FPSC to meet their requirements for timely, meaningful information and to better manage and oversee the relay program. VISTA would be pleased to discuss any special reporting requirements or to modify reporting formats to best achieve those goals. All data originates and is processed in electronic format and VISTA can reformat the data in many ways. The Administrator, Contract Manager or FPSC may request reports in hardcopy and/or electronic form.

47. Liquidated Damages for Failure to Initiate Services on Time or to Provide Contracted Services for the Life of the Contract.

Implementation of the Florida Relay Service in a timely matter is essential. Failure by the Provider to implement the service by June 1, 2000 shall be considered a significant and material breach of the Provider's commitment. For every day the service is delayed, the Provider shall pay to the Administrator, for deposit in its operating fund, the sum of \$25,000 per day.

Liquidated damages shall accrue in amounts up to the following amounts per day of violation:

a. For failure to meet, blockage rate or transmission level requirement - \$5,000

b. For failure to meet complaint resolution requirement - \$1,000

c. For failure to provide reports - \$500

d. For failure to provide contracted services for the life of the contract, the FPSC reserves the right to require the payment by the Provider, of liquidated damages in an amount commensurate with the duration and extent of the system deficiencies.

Liquidated damages shall accrue in amounts up to \$25,000 per month for failure to meet answer time requirements.

Any liquidated damages may be paid by means of the Administrator deducting the amount of the liquidated damage from a monthly payment to the provider. Such action shall only occur upon order of the FPSC.

VISTA understands and will comply.

48. Transfer to New Provider

When relay service is transferred to a new provider, the provider shall make every effort to ensure that service is transferred to the new provider so that relay users do not experience an interruption in service. The relay service and consumer service 800 or other telephone numbers shall be made available to the new provider, with the new provider paying any costs associated with transferring the numbers to the new provider's use.

VISTA understands and will comply.

49. Insurance Coverage

The provider shall provide insurance coverage for itself and all of its employees used in connection with performance of services under this Agreement and ensure that all subcontractors shall be similarly covered. Such policies shall be issued by a financially sound carrier and/or carriers. Such insurance coverage shall hold the FPSC harmless from all claims of bodily injury, including death, and property damage, including loss of use, by provider, its employees, agents or subcontractors and their

employees. This insurance will include Worker's Compensation as required by law and comprehensive general liability and bodily injury insurance in amounts that are commercially reasonable under the given circumstances.

VISTA understands and will comply.

C. THE TECHNICAL BID PROPOSAL FORMAT

1. Format

- *The bidder's proposal should be organized in the same order as the items listed in the checklist form in Section E. The bidder should provide information concerning each item in the checklist; however, for items rated as pass/fail, bidder may simply note that it has reviewed the item and agrees to comply with the item. For items for which points may be awarded, the bidder should explain how it will provide the service described in the RFP.*
- *Twenty (20) two-sided copies of the complete proposal should be filed.*
- *The technical proposal should be contained in a three-ring binder indicating the name of the bidder and indicating that the contents of the binder is the technical bid proposal only. (The price proposal shall be submitted in a separate sealed envelope - see Section D.)*
- *Each page of the entire proposal should be numbered at the bottom center of each page and each page should be consecutively numbered with no repetition of page numbers in the entire proposal. For example, there should only be one page 1, one page 50 and one page 500 in the entire proposal. Page numbering should only be done in Arabic numerals with no pages numbered with other characters such as 5.7, iii, 6-a, XIX, or similar numbering systems.*
- *In the top or bottom margin of each page, the name of the company should be identified.*
- *To the extent possible, all pages of the proposal should be on 8½ x 11" white paper. However, individual presentations which the bidder is unable to place on an 8½ x 11" page in a readable format may be presented on a larger page.*

VISTA understands and will comply.

VISTA has submitted twenty eight (28) two-sided copies of its Technical Proposal, eight (8) of which are submitted in black three-ring binders clearly marked as containing Proprietary Confidential business information. These eight (8) black binders are restricted for use by the evaluators only. The remaining twenty (20) white binders contain the same Technical Proposal with the exception of having Proprietary and Confidential business information blacked out, as per FPSC instructions.

2. Transmittal Letter

Of the twenty copies of the complete proposal, the transmittal letter on one should contain the original manual signature of the person submitting the proposal on behalf of the bidder. All twenty copies should also contain the signer's name and title typed. The transmittal letter shall clearly identify the complete legal name of the bidder.

Each person signing a proposal certifies that he/she is the person in the bidder's organization authorized to make the proposal. The signer shall provide his/her affiliation with the bidder, address, telephone and fax numbers. If different from the person signing the proposal, the transmittal letter shall identify the person or persons (name, title, mailing address, e-mail address, telephone and fax number) authorized to make decisions or answer questions related to the proposal and any subsequent contract.

In the transmittal letter the bidder should state that it will comply with all requirements of the RFP. If the bidder is unable to so state, it should in the transmittal letter identify the sections of the RFP with which it cannot comply and expand on that explanation in the body of its proposal.

VISTA understands and complies.

3. Public Entity Crimes Provision

Pursuant to Section 287.133, Florida Statutes, a person or affiliate who has been placed on the convicted vendor list following a conviction for a public entity crime may not submit a bid on a contract to provide any goods or services to a public entity, may not be awarded or perform work as a contractor, supplier, subcontractor, or consultant under a contract with any public entity, and may not transact business with any public entity in excess of the threshold amount provided for in Florida Statute 287.017 for Category Two (\$11,000) for a period of 36 months from the date of being placed on the convicted vendor list.

VISTA understands and complies.

4. Financial Information

To allow the FPSC to evaluate the financial responsibility of the bidding company, the following items shall be submitted with the proposal for the bidding company (and its parent company, if applicable):

1. *Audited Financial Statements (or a SEC 10K Report) for the most recent two (2) years, including at a minimum:*

- a. Statement of income and related earnings,*
- b. cash flow statement,*

c. balance sheet, and,

d. opinion concerning financial statements from an

outside CPA;

2. *Primary Banking Source letter of reference.*

VISTA understands and complies.

VISTA's financial information and bank letter of reference are presented in **Attachment 3**.

5. Experience and Customer References

For each state in which the bidder has or is providing relay service, the bidder shall indicate: (1) when the bidder began operating the system, (2) the number of outgoing calls for the most recent month, and (3) the total duration of the contract. If the bidder's relay service is available for testing by means of a number that can be dialed from within Florida, bidder should provide the telephone numbers that can be used to dial the bidder's relay service.

VISTA understands and complies.

From May 1, 1996 to April 30, 1999, VISTA was subcontractor to MCI WorldCom for the provision of relay services to the state of Massachusetts. VISTA was responsible for day-to-day operation of the relay service, employing all relay center staff with the exception of MCI WorldCom's Program Manager and assistant and Network Technicians.

VISTA presently is the vendor of relay services for the state of Massachusetts. VISTA began relay operations under a new contract on May 1, 1999 as the prime contractor.

For the month of September 1999 the Massachusetts Relay processed 102,168 outgoing calls.

The Massachusetts Relay contract duration is 4-years and will conclude April 30, 2003.

VISTA would be pleased to have the evaluators make test calls through the Massachusetts Relay. However, the Massachusetts contract restricts calls to those either originating or terminating within the state. VISTA can arrange for in-state terminating number for test purposes. The Massachusetts Relay access numbers are 800-439-0183 Voice and 800-439-2370 TTY.

The bidder shall provide the names of three customer references, including specific contact name and phone number, to whom the bidder has provided the bid service or a similar service. If no customer references are available or applicable, explain and provide three alternative references explaining the relationship of the reference to the bidder.

VISTA references follow:

Marilyn Benoit
Bell Atlantic
280 Locke Drive
Marlboro, MA 01752
508-460-4539

Kim Wobschall
MCI WorldCom
10120 Cromwell Lane
Mokena, IL 10120
708-478-8752

Nick Corona
IBM Corporation
Boulder, CO
303-448-6116

Letters of reference are included in **Attachment 4**.

6. Bid Security Deposit

A bid security deposit in the amount of \$500,000 shall be furnished to the FPSC with the original of the proposal. The bid security deposit shall be in the form of a bond, a certified or cashier's

check, or bank money order that is valid through at least February 28, 2000 and is payable to the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. The bid security deposit will be held without cashing.

If a bond is used, the bond shall be issued from a reliable surety company acceptable to the FPSC, licensed to do business in the State of Florida and shall be signed by a Florida Licensed Resident Agent. Such a bond shall be accompanied by a duly authenticated power of attorney evidencing that the person executing the bond on behalf of the Surety had the authority to do so on the date of the bond.

The unsuccessful bidders' bid security deposit shall be returned, without interest, within thirty (30) days after disqualification, withdrawal or signing of the contract. The successful bidder's bid security shall be returned, without interest, upon signing of the contract and furnishing the Performance Bond as specified herein. If the successful bidder fails to sign a contract within thirty (30) days after the Letter of Intent or fails to deliver the Performance Bond as specified herein, the bid security shall be forfeited to the Florida Telecommunications Access System Fund.

VISTA understands and complies.

Required bid bond is included and is packaged along with VISTA's Price Proposal.

7. Subcontractors

If the bidder proposes to use subcontractors, the bidder shall identify those subcontractors and indicate the scope of their role in the provision of relay service. The bidder should also indicate what experience the subcontractor has in providing the service for which it would contract with the Provider.

VISTA understands and complies.

VISTA proposes to subcontract to MCI WorldCom for telecommunications and network services. MCI WorldCom is the second largest telecommunications provider in the United States and has direct experience in providing the telecommunications and network elements required to support relay services, having itself provided relay services since 1992.

VISTA intends to subcontract other support services to deaf community organizations if it is awarded a contract for Florida Relay, specifically to provide staff and consulting support for Customer Service, ASL and Deaf Culture Training, ASL Interpreter provisioning. VISTA will inform FPSC in advance of any new subcontractors to be used to assist in providing relay service and will identify the scope of their role in the process and the relationship of the subcontractor to VISTA.

8. Check List of Proposal Content

As a part of the bidder's proposal, the transmittal letter should be followed by the evaluation check list in Section E. In the blank beside each item on the check list, the company contact person who is responsible for the proposal and any subsequent contract and who signs the transmittal letter should initial (not check) each item in the check list which is contained within the proposal. The person initialing the check list should ensure that each item in the check list is also contained in its proposal and in the same order as the item appears in the check list. The bidder should also indicate beside each item in the checklist the page number in its proposal where the item in the check list can be found.

VISTA understands and complies.

The Section E CheckList immediate follows our Transmittal Letter as required.

ATTACHMENTS

**PROPOSAL FOR PROVISION OF
FLORIDA TELECOMMUNICATIONS
RELAY SERVICE**

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1:

CA Call Processing Manual and Training Materials

(Note: This material is designated Proprietary and Confidential and is included only in the 8 Evaluator Copies of this Proposal.)

Reference: Section B.9, Page 17.

Attachment 2:

Pledge of Confidentiality and Code of Ethics

Reference: Section B.17, Page 38.

Attachment 3:

Financial Information and Bank Letter of Reference

(Note: This material is designated Proprietary and Confidential and is included only in the 8 Evaluator Copies of this Proposal.)

Reference: Section C.4, Page 88.

Attachment 4:

Customer Reference Letters

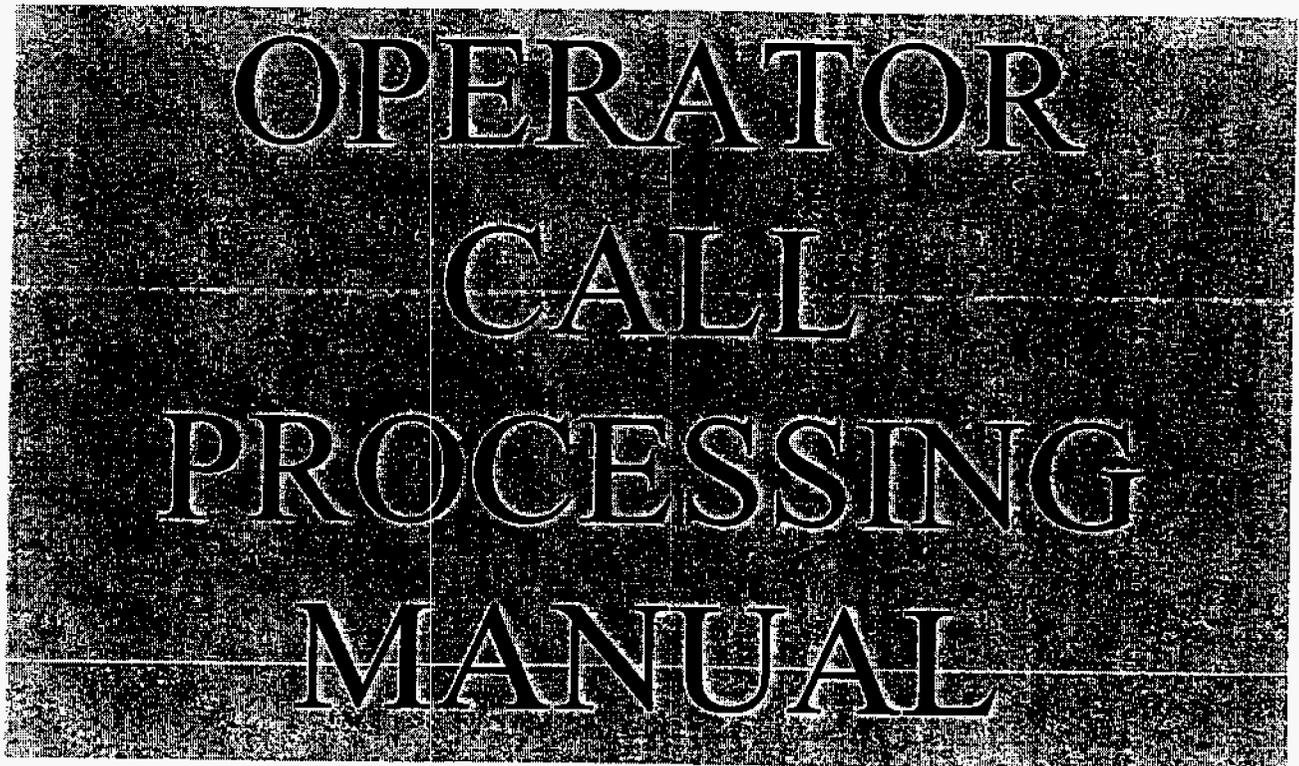
Reference: Section C.5, Page 88



MASSACHUSETTS RELAY SERVICE CENTER
A SERVICE PROVIDED BY VISTA INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~PROPRIETARY~~



VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

MASSACHUSETTS RELAY SERVICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CALL PROCESSING

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~PROPRIETARY~~

MA-TRS
489 WHITNEY AVE • Suite 100
HOLYOKE, MA 01040
Phone 413.493.1100 • Fax 413.493.1190

(revised 9/9/99 bs)

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I. RELAY SERVICE

A. THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

The Massachusetts Relay Service and Vista I.T., Inc. aspires to build, manage and operate the best relay center in the United States. Vista, I.T. provides the human element expertise of the relay process by training its personnel in the various aspects of relay and interaction with the various community groups it serves. [REDACTED]

Whether one is a Relay Customer, or a Vista employee, your input, ideas, comments and suggestions are valued by the Relay Center. The Relay Center personnel care about the quality of the relay process. Feedback from everyone involved is a crucial element of quality assurance. We want to deliver the best service that we can to our consumers. Relay Center administrative personnel will be actively involved in seeking consumer input wherever possible.

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Massachusetts Relay Service
Policies and Procedures

II. GENERAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE POLICIES

~~PROPRIETARY~~

A. TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE GOALS/PURPOSES

The goals of the Telecommunications Relay Service are:

- ◆ To provide functionally equivalent telecommunications access for all citizens of Massachusetts.
- ◆ To proactively engage relay users in the continued improvement of Relay.
- ◆ To provide innovative and on-going training for its employees to enable them to perform their relay functions in the most efficient and effective manner for its consumers.
- ◆ To meet or exceed Federal Communications Commission (FCC) relay certifications standards and regulations.
- ◆ To provide Relay Education and Outreach programs for all Massachusetts citizens.
- ◆ To research, develop, and implement the latest state-of-the-art technology that can be utilized by the Relay Center.

The purpose of the Telecommunications Relay Service is to meet the needs of persons who have traditionally not been able to use telecommunications in the most effective manner due to societal barriers. Deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, voice and speech disabled individuals are traditionally confronted with barriers imposed by the audiological nature of telephone systems and physical limitations of telecommunication devices as well as attitudes of society at large. Generally they rely on adaptive amplifiers to communicate by telephone. When a deaf person traditionally makes a call by telephone with a TTY, the other end must have a reciprocal device to enable them to communicate. Despite advances in handset amplifier technology, hard of hearing persons may not have TTYs to enable deaf persons to communicate with them by telephone. The Telecommunications Relay Service provides functions as a go-between for its users. The Relay Service is the voice for one side of the call and the TTY for the other.

B. RELAY OPERATOR CALL PROCESSING MANUAL

Vista I.T. has developed this Call Processing Manual for Operators. This manual will be reviewed with the necessary state review boards. Policies and Procedures will be constantly updated as needed.

This manual will establish the procedures to be carried out by Operators in the performance of their duties in providing Telecommunications Relay Services. It will also establish Vista I.T. policy regarding many situations likely to be encountered by Operators, either routinely, or at some point in the delivery of service to Customers. Operators will then be able to clarify specific procedures for any Customer upon request or as otherwise appropriate.

Massachusetts Relay Service
Policies and Procedures

C. CONFIDENTIALITY

By far, the most important single Relay Service issue is confidentiality. Confidentiality is the critical foundation of any good relay service. Hearing persons can use the telephone for virtually any purpose they wish. Relay users must go through a third party, such as a Operator, to make the same calls. Relay users often lack trust that the Operator will not talk to other persons about their private conversations or act on information received through the Relay Center.

This Telecommunications Relay Service actively demands confidentiality both internally and externally through training, supervision, and the security of the facility at all times. Specific policies on Confidentiality and Ethics (Section IV.) establish guidelines for compliance and consequences for any breach.

D. OPERATOR ROLE/FUNCTION

The Operator's role is to function as a "human telephone wire." As such, the Operator is not allowed to interject personal opinions or participate in the telephone conversation. The Operator facilitates communication for both the voice caller and the TTY user.

E. RELAY CENTER LIMITATIONS

[REDACTED]

The Relay Center will not process certain types of pay phone calls in which additional coins may be required to be deposited to complete the call. The Relay Center has no ability to determine the proper coinage amounts to be charged, as pay phones are usually under direct control of another telephone company.

No relay calls will be processed that will result in a direct charge to the Relay Center.

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Massachusetts Relay Service
Policies and Procedures

III. CALL PROCESSING PROCEDURES

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A. OPERATOR NUMBER/IDENTIFICATION

Operators will identify themselves with a number followed by either the letter "M" or "F" to indicate gender (e.g., 5XXXXF).

B. CALLER READINESS

Callers are expected to have phone numbers ready before calling through the Relay Center. The Massachusetts Relay Service has an obligation to provide the state of Massachusetts with an effective, high quality relay at the lowest cost. If the Operator spends an excessive amount of time (over one minute) waiting for the caller to provide dialing information for their call, the Operator will then courteously inform the caller (OPR HERE NUMBER TO DIAL PLS QQ)GA. If the Operator receives no response after fifteen seconds they may type (OPR HERE ONLY PERMITTED TO HOLD ONE MINUTE NUMBER TO DIAL PLS QQ)GA. If the Operator still receives no response, s/he will then request a Supervisor for assistance.

Operators are expected to use their discretion in this area as the caller might be dual sensory impaired, physically disabled, a senior citizen with motor difficulties or may be slow in responding for a variety of legitimate reasons. Callers who have requested a "slow type/long hold" profile are not held to the one minute limit (see Recognition of Caller Profiles, pg. 9). Operators are taught as part of their training to be aware of persons with various disabilities and their respective relaying needs.

Caller readiness procedures are functionally equivalent to announcements or busy tones used by telephone companies to prevent customers from unnecessarily tying up dial tone availability.

C. EXPLAINING CALL PROCESSING PROCEDURES (to new users)

Unless instructed by the caller not to explain the service, the Operator will explain the relay process to new users only as necessary. When the Operator places the call and reaches a terminator, s/he will ask, "Do you know how to use Relay?" If the response is, "No", then the Operator will provide our quick, standard Explanation of Service, keep the caller involved by typing in, "(EXPLAINING RELAY)", and proceed with the call.

Operators shall inquire of all Voice originating callers "Do you know how to use Relay?" and proceed with appropriate script as necessary.

This is the standard way good relay services provide smoother call processing. At all times, however, the caller is STILL in full control of the call. Should a caller instruct the Operator not to explain the service, s/he will do as instructed and NOT explain the service.

C. EXPLAINING CALL PROCESSING PROCEDURES (continued)

The Operator will not inform the telephone user that the TTY user is deaf or hearing, speech or otherwise disabled unless the caller asks the Operator to do so. The Operator will always strictly follow our standard, prepared script for "Explanation of Service" and "Explanation of Telecommunications Device for the Deaf".

D. CALL STATUS INFORMATION

The Operator will keep the caller informed on the status of the call, such as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected or holding. Examples of call status information are: (dialing), (busy), (holding), (ring 1), (ans mach), etc. This information should be consistently relayed unless the TTY user specifically instructs the Operator not to do so.

E. CALLS TO/MESSAGES FOR ANSWERING MACHINES

The Operator will leave messages on answering machines or other voice processing systems using the following steps.

1. The Operator will relay any message received from the called party's machine/system, and will ask the customer if s/he wishes to leave a message.
2. If the caller transmits a message, the Operator will attempt to leave the message, and advise the caller if the machine/system timed-out before completing the message. At the caller's request, the Operator will make additional calls at no cost (applicable in the case of calls billable to the caller, i.e., long distance) to transmit the message. In the case of non-billable calls (e.g., flat-rate local service) the Operator will make as many repeat calls as necessary to complete the message, and will start the Relay Timer each time the machine answers.
3. If a live person picks up the phone when the Operator calls back to leave the message, the Relay Timer should be started.

The Operator will retrieve messages from voice processing systems and relay a TTY message to a voice user or a voice message to a TTY user verbatim unless instructed to do otherwise by the TTY user. Since access codes are confidential in nature, the Operator will not keep any record of system access codes received from the user. If the Operator reaches an answering machine when making a collect call, the Operator will listen for acceptance of charges and will inform the customer accordingly, i.e. (ANS MACH) (WILL ACCEPT UR CALL) (BEEP) GA or (WONT ACCEPT) (HUNG UP) GA.

F. BUSY SIGNALS AND REDIALS

When a line is busy, the Operator will redial as many times as the Customer asks. No restrictions can be imposed on the number of busy attempts. Unless specifically instructed otherwise, after reaching a busy signal, [REDACTED] and will inform the customer accordingly, i.e., (BUSY) (REDIALING). If a busy signal is reached on the third attempt, the Operator will send the macro (BUSY)GA and wait for instructions.

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G. NUMBER OF CALLS OR LENGTH OF CALLS NOT RESTRICTED

No restrictions will be placed on the length or number of calls placed by the Customer through the Relay Center.

H. CALL TERMINATION

The Operator will stay on the line until both parties have terminated the call.

When the caller has already typed "SK" (indicating stop-keying) directly to the Operator, the Operator will not offer another call.

The Operator may never Orig. Disconnect without a Supervisor's approval.

I. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING GARBLING

If a TTY transmission is garbled or unintelligible, the Operator will inform the TTY user. If the problem is not easily corrected the Operator will follow procedures for correcting garble and/or see a Supervisor for assistance.

Hitting the space bar several times and/or typing "ABC123" will sometimes clear the problem.

J. OPERATOR CLARIFICATION INSTRUCTIONS OF VOICE AND SPEECH QUALITY

The Operator may request that the speaking party slow down or stop speaking when appropriate to ensure that good communication occurs between parties involved in the call. The Operator may also request that proper nouns be spelled if s/he is unclear on the correct spelling. All content spoken by the caller must be relayed verbatim.

K. USAGE OF TTY ABBREVIATIONS

Operators are trained in the use of TTY abbreviations (e.g., U, PLM, HLD) and may use them during the course of relaying a conversation. There may be regional or personal variations in use of abbreviations. Some TTY users do not use them at all. Operators will not initiate abbreviated communications. When the TTY caller uses common abbreviations, then it is appropriate for the Operator to mirror the user's abbreviations.

L. NAME OF CALLING PARTY OR CALLED PARTY

Callers will not be required to give their names or the name of the party they are calling, unless a name is needed for billing purposes.

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M. VOICE CARRY-OVER/HEARING CARRY-OVER OPTION

All callers will have the option of telling the Operator what aspects of the call s/he will handle.

A deaf or hard of hearing caller may opt to use the voice carry-over feature which allows them to speak directly to a called party. The Operator will type the called party's responses to the caller.

A speech-disabled caller may opt to use the hearing carry-over feature, which allows them to hear the called party's voice. The Operator voices the TTY conversation to the called party.

N. MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE CALL

When the call is first answered, and at all times during the conversation, the Operator will type to the TTY user or voice to the non-TTY user verbatim what is said or typed, unless translation is requested. The Operator will always convey the full content and intent of the communication. When a customer specifically requests translation, the Operator will readily comply by providing grammatical correction for TTY user's ASL-influenced English.

O. COMMENTS TOWARDS AND FROM THE OPERATOR

Questions, directions and requests for clarification directed by either party to the Operator need to be relayed to either party. If a caller persists in speaking to the Operator, the Operator will remind them to speak directly to the other party, not the Operator.

P. OPERATOR TYPING ERRORS

There are two ways to correct an error:

- 1) Use the backspace key one time (sends "XXX").
- 2) By typing "xx" (a common TTY practice for error correction), space, and then type the word correctly.

Q. OPERATOR RETENTION BY A USER

If a Customer requests that the same Operator relay the entire conversation, the Operator will comply whenever possible. If, however, it is not possible, both callers must be informed.

R. VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

The Operator will verify the correct spelling of proper nouns, numbers, addresses, drug prescriptions, medical terms, technical terms and any unfamiliar terms that are spoken and are to be relayed. Any time the Operator is verifying this information, the TTY user will be informed in parentheses. If verifying spelling, the Operator will send, (Smith S M I T H). If verifying long or complicated series of numbers the Operator will type, "(checking number)".

S. GENDER/LANGUAGE SELECTION OPTION

If a caller requests that an Operator be of a specific gender or have specific language capability (e.g., Spanish), the Relay Center will comply whenever possible.

T. OPERATOR NON-INTERFERENCE/NON-INVOLVEMENT

The Operator is the "voice" of the TTY user and the "keyboard" of the voice user. In keeping with Relay Ethics, the Operator will not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions or additional information into any relay call. This also means that the Operator will not make any value judgment on the profanity, obscenity or legality of any messages. Furthermore, the Operator will not hold personal conversations with anyone using the system. (See Section IV. C).

U. VOICING AND BACKGROUND NOISES

When speaking for the TTY user, the Operator will adopt a conversational tone of voice appropriate to the type of call being made in order to convey the intent and mood of the message. The Operator will also type identifiable voice tone indicators in parentheses (e.g., yelling, crying). Any identifiable background noises will also be relayed in the same manner to the TTY user in parentheses (e.g., baby crying, dog barking, children talking). If, however, a customer's profile indicates ALL VOICE TONES and/or ALL BACKGROUND SOUNDS, the Operator will then provide all such indicators, whether they impact the conversation or not.

V. NEW PARTY ON THE LINE

The Operator will indicate the presence of another person on the line, if known, announce Relay to the new party, and explain the service, if necessary. It is the responsibility of the caller to tell the Operator how to proceed with the call.

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W. OPERATOR CHANGEOVERS

Changeovers of Operators during calls should be avoided. Inevitably, however, there will be instances that require Operator changeovers, such as shift changes and lunch breaks. Changeovers should be made as quickly and smoothly as possible to cause the least inconvenience to the callers. A new Operator taking over a call from another will come behind the Operator who is leaving and spend a few moments reading the current dialogue on the terminal to determine the spirit, gender, language and context of the conversation. When the Voice user has finished a response, instead of "GA", the Operator who is being replaced will type to the TTY user (OPR CHANGEOVER PLS HD) and inform the Voice user: "Please hold for Operator changeover". When prepared, the new Operator will take over, informing both parties on the call that s/he is the new Operator by giving his/her identification number and proceeding with the call.

X. SHIFT SUPERVISOR'S ASSISTANCE

Shift Supervisors are scheduled for each shift at all times. Operators may request assistance at any time.

Y. RECOGNITION OF CUSTOMER PROFILES

Operators will recognize customer profiles and process calls accordingly.

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IV. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS

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A. CALL DOCUMENT RESTRICTIONS

All calls will be totally confidential and no written or electronic script will be kept beyond the duration of the call. Operators and Supervisory personnel will not reveal information about the content of any call and, except for the minimum necessary for billing, trouble resolution, complaint processing, employee counseling, statistical reporting or training purposes, will not record any information about a call.

B. NON-DISCLOSURE/NON-ACTION STIPULATION

When training new Operators by the method of sharing past experience, Trainers will not reveal any of the following information:

1. names of the parties to the call;
2. originating or terminating points of specific calls, and;
3. specifics of the information conveyed.

Operators will not discuss (even among themselves or their Supervisors) any names or specifics of any relay call, except as necessary in instances of resolving complaints, bill processing, or emergencies. Operators may discuss a general situation with which they need assistance with a Supervisor or a Trainer in order to clarify how to process a particular type of relay call. Operators are trained to ask questions about procedures without revealing names or specific information that will identify the caller or interfere with confidentiality.

Watching or listening to actual calls by anyone other than the Operator is prohibited except for training or quality assurance purposes.

The Operator will not act on any information contained in a relay conversation, or be concerned with a caller's business outside the relay process.

C. OPERATOR NEUTRALITY REQUIREMENT

The Operator **WILL NEVER** offer advice, information, opinions, or suggestions. They will remain neutral on all subjects and conversations. They will only transmit communications. The Relay user is responsible to judge the content of the conversations and act accordingly. This is a serious ethical responsibility in the relay business. The Center's policies hold Operators and all other staff responsible to remain totally uninvolved in the conversation beyond communications required to process a call. Operators who offer advice, information, opinions, or suggestions are subject to immediate disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.

D. BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND/OR ETHICS/TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Any Operator, Supervisor or Administrative personnel who, after investigation, is found to have violated the confidentiality rules or committed a serious breach of ethics will be severely disciplined or terminated. Confidentiality and Relay Ethics are constantly stressed and emphasized to all Operators, Supervisors, and Administrative personnel in initial training and through on-going awareness programs. Under no circumstances will a breach be tolerated. An employee terminated for breach of confidentiality or ethics will not be allowed to work at the Relay Center again.

E. PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS DOCUMENT

Operators, Supervisory and Administrative personnel will be required to sign a Pledge of Confidentiality and Ethics promising not to disclose the identity of any callers or act on any information contained in a relay conversation, and promising not to offer advice, information, opinions or suggestions. This pledge will be re-signed annually.

F. OPERATOR CODE NUMBER/IDENTIFICATION

Each Operator is assigned a code number to assure anonymity. The Operator number is also used to identify an individual in the event a caller wants to praise their work or file a complaint. The Operator must ensure that his/her anonymity is protected by not revealing his/her Operator number to persons outside of the Relay Center, or fellow Operators.

G. COPIES OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS POLICY

A copy of the Confidentiality and Ethics Policy will be provided to any customer upon request and at no cost.

H. EXCEPTIONS

Threats, harassment, or prank calls directed toward an individual Operator or the Relay Center, when not made in connection with a relay call, may be acted on as deemed necessary by Management. Shift Supervisors will determine appropriate action to take on such calls, consulting other Managers if necessary.

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V. EMERGENCY CALLS

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A. 911/EMERGENCY NUMBER TTY REFERRED

Callers are urged to call 911 or emergency numbers to directly access their local public safety office as these offices are usually TTY accessible. However, if a 911 call is received by the Relay Center, the Operator will be able to dial into the local public safety office based on the phone number (Automatic Number Identification or ANI) and other necessary information received from the caller. The Operator will call, the Shift Supervisor who will observe and, if necessary, take over the call to ensure that the call is processed quickly and accurately.

The Operators have a pop-up window available to select and automatically speed-dial the appropriate, local emergency number based on the originating phone number and other information received from the caller. The Operator will relay the conversation between the caller and the emergency service provider.

The Operators are not trained Emergency/911 Operators and must not administer first aid advice or counsel, or offer other information to the caller in the event of an emergency. The Operator's role is strictly to relay the call between the emergency service provider and the caller.

Emergency/911 calls will be given the utmost attention. The Operator will not disconnect the call until the emergency is resolved or the emergency service provider and the caller disconnect. The Operator must ask the caller for his/her name, address, city, state and phone number if no ANI was received.

The procedure for handling Massachusetts 911/Emergency Calls made to the relay center is:

1. The Operator will hit the EMERGENCY key. When s/he hits the key, several things will happen simultaneously.
2. Before dialing the number, the Operator will verify the originating town information.
3. A pop-up window with the possible emergency numbers for the originator's calling area will appear. Information in the window is customized. Emergency numbers directly related to the originating number are listed.
4. Supervisor(s) will arrive to assist Operators.
5. The Operator will move the cursor to a specific number and press ENTER.
6. The number will be automatically dialed.

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B. CALL PROCESSING SPEED/EFFICIENCY EXPECTATIONS

Operators and the Shift Supervisor on duty will work to handle Emergency/911 calls in the most expeditious manner possible. The pop-up and speed-dial information on 911/Emergency service centers helps speed up and accurately place the call to the appropriate 911/Emergency Service Center. Once critical information is received from the caller, the appropriate 911/Emergency Service Center can be determined and contacted immediately.

C. AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS (reference usage)

VISTA will maintain a comprehensive database of Massachusetts NPA-NXX locations and their associated emergency services. These services (fire department, police, ambulance, bomb threat and poison control) may be reached by the Operators based on the caller's NPA-NXX (calling number).

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VI. COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

A. ON-LINE RESOLUTION RESPONSIBILITIES

When a caller registers a complaint or concern with the on-line Operator, the Operator will refer the caller to Customer Service. However, the caller has the right to request intervention by the Shift Supervisor while still on-line. If the complaint is still not resolved, the Shift Supervisor will then refer the caller to a Customer Service Representative. The complaint or concern is logged into the Customer Service Tracking System and investigated, if necessary.

B. ROLE OF THE SHIFT SUPERVISOR

The Shift Supervisor will intervene and investigate the caller's complaint or concern. The Shift Supervisor will take over a call from the Operator, when necessary and attempt to resolve the complaint or concern. If the Shift Supervisor is unable to resolve the situation, s/he will refer the caller to the Customer Service Department. The Shift Supervisor will document his/her findings as part of the problem and report to the Customer Service Manager.

C. ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

Operators do not act as Customer Service Representatives. Vista provides Massachusetts Relay Customer Service in the Holyoke center utilizing specially trained Customer Service Representatives and Operators to assist callers. The Customer Service Representative obtains and documents pertinent information received from persons needing relay assistance, information, or wishing to relate a compliment or complaint. The complaint or concern is logged in the Customer Service Tracking System. The Customer Service Representative answers calls to the Customer Service line, responds to Customer Service requests for information and assistance with Relay Service problems, assigns a priority level to the complaint or concern, and informs the caller when an update can be expected.

The complaint or concern is routed through appropriate Relay Center personnel and investigated. The Customer Service Representative updates status information via the Customer Service Tracking System.

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VII. INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

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A. DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

When a request is made from a TTY consumer to place a Directory Assistance call, the Operator will dial (NPA) 555-1212. If name and city was provided by the consumer, the Operator may voice this information to the automated system. The Operator would then type the number to the TTY user. If a Directory Assistance operator must get involved in the call for any reason (e.g., no listing), the call would then be handled as a normal relay call.

[REDACTED]

B. REFERRAL/REQUESTS FOR RELAY SERVICE INFORMATION

Callers to the service with questions or complaints, or who require information, will be referred to the toll-free Customer Service numbers: 1-800-720-3480 (TTY) and 1-800-720-3479 (Voice). Vista has developed a Massachusetts Customer Service Desk. Voice and TTY callers requesting to speak with employees should be referred to a Supervisor for an answer. Vista also has a qualified Outreach Department. The Outreach Manager directly supervises the Customer Service Department, and is responsible to see that all questions or concerns are handled quickly and efficiently.

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VIII. SERVICE STANDARDS

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A. OPERATOR TRAINING

Operators receive intensive initial training and on-going training. An Operator will not be allowed to handle live calls until s/he has completed initial training. The Operator Trainees will be observed and critiqued by Training staff.

During Operator training:

1. The Policy and Procedures Manual of the Relay Center is reviewed and discussed.
2. Confidentiality and rules of ethics are emphatically taught and discussed. The importance and the difficulty of abiding by these rules are discussed and trainees are tested on their understanding.
3. Policies and Procedures directly pertinent to the Operators are covered in detail. This training will include "what if" situations based on actual relay circumstances that have happened, as well as on theoretical situations.
4. Relay is a multi-cultural activity as Operators are constantly serving persons from all walks of life. Training covers the different classes or groups of relay users that most likely will use the Relay Center.
5. Deaf Culture, American Sign Language and ASL-influenced written English are emphasized. Significant numbers of the calls coming through the Relay Center will be coming from culturally Deaf people. Operators will be trained in Deaf Culture - its history and current issues. American Sign Language is a visual language that does not have a written counterpart. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people write English in a great variety of ways - from perfect standard English to written English presented in ASL structure. How deaf individuals may use English in relay is an important component of our training. In-house American Sign Language classes will be offered on a regular basis, and ASL grammatical correction classes will be included in the initial Operator training phase.

B. OPERATOR QUALITY: ASSURANCE/SUPERVISION

Quality assurance in relay begins with training. Giving Operators the tools and information they need to be effective and adaptive at their jobs is crucial to quality control.

Complaint resolution processes also help determine if an Operator is not meeting quality assurance expectations. The Relay Center relies on, and expects, input from the community it serves regarding the quality of the Relay Service.

Training and Supervisory staff will directly observe Operators' performance for the purpose of quality assurance reviews.

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C. SYSTEM DESIGN STANDARDS

1. The Relay Service is accessible 24 hours, 7 days per week - including holidays. The Relay Center facilities and staff will operate year round.
2. The system provides for maximum accessibility and cost effectiveness. Vista I.T. will train, manage and sufficiently staff the Relay Center to meet actual and projected call volume needs and expectations of consumers to assure that it meets contractual specifications and FCC requirements. [REDACTED]
3. Operator equipment will be able to interface with or receive data from a wide variety of standard telecommunications equipment. The Relay Center equipment is capable of receiving and transmitting in both Baudot and ASCII codes.

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IX. ACCESS

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A. RELAY CENTER ACCESS NUMBER

There are two (2) domestic toll-free numbers that enable caller access into the Relay Center, as well as one (1) international access number and one (1) 900 access number:

For Voice callers in Massachusetts:
1-800-439-0183

For TTY callers in Massachusetts:
1-800-439-2370

For TTY access from outside the U.S.:

For TTY 900-Access in Massachusetts:
1-900-263-7955

B. CALL PROCESSING LIMITATIONS

Certain types of calls cannot be handled because of contractual limitations or because they may not be physically or humanly possible to handle.

[REDACTED]

The Relay Center will not process certain types of pay phone calls in which additional coins may be required to be deposited to complete the call. The Relay Center has no ability to determine proper coinage amounts to be charged as pay phones are usually under direct control of another telephone company.

No relay calls will be processed that will result in a direct charge to the Relay Center.

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X. BILLING

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A. LOCAL CALLS (non-toll, direct-bill equivalent)

Callers will not be charged for local calls, even though the call may be long-distance to the Relay Center. For example, John Doe in Boston orders a pizza from a local restaurant using the Relay Center in Holyoke. Even though the call was long distance to and from Holyoke through the Relay Center, John Doe will not be charged for the long distance cost to use the Relay Center. If John Doe were a hearing person making the same call without the Relay Center, it would have been a local call.

B. OUT-OF-STATE CALLS

Callers can elect to make Interstate and International calls through the Relay Center as long as the call originates or terminates in the service state. ~~Interstate and international calls are billed at the same rate as local calls. The cost of the call is based on the distance of the call and the time of day. The cost of the call is based on the distance of the call and the time of day.~~

C. COLLECT, CREDIT CARD, AND THIRD-PARTY BILLING

Callers can opt to place collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms and pay phones (the exception being where the caller has to deposit additional coins for toll calls), credit card calls, long distance carrier services, local exchange carrier (LEC) calls, and calls charged to a third party.

D. WHEN TOLL CALLS START

Timing for toll calls begins when the line is answered, unless the Operator is redialing to leave a message on an answering machine.

XI. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

It is the policy of Vista I.T. to provide Equal Opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment in accordance with all applicable Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action laws, directives and regulations of Federal, State and Local governing bodies or agencies thereof. At this Telecommunications Relay Service Center, located in Holyoke, Massachusetts, employment with Vista I.T. is at will.

Vista I.T. will not discriminate against, or harass, any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin or ancestry, disability, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual or affectionate orientation or identity.

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XII. PUBLICITY POLICY

The users of the Relay Center may call or write to offer suggestions or comments. Information pamphlets and brochures are written in a manner which is understandable by readers of targeted populations. The Relay Center is committed to ensuring quality relay services that effectively meet the needs of Deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, hearing and speech disabled communities. Consumer input is an indispensable tool and is fundamental to the successful provision of high quality relay services.

Relay Center personnel will not provide interviews or general information to the media or external parties. All Public Relation Functions of the Center are to be handled through Vista I.T.'s Outreach and Quality Assurance Department.

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XIII. OBSCENITY OR VERBAL ABUSE DIRECTED TOWARD THE OPERATOR

The level of training received by Relay Operators, both in the handling of calls and in Deaf awareness, will minimize instances where conflict may arise between the Operator and the Deaf, hard of hearing, voice or speech disabled individual.

When a conflict negatively impacting the conversation occurs, or if obscenities or verbal abuse are directed at the Operator, the call may be transferred to the Shift Supervisor. During training, Operators learn that they are not required to listen to, or look at, abuse directed toward them (usually obscenities). A Supervisor may take over the call immediately, in the event that an Operator does not wish to be exposed to such abuse or obscenities.

The Supervisor will explain to the caller that such abuse is not allowed and will determine the resolution of:

- ◆ returning the call to the original Operator,
- ◆ transferring the call to a different Operator, or
- ◆ disconnecting the call, in instances where the caller persists in obscenity or abuse.

The transferring of a call to the Shift Supervisor can be initiated by the Operator or at the request of the caller or the party being called. Shift Supervisors will be available to handle this type of call at all times.

If a conflict still exists, the caller will be referred to the Customer Service Department.

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XIV. MINIMUM OPERATOR REQUIREMENTS

The Relay Center will adequately supervise and train its employees to be courteous, considerate and efficient in their contact and dealing with its Customers and the public in general, and will make quality assurance checks from time to time to ensure that courteous and proficient service is rendered.

The Relay Center will use valid, unbiased tests for Operators on subjects including, but not limited to:

1. Basic skills in English grammar.
2. A minimum typing speed of [REDACTED] words per minute (after 90 days' employment).
3. Minimum spelling skill sufficient to spell words quickly and easily, comparable to a beginning college level conversation.
4. An understanding of the characteristics of non-standard written English and of American Sign Language (ASL), as it may be reflected in the language of TTY users.
5. Deaf Culture.
6. Confidentiality and Relay Ethics.

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Getting Started

~~PROPRIETARY~~ ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Alt-Keys

Alt-Keys	TTY Scripts	Voice Scripts
	XXX CAXXXX F/M/T GA	[STATE] relay CA/Operator XXXX Go Ahead
		Do you know how to use relay? (VCO?) (HCO?)
	SENDS NOTEPAD CONTENTS	
	(TTY CUST SVC 1-800-XXX-XXXX) GA	
	BUSY GA	The line is busy go ahead.
	(WONT ACCEPT)	They won't accept the charges.
	(BILLING PROB NEED OTHER WAY TO PAY) GA	How would you like to bill this call?
	DIALING (L/LD) XXX XXX XXXX (state specific w/ or w/o loc/ld) pls hd	Thank you, dialing xxx xxx xxxx. (pause for confirmation) please hd
	(EXPLAINING RELAY)	
	(F)	
	(GARBLE PLS REPEAT) GA	
	(HOLDING) (HD) -- (sent every 20 seconds while on hold)	
	... IN BKGD)	
	(FAST MSG)	
	(COLLECTING INFO PLS HD)	
	THIS IS BEING MONITORED FOR TRAINING AND	This call is being monitored for training and quality assurance.
	QUALITY ASSURANCE	
	(CA/ROXXXX F/M/T CONT UR CALL)	
	(MSG LEFT) GA	
	(M)	
	REDIALING	
	(HUNG UP) GA	The person hung up, go ahead.
	(PLS HD	
	STILL RINGING GA	
	RING 1	
	(ANS MACH)	You have reached a TTY answering machine...
	TRANSFERRING UR CALL PLS HD	
	(TTY ANSWERED U MAY TYPE) GA	
	(RECORDING)	
	(LVG MSG PLS HD)	
	(WHILE U TYPED	
	(ENTERING NBR)	
	(XXX CA/RO XXXX F/M/T WITH A CALL	This is [state] relay CA/Operator XXXX with a call for a TTY user
	THK U BYE CA/RO XXXX F/M/T SK	Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX, goodbye.

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Explanation Scripts

TTY to Voice

"The caller will be typing on a (TTY) teletext device. I will relay the conversation to you. When you hear the words, "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower and directly to the caller. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Relay will begin now ..."

Voice to TTY

"(The person you are calling uses a (TTY) teletext device.) The person will type and I will relay the conversation to you. When you hear the words, "GO AHEAD," it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower and directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Please hold while I dial (XXX-XXX-XXXX)"

Voice Carry Over to Voice

"The caller is making a voice carry over call using a (TTY) teletext device. You will hear the caller speaking directly to you. When the caller say the words "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower, and directly to the caller. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Relay will begin now ..."

Voice to Voice Carry Over

"The person you are calling (have reached) uses Voice Carry Over on a (TTY) teletext device. You will hear the person speaking directly to you. When you hear the words "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. I will type everything I hear. Please speak slower, and directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Please hold while I dial (XXX-XXX-XXXX)"

Hearing Carry Over to Voice

"The caller is making a Hearing Carry Over call using a (TTY) teletext device. The caller can hear you and I will relay the caller's typed response to you. There may be pauses as the message is typed. When you hear the words "GO AHEAD", it is your turn to respond. Please speak directly to the caller. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response. Relay will begin now ..."

Voice to Hearing Carry Over

"The person you are calling (have reached) uses Hearing Carry Over on a (TTY) teletext device. The person can hear you and I will relay their typed responses to you. There may be pauses as the message is typed. When you hear the words, "GO AHEAD," it is your turn to respond. Please speak directly to the person. Say "GO AHEAD" when you are finished speaking and ready for a response ... Please hold while I dial (XXX-XXX-XXXX)"

Explanation of a TTY

"A Teletext device (TTY) is a communications device used by people who may be deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled, instead of a standard telephone."

CONFIDENTIAL

Call Processing (revised 9/99)

PROPRIETARY

TTY > Voice

Pre-step: [REDACTED] NOTE [REDACTED]

Call Setup

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	(greeting) GA	If busy	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	key in # as instructed	Asked to redial	[REDACTED]	(busy) GA Wait for instructions (redialing) Type: (BUSY...REDIALING)
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	(dialing pls hd)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2... 10	If still busy	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
After 10 rings	[REDACTED]	(still ringing) GA	Repeat from	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Term's greeting verbatim	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"This is [STATE] Relay CA/Operator XXXX with a relay call. Do you know how to use relay?"	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
If no	[REDACTED]	"One moment please for an explanation"	If yes	Say	"Relay will begin now"
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] LAINING RELAY) Type GA	[REDACTED]	Type	GA
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	TTY to VOICE Explanation Script to term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Orig's message	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Then continue relaying call	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Closing...after conversation is complete...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
To term	Say	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX, goodbye."	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] GA wait for instructions	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Another call	Return to	[REDACTED]	If not	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Billing Options

Collect Calls

(continued from previous page)

~~PROPRIETARY~~

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Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
<u>Voice Orig</u> answered by TTY	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			
will accept	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] relay	won't accept	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<u>TTY Orig</u> V. ans mach	[REDACTED]	If permits acceptance of collect calls			Caller will not accept the charges, go ahead
will accept	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	won't accept	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
to lv msg	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] to answer			

Connection... answered... relay as usual

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
	Press	[REDACTED]			

Call Processing

(revised 9/99)

CONFIDENTIAL

Voice > TTY

Pre-step: [REDACTED] NOTE [REDACTED]

Call Setup

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
If yes	[REDACTED]	"Do you know how to use relay?" "Thank you, dialing XXX XXX XXXX please hd"	If no	[REDACTED]	Voice to TTY Script
after 10 rings	[REDACTED]	"Still ringing go ahead"	if busy	[REDACTED]	"The line is busy go ahead."
If continue	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
By TTY	[REDACTED]	"The line has been answered, please hold."	By Voice	[REDACTED]	"This is [state] relay CA/Operator XXXX F/M with a relay call for a TTY user. Is the TTY user available?"
	[REDACTED]	"Thank you for holding, relay will begin now" TTY-user's greeting... Continue relaying call	If no TTY-user	[REDACTED]	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye"
	[REDACTED]		To Orig,	[REDACTED]	"There is no TTY-user available."

Closing...after the conversation is complete...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
	Say	"The person hung up go ahead" wait for instructions			
Another call	Return to [REDACTED]		If not	Say	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye."

Billing Options

Third Party Billing – answered by TTY or Ans Mach

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(continued from previous page)

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
answered by TTY		[REDACTED]			
	Wait	[REDACTED]			
	Send	[REDACTED]			
will accept		[REDACTED]			[REDACTED]
	Proceed	[REDACTED] to answer			[REDACTED]

By ans mach if will accept	Listen	[REDACTED]	won't accept	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
		[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
		[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
		[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Connection... answered... relay as usual

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
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[REDACTED]

Call Processing

(REVISED 9/99)

Voice > TTY Answering Machine

Pre-step: [REDACTED]

CONFIDENTIAL

Call Setup

PROPRIETARY

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
		[REDACTED]			
If yes		"Do you know how to use relay?"	If no		Voice to TTY Script
		■ Thank you, dialing XXX XXX XXXX please hold"			
after 10 rings		[REDACTED]	if busy		"The line is busy go ahead."
If continue		[REDACTED]			

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
Ans by TTY		"The line has been answered, please hold"... "You have reached a TTY answering machine, TTY Answering Machine Message verbatim "Would you like to leave a message?"			"This is [state] relay CA/Operator XXXX F/M with a relay call for a TTY user. Is the TTY user available?"

If customer wants to leave a message,

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
		Message verbatim (END OF MSG) SKSK "Your message has been left go ahead."			
Another call		[REDACTED]	If not	Say	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye."

Call Processing

(Revised 10/99)

~~PROPRIETARY~~ ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Pagers

Pre-step: [REDACTED]
Follow Appropriate Call-Setup – TTY or VCO [REDACTED]

Connection to Numeric Pagers:

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
If needed	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			
Another call	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If not	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Connection to Alpha-Numeric Pagers and Pager Operators:

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
If answered by live operator	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			
If yes	[REDACTED]	"This is [STATE] Relay CA/Operator XXXX with a relay call. Do you know how to use relay?" "Relay will begin now" Orig's message	If no	[REDACTED]	Orig's message – wait for orig's GA [REDACTED]
		Then continue relaying the call			

Call Processing

(Revised 9/99)

~~PROPRIETARY~~

VCO > Voice

Pre-step: [REDACTED] NOTE [REDACTED] ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Call Setup

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
Customer requests VCO before giving # to dial	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
After 10 rings	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If busy	[REDACTED]	Wait for instructions

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
If yes	[REDACTED]	Term's greeting verbatim To term "[STATE] Relay CA/Operator XXXX F/M with a Voice Carry Over call. Do you know how to use VCO?" "Relay will begin now" GA (allow orig to speak directly to term)	If no	[REDACTED]	VCO to Voice Script to term GA (allow orig to speak directly to term)

Closing...after conversation is complete

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
To term	Say	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye." [REDACTED]	If not	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Call Processing

~~PROPRIETARY~~

[REDACTED]

Pre-step [REDACTED]

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Call Setup

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
		[REDACTED]			
After 10 rings		[REDACTED]	If busy	Press [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
		[REDACTED]			
If yes		To term "This is [STATE] Relay CA/Operator XXXX with a Voice Carry Over call. Do you know how to use VCO?"	If no	Send [REDACTED]	Read VCO script to term

Closing...after conversation is complete

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
To term		"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX, goodbye."			
Another call		[REDACTED]	If not	[REDACTED]	

Call Processing

(Revised 9/99)

Voice > Known VCO

CONFIDENTIAL

Call Setup

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
If yes	[REDACTED]	"Do you know how to use Voice Carry Over? go ahead"	If no	Read	Voice to VCO Script.
after 10 rings	[REDACTED]	"Thank you, dialing XXX XXX XXXX please hold"	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
To continue	[REDACTED]	"Still ringing go ahead"	If busy	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
By TTY	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"This is [state] relay CA/Operator XXXX F/M with a relay call for a VCO user. Is the VCO user available?"
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"The line has been answered pls hd"	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye."
To Term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"There is no VCO-user available."
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"Thank you for holding, relay will begin now"	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	GA ...allow term to voice own greeting...	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Closing...after conversation is complete

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
To term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	"The person hung up go ahead" wait for instructions	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Another call	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If not	Say	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M goodbye."

Call Processing

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Voice > Unknown VCO

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Call Setup – Same as “Voice to TTY”

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
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Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
-----------	--------	------------	----------------	--------	------------

By TTY	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	By voice	[REDACTED]	"This is [state] relay CA/Operator XXXX F/M with a relay call for a TTY user. Is the TTY user available?"
To Term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If no TTY-user	[REDACTED]	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye."
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	To Orig	[REDACTED]	"[REDACTED] available."
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If ans by voice/ no response -- assume VCO phone	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Term requests VCO	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
If yes	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If no	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Closing...after conversation is complete

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
-----------	--------	------------	----------------	--------	------------

To term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			
Another call	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If not	Say	"Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX F/M, goodbye."

Call Processing

~~PROPRIETARY~~

Voice > Unknown HCO
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Call Set-Up

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
		[REDACTED]			
If yes		Do you know how to use relay? GA			Voice to TTY Explanation Script
after 10 rings		[REDACTED]	If busy		[REDACTED]

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
By TTY To orig		*The line has been answered, pls hold*	By voice		This is [state] relay CA/Operator XXXX with a call for a TTY-user. Is the TTY-user available?"
		[REDACTED]	If no TTY		[REDACTED]
Term requests HCO		[REDACTED]			
If yes		The person you called has requested Hearing Carry over. Do you know how to use HCO? HCO is on. HCO user go ahead	If no		[REDACTED]
		[REDACTED]			
		[REDACTED]			

Continued on next page

Call Processing

PROPRIETARY

Voice to Unknown HCO

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Continued from previous page

Closing...after conversation is complete

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
To term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			
To orig	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			
Another call	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	If not	Say	*Thank you, CA/Operator XXXX, goodbye*

Call Processing

(Revised 9/99)

Emergency or 911 Call

~~PROPRIETARY~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Call Set-Up

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
Caller asks for 9-1-1		[REDACTED]			
If yes		[REDACTED]	If no		[REDACTED]

Connection...answered...

Condition	Action	What to do	Alt. Condition	Action	What to do
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]



PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELAY CODE OF ETHICS

I, the undersigned, (including, but not limited to Vista I.T., Inc. Managers, Supervisors, Operators, Trainees, professional support staff, applicants, and visitors) do hereby recognize the serious and confidential nature of this position and therefore promise in all good faith and conscience to abide by the following guidelines:

PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

1. Under no circumstances will I reveal to any individual the identity of any caller or information I may learn about a caller while relaying conversations or upon overhearing a relayed conversation. This includes but is not limited to: names, phone numbers and locations.
2. I understand that observing or listening to actual calls by anyone other than the Operator serving that call is prohibited except for training or quality assurance purposes.
3. Under no circumstances will I act upon any information I may learn while relaying conversations or overhearing relayed conversations.
4. Under no circumstances will I discuss any information pertaining to relay users or call content with other Operators, friends or family members.

RELAY CODE OF ETHICS

1. Under no circumstances will I disclose to anyone the names, schedules or personal information of any fellow Operators or Supervisor at the Relay Center.
2. I will not reveal my name in conjunction with my Operator number unless asked to do so by a member of Relay Administration.
3. Under no circumstances will I engage in conversation with another Operator at any point while processing a call.
4. I recognize that all components of call processing requires my undivided attention and that I may not engage in any other activity at any point during a relay call which may delay answering or processing the call.
5. I shall convey the exact verbatim content of the user's words and the spirit of the user's meaning, unless otherwise directed by the user.
6. I shall not edit, censor, counsel, advise, get involved beyond what is necessary to process a call, or provide personal opinions on calls. It is the user's right and responsibility to make his/her own decisions. I am to serve as a "human telephone wire" in the relay process. I will truthfully relay call status to both parties on a call.
7. I will not intentionally obstruct the receipt, transmission and/or the completion of relay calls; I will not refuse to answer calls; I will not refuse to place subsequent calls for the originating caller.
8. I recognize that information about the policies, procedures, equipment or equipment configuration designed and maintained by either Vista I.T. Inc. or any of its contract affiliates is proprietary and must remain confidential and on the premises.
9. In the event of my resignation or termination of employment, I will continue to hold the strictest confidence all information related to the work performed at the Relay Center.

I FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT VIOLATION OF ANY OF THESE SECTIONS IS GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION, UP TO AND INCLUDING IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL, WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN WARNINGS OR PROBATION.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Revised 5/99

VISTA IT, Inc. Call Center Services

November 10, 1999



Consolidated Financial Statements

Vista Information Technologies, Inc.

*Years ended December 31, 1998 and 1997
with Report of Independent Auditors*

Vista Information Technologies, Inc.
Consolidated Financial Statements

Years ended December 31, 1998 and 1997

Contents

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Board of Directors and Shareholders
Vista Information Technologies, Inc.

We have audited the accompanying consolidated balance sheets of Vista Information Technologies Inc. as of December 31, 1998 and 1997 and the related consolidated statements of operations, stockholders' equity, and cash flows for each of the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Company's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of Vista Information Technologies, Inc. at December 31, 1998 and 1997, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for each of the years then ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Ernst + Young LLP

July 12, 1999

VISTA Information Technologies, Inc.

Consolidated Balance Sheets

As of December 31

All amounts in thousands except share amounts

	1998	1997
Assets		
Current assets		
Cash and equivalents	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
Accounts receivable, net	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Inventories, net	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other current assets	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total current assets	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Property and equipment, net	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Intangible assets, net	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total assets	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity		
Current liabilities		
Term loan	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ -
Seller financing	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Accounts payable	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Accrued expenses and other	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total current liabilities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Long-term liabilities		
Line of credit	[REDACTED]	-
Term loan	-	[REDACTED]
Seller financing	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Minority interest in consolidated subsidiary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Stockholders' equity		
Senior common stock, par value [REDACTED] shares authorized [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] issued and outstanding	-	-
Class A common stock, par value [REDACTED] shares authorized [REDACTED] issued and outstanding	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Class B common stock, par value [REDACTED] shares authorized [REDACTED] issued and outstanding	-	-
Capital in excess of par value	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Accumulated deficit	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total stockholders' equity	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

Vista Information Technologies, Inc.
Consolidated Statements of Operations
For the Years ended December 31
All amounts in thousands

	1998	1997	
Revenues	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]	
Costs and expenses			
Costs of services	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Selling, general and administrative	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Amortization of intangibles	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Total costs and expenses	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Operating loss	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Other income (expenses)			
Interest income	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Interest expense	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Other	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
Net loss	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]	

Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows
For the Years Ended December 31
All amounts in thousands

	1998	1997
Operating activities		
Net loss	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
Adjustments to reconcile net loss to net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities:		
Depreciation and amortization expense	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Minority interest in VistaNet	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Amortization of debt issuance costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Allowance for bad debts	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Changes in operating assets and liabilities:		
Accounts receivable	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Inventories	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other current assets	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Accounts payable	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Accrued expenses	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other liabilities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Investing activities		
Acquisition of assets of General Analytics Corporation	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Adjustment to purchase price of General Analytics Corporation	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Acquisition of assets of telecommunications company	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Acquisition of non-cash assets of MAI	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Acquisition of non-cash assets of TLA	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Acquisition of non-cash assets of MTS	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Acquisition of non-cash assets of NIS	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Purchases of equipment and software	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Net cash used in investing activities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Financing activities		
Capital contributions	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Borrowings under line of credit	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Borrowings under term loan	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Deferred debt issuance costs	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Principal payments on seller financing	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Net cash provided by financing activities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Increase in cash and cash equivalents	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

Vista Information Technologies, Inc.

Consolidated Statement of Stockholders' Equity

For the Years Ended December 31, 1998 and 1997

All amounts in thousands except share amounts

	Senior Common Stock		Class A Common Stock		Class B Common Stock		Capital In Excess of Par Value	Accumulated Deficit	Total Stockholders' Equity
	Shares	Amount	Shares	Amount	Shares	Amount			
Issuance of Senior Common Stock	██████	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	\$ ██████	\$ -	\$ ██████
Issuance of Class A Common Stock	-	-	██████	1	-	-	██████	-	██████
Issuance of Class B Common Stock	-	-	-	-	██████	-	██████	-	██████
Net loss	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	██████	██████
Balance at December 31, 1997	██████	-	██████	1	██████	-	██████	██████	██████
Issuance of Senior Common Stock	██████	-	-	-	-	-	██████	-	██████
Net loss	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	██████	██████
Balance at December 31, 1998	██████	\$ -	██████	\$ 1	██████	\$ -	\$ ██████	\$ ██████	\$ ██████

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements

1. Description of Business

Vista Information Technologies, Inc. and subsidiaries ("Vista," or "the Company") provide network centric information technology ("IT") consulting and other strategic IT solutions and advisory services to middle market, large commercial and government organizations. Vista also designs, installs and maintains information technology networks (both voice and data). The Company's services are performed primarily in the United States. The Company was formed to create, through acquisitions and internal growth, a nationwide IT services business. Vista was incorporated in Delaware on December 13, 1996 but was inactive until March 14, 1997 when the Company completed its initial financing round. See Note 3 for discussion of acquisitions completed to date.

As of December 31, 1998, the Company had approximately 1,100 employees and offices in 13 cities.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Principles of Consolidation

The accompanying consolidated financial statements include the accounts of Vista Information Technologies, Inc., its wholly owned subsidiaries and its 80% owned subsidiary, VistaNet. All significant intercompany balances and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation.

Revenue Recognition

The Company generally recognizes revenue on fixed-price long-term service and installation contracts using the percentage of completion method of accounting. Losses, if any, are accrued when they become known and the amount of the loss is reasonably determinable. Revenue on time and materials contracts is determined based on billable hours worked and materials delivered. Revenue from sales of equipment is recognized upon delivery and, when contractually required, acceptance of the equipment. Maintenance fees are generally recognized ratably over the term of the maintenance agreement. Accounts receivable are reported net of allowances for estimated uncollectible or unbillable amounts.

Cash Flows

Cash and cash equivalents consist of cash and repurchase agreements with original maturities of three months or less.

Inventory

Inventory consists of parts and equipment held for resale and is recorded at the lower of cost or market. Cost is determined using the first in, first out method. Market is based on the lower of replacement cost or estimated value.

Property and Equipment

Property and equipment are stated at cost when purchased including the allocated cost based on fair value in connection with purchases of businesses. Depreciation is provided on the straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the assets (3 to 8 years). Amortization of leasehold

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

improvements is provided on the straight-line basis over the lesser of the estimated useful lives of the assets or the term of the related lease.

Intangible Assets

Intangible assets consist of contracts, assembled workforce and goodwill acquired in purchases of businesses of [REDACTED] less [REDACTED] accumulated amortization in 1998 and [REDACTED] less [REDACTED] accumulated amortization in 1997, and deferred debt issuance costs of [REDACTED] less [REDACTED] accumulated amortization in 1998 and [REDACTED] less [REDACTED] accumulated amortization in 1997. Intangible assets resulting from purchases of acquired businesses are amortized over their expected useful lives, as follows: contracts, remaining life of contract; assembled workforce, 5 years, and goodwill, principally 7 years. Deferred debt issuance costs are amortized over the life of the related debt. The Company assesses the impairment of long-lived assets including intangible assets and recognizes impairment losses when indicators of impairment are present and the undiscounted cash flows are not sufficient to recover the assets' carrying amount. An impairment loss is measured by comparing the carrying amount of the asset to its fair value with any excess of carrying value over fair value written off. Fair value is based on market prices where available, an estimate of market value, or is determined by various valuation techniques including discounted cash flow.

Income Taxes

The Company accounts for income taxes under the asset and liability method, where deferred tax assets and liabilities are recognized for future tax consequences attributable to temporary differences between the financial statement carrying amounts of existing assets and liabilities and their respective tax basis. Deferred tax assets and liabilities are measured using enacted tax rates which apply to taxable income of future years when those temporary differences are expected to be recovered or settled. The effect on deferred tax assets and liabilities for changes in tax rates are recognized in the period of the enactment date.

Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results will invariably differ from those estimates.

3. Acquisitions

On March 14, 1997, the Company, through its wholly owned subsidiary GAC Technology Services, Inc., acquired certain assets and assumed certain liabilities of General Analytics Corporation, McLean, Virginia. Under the terms of the acquisition agreement, the Company acquired tangible assets, the rights to contracts, employees, products and trademarks. The purchase price was approximately [REDACTED] (including \$ [REDACTED] of acquisition costs), of which [REDACTED] was payable in cash at closing, including [REDACTED] held in escrow, and [REDACTED] is payable in five annual installments of [REDACTED] (including accrued interest) beginning one year after the date of purchase. The escrow was established until the final outcome of various

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

contingencies is known. The Company has received [REDACTED] of payments from the escrow fund as of December 31, 1998, which results in a reduction in purchase price.

On October 22, 1997, the Company, through its 80% owned subsidiary VistaNet, acquired the professional services division of a private telecommunications company. Under the terms of the acquisition agreement, VistaNet acquired the rights to contracts, employees and service offerings, however no tangible assets were acquired. The Company recorded the purchase price at [REDACTED] (including [REDACTED] of acquisition costs). Pursuant to a Stock Option Agreement dated October 22, 1997, the Company has a call option to purchase the 20% minority interest in VistaNet from the minority shareholder and the minority shareholder has a put option to sell to the Company its 20% interest at any time after December 31, 1998. The price of any such purchase or sale is determined by a formula in the Stock Option Agreement. On February 12, 1999, VistaNet's minority owner exercised its option to sell its shareholding to Vista. The sale is anticipated to close in mid-1999.

On December 24, 1997, MAI Acquisitions, Inc. (a wholly owned subsidiary) was incorporated in Delaware, and on January 2, 1998, this subsidiary acquired certain assets, personnel and ongoing contracts and assumed certain liabilities of a private company. The purchase price was [REDACTED] (including [REDACTED] of acquisition costs) of which [REDACTED] was payable in cash at closing, and [REDACTED] is payable in 30 monthly installments of [REDACTED] (including accrued interest) beginning February 1998. An escrow of [REDACTED] was established until the final outcomes of various contingencies are known. There is an additional contingency of [REDACTED] which is payable if a specified contract is renewed as defined in the merger agreement upon its February 2000 expiration.

On February 20, 1998, the Company acquired all of the outstanding stock of TLA. The purchase price was [REDACTED] (including acquisition costs of [REDACTED] subject to adjustment upon the determination of TLA's 1997 EBIT, of which [REDACTED] was payable in cash at closing. The remaining amount of the purchase price was determined in May 1999 to be a reduction of [REDACTED] which will be recorded in 1999. The Company paid the remaining purchase price of [REDACTED] in mid-1999. There is an additional amount contingently payable based on TLA's earnings for the period January 1, 1998 through December 31, 1999.

On June 29, 1998, Vista/MTS, Inc. (a wholly owned subsidiary) was incorporated in Delaware, and on July 17, 1998, this subsidiary merged with MTS. The purchase price was [REDACTED] (including acquisition costs of [REDACTED], of which [REDACTED] was payable in cash at closing and [REDACTED] is payable in three annual installments of [REDACTED] (plus accrued interest). An escrow of [REDACTED] was established until the final outcome of various contingencies was known; the escrow was paid in its entirety to the previous owners of MTS in January 1999. There is an additional amount of up to [REDACTED] contingently payable based on MTS's earnings and revenues derived from services for the period August 1, 1999 through July 31, 2000. The Company anticipates paying [REDACTED] of the contingent payable, and accordingly has included this amount in the purchase price as of December 31, 1998.

On July 21, 1998, Vista purchased all of the outstanding stock of NIS. The initial purchase price was [REDACTED] (including acquisition costs of [REDACTED] payable in cash at closing. The purchase price is subject to adjustment based on a mutually agreed upon value for the net worth of

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

NIS as of the purchase date in relation to a target value specified in the Stock Purchase Agreement. As of December 31, 1998, the Company estimated that the purchase price reduction would be [REDACTED] accordingly, the Company has used this amount to determine the final purchase price as of December 31, 1998. On April 5, 1999, the parties tentatively agreed that the total purchase price reduction would be [REDACTED]

All of the Company's acquisitions were accounted for under the purchase method of accounting, and accordingly, the results of operations of the acquired businesses are included in the accompanying consolidated statement of operations from the date of purchase. The excess of the purchase price over the fair value of net tangible and intangible assets acquired was recorded as goodwill.

4. Accounts receivable

At December 31, the components of accounts receivable are as follows:

	1998	1997
Billed amounts	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
Unbilled amounts	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other receivables	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Allowance for possible losses	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total	<u>\$ [REDACTED]</u>	<u>\$ [REDACTED]</u>

All billed, unbilled and other receivables amounts are expected to be collected during the next fiscal year. Management has provided an allowance for amounts which it believes are doubtful as to their ultimate realization.

5. Property and equipment

Components of property and equipment at December 31 are as follows:

	1998	1997
Office equipment and furniture	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
Leasehold improvements	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Accumulated depreciation and amortization	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
	<u>\$ [REDACTED]</u>	<u>\$ [REDACTED]</u>

Depreciation and amortization expense related to property and equipment for the years ended December 31, 1998 and 1997 was \$679,000 and \$221,000. Costs of repair and maintenance of property and equipment are charged to expense as incurred.

6. Line of Credit Facility

The Company has obtained a [REDACTED] million working capital line of credit ("LOC") facility from NationsBank, N. A. which is effective from August 27, 1998 to March 12, 2000. Funds are advanced up to a specified multiple of the Company's Trailing Twelve Month Earnings Before Interest, Depreciation, Amortization and Taxes ("TTM EBITDA"). Borrowings under the LOC bear interest at a margin over either the bank's prime rate or the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate, selected at Vista's option at the time of each borrowing. The margins vary depending on the Company's financial condition as determined by a specified financial ratio and the interest rate was [REDACTED] at December 31, 1998. Interest is due and payable monthly. There are also commitment fees on the unused amount of the LOC which vary (based on a specified financial ratio) from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]. At December 31, 1998 and 1997 the Company had [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] borrowing outstanding under the LOC, respectively.

The facility requires that the Company meet certain financial and other covenants. In addition, the bank has a security interest in substantially all of the Company's assets.

7. Term Loan Facility

The Company has obtained a [REDACTED] million term loan facility from NationsBank N. A. which is effective from August 27, 1998 to December 31, 1999. Funds are advanced for the purpose of acquiring the business operations of other companies.

Borrowings under the Term Loan bear interest at a margin over the bank's prime rate. The margins vary depending on the Company's financial condition as determined by a specified financial ratio and was [REDACTED] at December 31, 1998. Interest is due and payable monthly. At December 31, 1998 and 1997, the Company had [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] outstanding under the Term Loan facility. The Term Loans mature on December 31, 1999.

The facility requires that the Company meet certain financial and other covenants. At December 31, 1998, the Company was in violation of a covenant on the Term Loan and LOC. The Company has received a waiver of the violation as of December 31, 1998 and a commitment from the bank to amend the covenant to levels management believes are attainable in future periods.

8. Seller Financing

On March 14, 1997, Vista acquired certain assets and assumed certain liabilities of General Analytics Corporation (see Note 3). In connection with this purchase, Vista is obligated to pay [REDACTED] to the sellers in five annual installments of [REDACTED] with the first payment commencing March 14, 1998. No interest rate was specified in the Asset Purchase Agreement. Therefore, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, interest has been imputed at [REDACTED] which was the rate for the contemporaneous borrowing under the Term Loan facility. This obligation to the sellers is subordinated to the security interest of the Company's bank (see notes 6 and 7.)

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

On July 17, 1998, Vista issued [REDACTED] of subordinated debt in connection with the purchase of MTS (see Note 3). The debt bears interest at [REDACTED] and is payable in three annual installments of [REDACTED] (plus accrued interest) beginning July 15, 1999.

The following table summarizes the principal and accrued interest payable balances of this debt at December 31, 1998, and 1997:

	1998	1997
Current liability		
GAC acquisition	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
MAI acquisition	[REDACTED]	
MTS acquisition	[REDACTED]	
Accrued interest payable	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total current	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Long term liability		
GAC acquisition	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
MAI acquisition	[REDACTED]	
MTS acquisition	[REDACTED]	
Total long term	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total seller financing	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]

The Company made interest payments on all of its debt of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] during the years ended on December 31, 1998 and 1997.

9. Income Taxes

There was no income tax benefit for the years ended December 31, 1998 and 1997 because the Company does not have enough operating history to determine the realization of the income tax benefit from its net operating loss carryforward.

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

The actual income tax benefit differs from the expected income tax benefit computed using the statutory federal income tax rate of 34 percent applied to the pretax loss as a result of the following for the years ended December 31:

	1998	1997
Tax benefit at U.S. statutory rate	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
State taxes, net of federal benefit	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Non-deductible items	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Change in valuation allowance	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Other	[REDACTED]	-
	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

The tax effects of temporary differences that give rise to deferred tax assets and deferred tax liabilities at December 31 are presented below:

	1998	1997
Deferred tax assets:		
Accruals and allowances not deductible for tax	\$ [REDACTED]	\$ [REDACTED]
Depreciation	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Amortization of acquisition intangibles	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
NOL carryforward	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Deferred tax assets	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Less valuation allowance	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total deferred tax assets	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Deferred tax liabilities:		
Acquisition costs expensed for tax, not books	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Book revenue in excess of taxable revenue	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Section 481 (a) adjustment	[REDACTED]	-
Other	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total deferred tax liabilities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total net deferred tax assets	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>

Net operating loss carry forwards of approximately [REDACTED] expire in 2017 and [REDACTED] in 2018. The Company does not have enough operating history to determine if it is more likely than not that it will realize the benefit of net deferred tax assets. Accordingly, a valuation allowance for the entire net amount was provided at December 31, 1998 and 1997. The timing and manner in which the net operating loss carry forwards can be utilized by the Company may be limited by certain provisions of the U.S. Tax code, including future changes in equity interests.

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

10. Commitments

The Company is obligated under various operating leases for office space that expire from 1999 through 2010 and for certain office equipment that expire from 1999 through 2002.

Future minimum lease payments under non-cancelable operating leases with initial or remaining lease terms in excess of one year are as follows:

Year ended December 31:	
1999	\$ [REDACTED]
2000	[REDACTED]
2001	[REDACTED]
2002	[REDACTED]
2003	[REDACTED]
2004 and thereafter	[REDACTED]
Total minimum lease payments	\$ [REDACTED]

Total rent expense under all operating leases was approximately \$ [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in 1998 and 1997, which expense was partly offset by sublease receipts of \$ [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Future minimum sublease rent receivable is [REDACTED] in 1999, [REDACTED] in 2000 and [REDACTED] in 2001.

11. Stockholders' Equity

A Shareholders' Agreement dated January 29, 1997 among all of the Company's shareholders gives GTCR Fund V, L.P. ("GTCR") the right to determine the number of Directors of the Company and all subsidiaries, and to choose a majority of the Board of Directors. Each shareholder has the preemptive right to maintain its percentage ownership. The Agreement also requires minority shareholders to approve the sale of the Company if such sale is approved by the majority owner. These rights cease if there is a public offering of the Company's stock. GTCR also has certain registration rights for its shares.

Pursuant to a Purchase Agreement dated January 29, 1997, GTCR has purchased [REDACTED] million of Senior Common Stock and [REDACTED] million of Class A Common Stock. (As of December 31, 1997, GTCR had purchased [REDACTED] million of Senior Common and [REDACTED] million of Class A Common Stock). GTCR owns the majority of the Company's voting stock as well as the majority of the Company's Senior Common Stock.

Senior Common Stock

At December 31, 1998 and 1997, the Company has authorized [REDACTED] shares of [REDACTED] par value Senior Common Stock of which [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] shares have been issued. Except as provided by law, Senior Common Stock has no voting rights. So long as Senior Common Stock is

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

outstanding, neither the Company nor any of its Subsidiaries can acquire any Class A or B Common Stock ("Junior securities.")

Liquidation preference – Upon any liquidation, dissolution or winding up of the Company, Senior Common Stock is entitled to be paid its original cost and all accrued dividends before any payments are made to Junior securities. At December 31, 1998, and 1997 the liquidation value of the senior common stock was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] respectively.

Distribution preference – If any distributions are made to shareholders, the holders of Senior Common Stock are entitled to receive their original cost and all accrued dividends before the holders of Junior securities receive any distributions.

Dividends – Senior Common Stock receives preferential dividends which accrue at the rate of [REDACTED] per annum on the original cost plus any accumulated unpaid dividends. Such dividends are cumulative whether or not declared and must be paid in full before any dividends on other securities are paid. Dividends may be paid on Senior Common Stock from any funds or assets of the Company that are legally available. No dividends were paid in 1998 or 1997. As of December 31, 1998 and 1997, accumulated unpaid dividends were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Redemption rights – The Company may at any time redeem all or a portion of Senior Common Stock from any funds or assets of the Company that are legally available. The redemption amount is the original cost plus accumulated unpaid dividends. If a public offering of the Company's stock occurs, all shares of Senior Common Stock must be redeemed. If a significant change of ownership occurs, the holders of Senior Common Stock may require the Company to redeem all or any portion of the shares of Senior Common Stock outstanding.

Class A Common Stock

At December 31, 1998 and 1997, the Company has authorized [REDACTED] shares of [REDACTED] par value Class A Common Stock of which [REDACTED] shares have been issued at December 31, 1998 and 1997. Each share has one vote.

Distribution preference – If any distributions are made to shareholders, the holders of Class A Common Stock are entitled to receive their original cost (subject to the preference of Senior Common shareholders). Class B Common and Class C Common shareholders may then receive their original cost. If there is any remaining distribution, [REDACTED] of it is shared equally among Class A and B shareholders, and the remaining [REDACTED] goes to Class C shareholders.

Dividends – Dividends on Class A Common Stock may only be paid if all accumulated dividends in arrears on Senior Common Stock have been paid. Dividends may be paid on Class A common stock from any funds or assets of the Company that are legally available and if declared by the Board of Directors. No dividends have been declared or paid as of December 31, 1998.

Class B Common Stock

At December 31, 1998 and 1997, the Company has authorized [REDACTED] shares of [REDACTED] par value Class B Common Stock of which [REDACTED] shares have been issued at December 31, 1998 and 1997. Each share has one vote.

VISTA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

Distribution preference – If any distributions are made to shareholders, the holders of Class B Common Stock are entitled to receive their original cost (subject to the preferences of Senior Common and Class A Common shareholders). Class C Common shareholders may then receive their original cost. If there is any remaining distribution, [REDACTED] of it is shared equally among Class A and B shareholders, and the remaining [REDACTED] goes to Class C shareholders.

Dividends - Dividends on Class B Common Stock may only be paid if all accumulated dividends in arrears on Senior Common Stock have been paid. Dividends may be paid on Class B Common Stock from any funds or assets of the Company that are legally available and if declared by the Board of Directors. No dividends have been declared or paid as of December 31, 1998.

Class C Common Stock

At December 31, 1998, the Company has authorized [REDACTED] shares of [REDACTED] par value Class C Common Stock of which no shares have been issued at December 31, 1998. Except as provided by law, Class C common is non-voting stock. Class C stock is reserved for issuance in connection with the Company's Stock Option Plan discussed below.

Distribution preference – If any distributions are made to shareholders, the holders of Class C Common Stock are entitled to receive their original cost (subject to the preferences of Senior Common, Class A Common and Class B Common shareholders). If there is any remaining distribution, [REDACTED] of it is shared equally among Class A and B shareholders, and the remaining [REDACTED] goes to Class C shareholders.

Dividends - Dividends on Class C Common Stock may only be paid if all accumulated dividends in arrears on Senior Common Stock have been paid. Dividends may be paid on Class C Common Stock from any funds or assets of the Company that are legally available and if declared by the Board of Directors. No dividends have been declared or paid as of December 31, 1998.

Stock Options

The Company adopted a non-qualified Employee Stock Option Plan ("Plan") on December 15, 1998. Options may be issued under the Plan to purchase up to an aggregate of [REDACTED] shares of Class C common stock at the fair market value of the shares at the time the options are granted. Options may expire for any period up to 10 years from date of issuance, and vesting terms may be specified as individual options are granted.

There were no outstanding options at December 31, 1998. Options for approximately [REDACTED] shares were issued under the Plan in the first quarter of 1999.

12. Profit Sharing Plan

The Company has a profit sharing plan which conforms to the provisions of Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Plan covers substantially all full-time employees and allows employees to voluntarily defer up to 15 percent of their compensation through contributions to the Plan. The Company may, at its discretion, elect to contribute to the Plan. Contributions for 1998 and 1997 were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

13. Related Party Transactions

The Company has a Professional Services Agreement with GTCR Cressey Rauner, Inc. ("Cressy Rauner") to provide management advisory services. Two principals of Cressy Rauner are members of Vista's Board of Directors. Cressy Rauner controls GTCR Fund V, L.P., which is the majority owner of Vista's voting stock (see Note 11). Annual fees charged under the Professional Services Agreement range from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] based on defined income levels. Fees were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in 1998 and 1997.

Under the terms of the Professional Services Agreement, Cressy Rauner also charges a [REDACTED] investment fee for any equity funds that it obtains, and also for any line of credit commitment amount. Investment fees of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for equity funds invested in 1998 and 1997 were recorded as a reduction of additional paid-in capital. Investment fees of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for the line of credit and term loan facility (see Notes 6 and 7) were capitalized in 1998 and 1997 as deferred debt issuance expense and are being amortized as interest expense on a straight line basis over the life of the related debt.

The amount payable to Cressy Rauner for the fees described above was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at December 31, 1998 and 1997. These fees are subject to a Subordination Agreement between Cressy Rauner and the Company's bank. In certain circumstances, such as the Company being in default under the terms of its loan agreement, the Company is precluded from paying these fees to Cressy Rauner.

In addition, the Company has agreed to reimburse Cressy Rauner for certain recruiting and travel expenses totaling [REDACTED] that were incurred in connection with the GAC acquisition and are payable at December 31, 1998 and 1997.

14. Significant Customers

In 1998, three customers accounted for 10% or more of revenues: [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. These three customers accounted for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of year end accounts receivable, respectively. In 1997, one customer, the [REDACTED] accounted for [REDACTED] of 1997 revenues and [REDACTED] of year end accounts receivable. Various agencies of the U. S. government as a group accounted for [REDACTED] of 1998 and [REDACTED] of 1997 revenues and [REDACTED] of 1998 and [REDACTED] of 1997 year end accounts receivable.

15. Year 2000 (unaudited)

The Year 2000 issue is the result of computer programs being written using two digits rather than four to define the applicable year. Any of the Company's computer programs that have time-sensitive software may recognize a date using "00" as the year 1900 rather than the year 2000. This could result in a system failure or miscalculations causing disruptions of operations,

including, among other things, a temporary inability to process transactions, send invoices, or engage in similar normal business activities.

The Company is aware of the implications associated with the "Year 2000" as it relates to software information systems and other outside implications on the Company's operations, including the potential impact on its customers and major vendors. The "Year 2000" issue is not expected to have a material impact on the Company's current information systems because current software is either already "Year 2000" compliant or required changes will be insignificant. The Company does not believe it is exposed to a significant risk related to services provided, or expected to be provided, to its customers related to the "Year 2000" issue. As a result, the Company does not anticipate that incremental expenditures to ensure that its information systems are "Year 2000" compliant or contingencies related to services provided will be material to the Company's liquidity, financial position or results of operations over the next few years. Any costs that may arise will be expensed as incurred.

Bank of America



Bank of America
Commercial Bank
MD2-600-03-02
6610 Rockledge Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817

November 8, 1999

VIA TELEFACSIMILE

Mr. Richard Tudor
c/o Ms. Blanca Bayo
Division of Records and Reporting
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

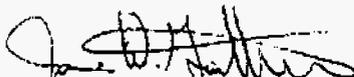
RE: Contract bid reference (Docket no. 991222-TP)

Dear Mr. Tudor:

VISTA Information Technologies, Inc. has maintained a relationship with Bank of America since December 1996. The relationship has been handled in a satisfactory manner, and all payments are current.

The company maintains aggregate 12-month combined depository and overnight investment balances in the moderate seven figure range. We currently extend a secured line of credit to the company in the moderate eight figure range and term loans in the high seven figure range. Usage on the line of credit is currently in the low eight figure range with excess unutilized availability in the low seven figure range.

Sincerely,


James W. Gaittens
Senior Vice President

NOTICE: THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS LETTER IS CONFIDENTIAL AND IS PROVIDED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ADDRESSEE SOLELY AS A MATTER OF BUSINESS COURTESY, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SOURCE AND CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED. THE SUBJECT MATTER AND AN EXPRESSION OF OPINION CONTAINED IN THIS LETTER ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE AND, WHILE OBTAINED FROM SOURCES CONSIDERED RELIABLE, THE ACCURACY OF ANY STATEMENT MADE IS NOT VOUCHERED FOR IN ANY WAY. THE ADDRESSEE AGREES THAT ITS USE OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS LETTER FOR ANY PURPOSE SHALL BE AT ITS SOLE RISK AND THAT NO RESPONSIBILITY THEREFORE IS ATTACHED TO BANK OF AMERICA, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OR THOSE CONNECTED WITH IT. THE NAME OF INQUIRING PARTY WILL BE PROVIDED TO OUR CUSTOMER UPON THEIR REQUEST ABSENT THE INQUIRERS CONTRARY WRITTEN NOTIFICATION TO THE BANK.

4

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November 4, 1999

Mr. Richard N. Tudor
Assistant Communications Director
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0866

Dear Richard:

As the administrator for the Massachusetts Relay Service I would like to take the opportunity to comment on Vista Information Technologies, Inc. who has been our new relay provider since May.

During the last five months of working with Vista as the primary provider of the relay service I have found them to be very responsive and accountable to both Bell Atlantic and the community.

This is a company that is focused on providing quality service and is easy to work with. They have been on time with all their reports and filings and worked closely with us to be sure we have whatever data we may need, and in a format that satisfies everyone.

I would also like to comment that since Vista is not a telephone company, the customers truly have carrier of choice because there is no default, which customers are very happy with.

If you would like to discuss more, feel free to contact me on 508 460-4539 or email me at marilyn.l.benoit@bellatlantic.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marilyn L. Benoit".

Marilyn L. Benoit
MA TRS Administrator
Bell Atlantic

Cc: T. O'Neil

October 12, 1999

To Whom It May Concern:

It gives me great pleasure to express my deepest appreciation for the many years of excellent service VISTA IT has provided to MCI WorldCom - Global Relay. Specifically in supplying, call center management services for our Telecommunications Relay product.

MCI WorldCom - Global Relay and VISTA IT began our relationship back in early 1996. MCI WorldCom - Global Relay continues to expand our relationship based on VISTA IT's quality, reliable and responsive call center management services. VISTA IT provides an innovative approach to managing large workforces with ever-changing performance requirements and traffic patterns. VISTA IT continues to exceed our expectation whether the request is acquiring management of a call center not performing at our high standards or stepping up to new products and services integration in the Global Relay platform.

It is a pleasure to work with an innovative and progressive company like VISTA IT. I would recommend VISTA IT to any company seeking a quality call center management team with a strong understanding of customer needs. If you seek any further information about VISTA IT, please feel free to contact me personally at 708-478-8752.

Sincerely,



Kim Wobschall
General Manager
MCI WorldCom - Global Relay