

Limited Accessibility in America Today

Out of the 35 to 40 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing people living in the United States, 2 to 3 million are American Sign Language (ASL) users with an overwhelming preference to communicate directly with ASL customer service representatives without third-party relay services.

Direct Video Calling (DVC) is the Solution

Direct Video Calling (DVC) is the modern solution for contact centers to communicate directly with their Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers in ASL, enabling point-to-point communication without the need for third-party relay services like Video Relay Services (VRS). The differences between VRS Calls and DVC are noted by many Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers:

Video Relay Service

Lengthy Delays:

The interpreting process causes delays in communication.

Lack of Specialized Knowledge:

VRS Interpreters are neither subject matter experts nor are trained to represent a company; they simply facilitate communication.

Impersonal Interaction:

The Deaf caller only interacts with the VRS interpreter and does not have direct contact with the customer support representative.

Increased Risk of Miscommunication:

During the interpreting process, information is likely to be missed, skewed, or omitted.

Reduced Employment Opportunities:

Continued dependency on VRS creates more demand to train and hire people outside the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Direct Video Calling

Call Duration Reduced:

DVC calls are up to 83% faster than VRS calls.

Effective Assistance:

DVC representatives possess the necessary training and knowledge to address the callers' needs.

Equitable and Personal Connection:

Deaf callers can receive direct support from a customer service representative, just as a hearing person would.

Reduced Risk of Miscommunication:

Face-to-face interaction with an American Sign Language representative significantly reduces the chances of misinformation

Equitable Economy:

DVC creates new job opportunities for skilled Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Recent studies have shown that nearly 70% of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community is unemployed.

Case Study: Project Endeavor

Funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Project Endeavor was launched to enhance the quality of life of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people by expanding broadband adoption required for communication access. The project created many new jobs and provided subsidized broadband services, mobile devices, and implemented DVC for survey collection and technical assistance for Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants. Further, it achieved the following outcomes:

Project Endeavor Key Outcomes	Number Reached
Subsidized devices and broadband subscriptions provided	14,195
Outreach and media impressions (website unique views, YouTube videos, flyers)	3,938,090
Partnerships with Community Anchor Institutions	181
Learners (viewed website educational videos, attended workshops, received technical support through the Contact Center)	250,386
Enrollment in online employment curriculum	550

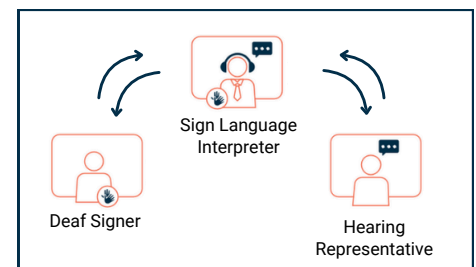
As a unique service that offered Deaf-to-Deaf support (a critical component of the customer experience), the program proved to be an overwhelming success. The CSD Project Endeavor customer service satisfaction survey found that the initiative had:

- Reached more than **480,000** customers.
- **83%** of whom rated Project Endeavor services as “Excellent”.
- **80%** of respondents stated that it was “very important” to be able to communicate directly with a customer service representative while on a call rather than have to rely on third-party relay services.
- A total of **93%** said that it was important or very important to communicate in their native language.

Conclusion

By utilizing Direct Video Calling for a more direct connection between your customer service representative and your Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers, you create a business environment where everyone is equal regardless of the language they use, and where all customer service initiatives benefit from a new sense of equality, empathy, cultural connection, and brand loyalty. This is especially true when there is clear, proven data to support the majority of Deaf and Hard of Hearing customers’ preference for one-on-one connection with customer service representatives fluent in ASL.

Third-Party Communication (VRS Example)



Direct Video Calling

