Amplified and Captioned Telephones

Don’t let hearing loss keep you from calling people or services that are important to you
What are my options?

**Amplified Telephone**
If you have a mild to moderate hearing loss, the first option to try is a good quality amplified telephone.

An amplified telephone can help with phone conversations by increasing both the volume (amplification) and the clarity of sound, making it easier to understand the other person on the call.

The phone can be paired with a neckloop if you have a hearing aid with a t-coil.

For most people with a hearing loss, an amplified phone will provide the solution you need to make phone calls with ease.

You may be able to test different amplified telephones at a Deaf and Hard of Hearing regional office location (for locations call 651-431-5940).

If you have already tried a good-quality amplified telephone and are still not able to hear on phone calls, you may be able to use Captioned Telephone Service (CTS).

**Captioned Telephone Service**
Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) is for individuals whose hearing loss is significant enough that they can’t use a standard telephone or specialized equipment, such as an amplified telephone or hearing-aid compatible phone.

CTS allows you to see captions of your telephone conversation on a display screen built into a specialized CTS phone, while also listening to what is being said using your residual hearing.

CTS is a relay service, so that means there is a communications assistant on the call.

When you dial the phone number of the person you are calling, the CTS phone automatically connects with a relay captioning service. You speak directly to the other person on the call and use your residual hearing to listen, to the extent possible, to the other party. When the other party speaks to you, a relay communications assistant transcribes everything the caller says into captions so that you can read what they say.

There is a short delay between when the caller speaks and when the captions appear on your CTS phone.
How Does Captioned Telephone Service Work?

You can watch a video about how Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) works on our website at: http://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/your-phone/minnesota-relay/making-a-relay-call.jsp (click on Captioned Telephone Service).

There is no cost to use CTS. The cost for this relay service is paid through federal and/or state government funding.
How Do I Decide Which Type of Captioned Telephone Service Is Right for Me?

If you have high-speed internet service and any type of phone service

This service is called Internet Protocol (IP) CTS. The voice part of the call is delivered over your telephone line, while the captions are delivered via your internet connection.

People dial your phone number directly and the call automatically links to the relay captioning service.

To purchase an IP CTS phone, contact one of the providers:

  • CapTel: www.captel.com or 1-800-233-9130
  • CaptionCall: www.captioncall.com or 1-877-557-2227
  • ClearCaptions: www.clearcaptions.com or 1-866-868-8695

If you have traditional (analog) telephone service and you don’t have high-speed internet service

With this type of CTS, when someone calls you they must first dial a toll-free relay captioning service number. The relay captioning service answers, and your caller is greeted by an automated system that prompts him or her to enter your area code and telephone number.

If an incoming call to you is not dialed through the relay captioning service, it will not be captioned.

To purchase this type of CTS phone:

  • Website: www.weitbrecht.com/captel.html
    Phone: 1-800-233-9130

* If you are not sure which type of telephone service you have, contact your telephone company and ask.

If you have a computer, internet, and any type of phone service

This service is called WebCapTel, and is a web-based form of captioned telephone service that allows you to listen to the other party on the call using your phone (landline or wireless), while reading word-for-word captions on your computer, or laptop (internet access required).

With WebCapTel there is no special equipment needed, and no software to download.

For more information go to: www.captel.com/webcaptel.

If you have a smartphone or tablet with internet

Software apps make it easy to get captioned telephone service on select smartphones and tablets. The app delivers captions of everything your caller says, while you listen (with your residual hearing) and speak directly to your caller.

For more information search “captioned telephone” in your device’s app store/marketplace.
What If I Can’t Afford an Amplified Phone or Captioned Telephone?

If you meet certain eligibility requirements, you may qualify to receive an amplified telephone or captioned telephone at no cost through the Minnesota Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program.

A TED Program specialist will assess your needs, have you try different types of phone equipment, and then provide you with the type of equipment that best meets your needs.

To learn more about the TED Program:
Website: mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing – search for “TED Program”
Phone: 1-800-657-3663

What If I Can’t Afford Telephone Service or Internet Service?

The federal Lifeline and state Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP) programs provide monthly discounts on landline or wireless telephone service, or on internet (broadband) service, for eligible low-income customers. Additional Lifeline discounts are available to low-income residents who live on tribal lands. Only one Lifeline/TAP service discount is allowed per household.

To learn more about Lifeline and TAP:
Website: mn.gov/puc - search for “telephone assistance”
Phone: 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782
Email: consumer.puc@state.mn.us
How Do I File a CTS Compliment or Complaint?

If you would like to file a compliment or complaint regarding CTS, we ask that you provide the date and time of the relay call, the calling to and from telephone numbers, the communications assistant’s identification number, and the nature of your compliment or complaint.

You may file a compliment or complaint regarding CTS two ways:

- **With Minnesota Relay**
  Phone: 1-800-657-3775
  Email: mn.relay@state.mn.us

- **With the Federal Communications Commission**
  Phone: 1-888-225-5322
  Online: www.fcc.gov/complaints

Learn More

To learn more about captioned telephone and other Minnesota Relay services, or to schedule a free presentation:

- Phone: 1-800-657-3775
  Website: www.mnrelay.org
  Email: mn.relay@state.mn.us