

October 2009

Monthly Communicator

Vol. 30 No 8.

Jon S. Corzine, Governor

Jennifer Velez, Commissioner

David C. Alexander, Director



NAD Says Banks Must Accept Relay Calls

From National Association of the Deaf (www.nad.org/node/433)

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has received many complaints about banks that refuse to accept telephone calls made through relay services. When advocacy efforts do not result in appropriate policy changes, sometimes the only thing left to do is to file a lawsuit in court. In the case of banks not accepting relay calls, the NAD says, "enough is enough." The NAD and Advocacy, Inc. filed a lawsuit on behalf of Amy Baxter against Wells Fargo.



Nanch Bloch, Chief Executive Officer for the NAD.

The lawsuit alleges that Wells Fargo does not accept relay calls. As a result, individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing, such as Ms. Baxter, are not able to place relay calls to Wells Fargo to obtain information that is available and accessible to hearing individuals over the phone. Refusing to accept relay calls deprives Deaf and hard of hearing people of their right to equal access, equal opportunity, and effective communication. Because Wells Fargo does not accept relay calls, Ms. Baxter claims that Wells Fargo is in violation of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The lawsuit was filed with the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio.

"The ADA mandated nationwide telecommunications relay services so that Deaf and hard of hearing people can have equal access to the telephone network," said Michael Stein, attorney for the NAD. "The Federal Communications Commission has repeatedly explained that relay services are the functional equivalent of telephone services. If a bank accepts telephone calls, then it must also accept relay calls."

"Deaf people, just like hearing people, need to be able to call banks and other financial institutions," said P. Faye Kuo, an attorney with Advocacy, Inc. "We expect that banks will treat Deaf people and hearing people equally in accepting all telephone calls, including relay calls."

The lawsuit asks the court to order Wells Fargo to accept relay calls from Deaf and hard of hearing people, as well as people who have speech impairments.



Michael Stein, Attorney for the NAD.

Page 2

Director's Corner

Page 4

*Mccarter Theatre
Receives Leadership
Award*

Page 9

*Glenn Anderson
keynote for
Philadelphia BDA
Deaf Awareness Day*

*Produced by DHS
Office of Publications*

