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Press Release

OHIOVRS Coming to the Buckeye State!

Ohio Association of the Deaf (OAD) is pleased to announce the launching of the OAD Video Relay Services (OHIOVRS) at its 25th Biennial Conference in August 2007 (www.oad-deaf.org). This opportunity symbolizes another exciting moment in the annals of Deaf national history as OAD enters into a partnership with CSDVRS, LLC (CSDVRS). Ohio will be the third state to offer a branded video relay service (VRS).

OHIOVRS will become a driving force in empowering OAD to focus on improving educational opportunities, preserving and promoting the interests and privileges of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind Ohioans as a minority group and the pursuit of their economic security.

"This is the perfect opportunity for OAD to expand their horizons as their theme for this year's conference *Commitment to the Future* suits well with OAD. Together, we are committed to providing quality video relay services within Ohio", CSDVRS CEO Sean Belanger stated.

Prior to the 1960s, the Ohio Deaf Community did not have complete access to human services. Services such as driver's licenses, food stamps, access to Job and Family Services, and even counseling were often difficult to acquire. Many of these services were difficult because they were not made accessible to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind individuals. OAD worked diligently to find ways for the community to have access to these services. One of OAD's greatest accomplishments was to work with the State of Ohio to create Community Centers for the Deaf. With the successful establishment of community centers for the Deaf, access to human services became a reality for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind. The Ohio Association of the Deaf continues to work in the interest of and be a strong advocate for the rights of Ohio's deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind citizens. President Linda Mahmood stated "This is a unique opportunity for OAD to expand into video relay services, further empowering the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community. It is also an excellent platform for community centers for the deaf to mutually benefit from access to video relay services to continue their supportive roles."

OHIOVRS is for everyone to use anytime, anywhere and with anyone. To access OHIOVRS, visit www.OHIOVRS.com on your web browser or dial OHIOVRS.TV through your existing videophone equipment. Voice callers may dial 1-866-459-0248 to reach OHIOVRS.

OHIOVRS offers Ohio's deaf community the ability to communicate using American Sign Language (ASL) when making telephone calls. With OHIOVRS, a caller using sign language can communicate via a Video Interpreter (VI) by using a videoconference connection. The VI signs the telephone conversation with the ASL user and voices to the hearing person using a standard telephone. Video relay is free to all users utilizing a personal computer with a web camera or a television with videophone equipment along with high-speed internet connectivity such as DSL or cable modem. OHIOVRS also offers Voice Carry-Over (VCO) services for deaf and hard of hearing persons who prefer to speak directly to the hearing caller using a standard telephone while viewing the VI relay what the hearing caller is saying.

The Board of Directors of OAD wants to express its sincere appreciation to CSDVRS for its support to the community and looks forward to this opportunity, not only to promote ASL communication access, but to offer quality services to deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind Ohioans.