

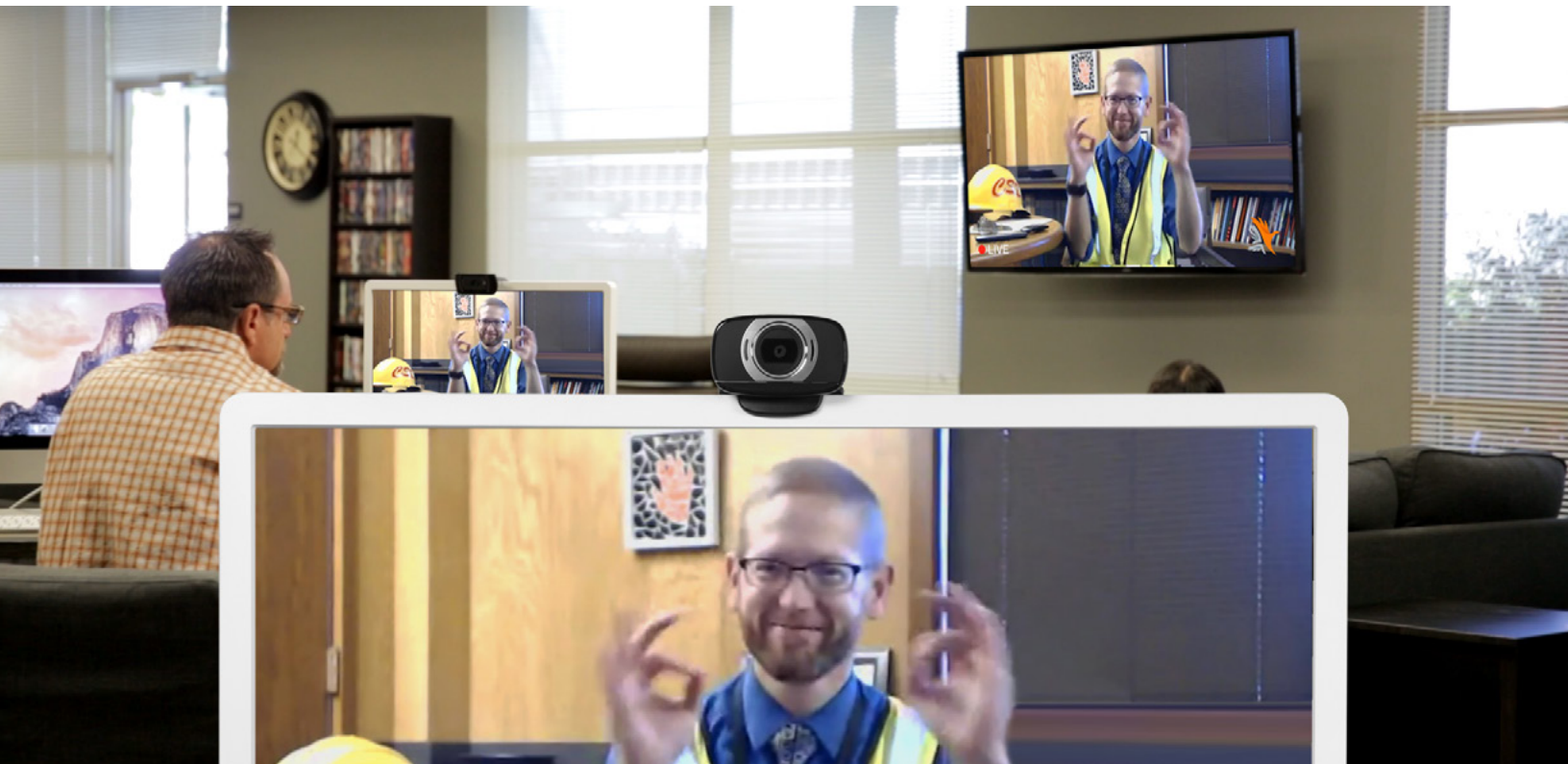
# convo announce CONVO TV



## Press Kit

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# Press Release

Convo, Deaf-owned telecommunications provider, releases world's first platform for the Deaf to integrate visual emergency and public broadcasting system with video relay service

Natural disasters, shootings, and other emergencies affect schools in this country on a recurrent basis, and when emergencies strike, most school administrators use the radio to communicate information and safety protocols. However, there are over 400,000 Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students in the U.S., as estimated by Cornell University's *Disability Statistics*, for whom an audio-based Public Announcement (PA) system would be ineffective.

"America's current public warning and emergency communication systems get a failing grade from deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf-blind individuals. There are too few effective options for communication and the options currently available have largely proved unreliable," stated Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network in their *Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Communication Access* report.

Even in the largest and most prominent schools for the Deaf in the country, the emergency response technology available is still not functionally equivalent. For example, at California School for the Deaf, Fremont (CSD), the only way their administrators could communicate an emergency besides a fire alert is for a supervisor to physically run into every classroom and instruct safety protocols to the teacher.

"Sending runners to notify of emergencies have always made us uneasy," said Ethan Bernstein, Dean of Students. "We have been searching for a safer solution that could communicate information simultaneously... but unfortunately, at the time, there wasn't an effective emergency announcement system for the Deaf."

"I want immediate and live emergency announcements at school for my kids," James Harmon said. Harmon has three children at CSD.

After Convo, a Deaf-owned telecommunications provider, learned from CSD Superintendent Dr. Sean Virnig that the PA system at CSD had serious limitations, the company saw an immediate need for a safer and effective visual emergency and public broadcasting system. The team at Convo created from the ground up Convo Announce, the world's first integrated Visual Notification System. Convo Announce runs on Convo TV, a multi-purpose videophone hardware.

Convo Announce gives users access to a visual notification system, video relay service, and video broadcasting capabilities all on one platform, making it a truly integrated experience. With this technology, users will be able receive announcements as Picture-In-Picture while in video calls—which has not been possible in the past. There are three types of announcements that administrators can make on Convo Announce: live video announcement, emergency (text) announcement, and public (text) announcement.

"America's current public warning and emergency communication systems get a failing grade from deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf-blind individuals."

# Press Release

Imagine this scenario: there is an emergency at a school for the Deaf. The staff and students simultaneously receive a notification of the situation via Convo Announce. A staff member minimizes the announcement on the screen in order to make a point-to-point call to a co-worker or a video relay service call to reach 911, while continuing to be notified of updates on the emergency. After the emergency is over, a school administrator broadcasts a video announcement to the school on the outcome of the situation in the Deaf students' own language—sign language. All of this occurs on the same platform: Convo TV.

Today, this is a reality at CSD. With 236 Convo TVs installed on campus, the Deaf students and staff have access to announcements, video calls, and more. Administrators can distribute school-wide or targeted announcements from any Convo TV on campus, easily accessed via a pin code.

"We're thrilled that we now have a technology that will ensure everyone gets the same information at the same time during an emergency," said Bernstein.

"With Convo Announce, I feel safe and assured that things will be all right in an emergency. As a Deaf person, I am no longer left behind and everyone is on the same page," said JAC Cook, Community Resources Coordinator at CSD. "This type of technology is what many Deaf schools are lacking and it is what many need... This is indeed a universal design for schools."

As a multi-purpose platform, Convo TV also includes a Deaf Ecosystem Directory, a central resource for finding and supporting Deaf-owned businesses in the United States, and an Internal Directory, a convenient way of contacting Deaf or hearing employees through point-to-point calls within a school, business, or organization.

"Since 9/11... [we] have asked the government and industry to come up with options so that deaf adults and students can get immediate information when there is an emergency. Thanks to Convo and CSD for this collaborative partnership. We call on school districts, state schools for the deaf, and other special programs to follow their example," said Claude Stout, Executive Director of Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

The road doesn't end here. Not only are there around 400 schools and programs nationwide for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, as recorded in the American Annals of the Deaf, without an effective visual emergency broadcasting system, there are hundreds of businesses and organizations for the Deaf in the U.S. looking for a safer solution as well. It is a goal of Convo's that every Deaf member in the country is prepared and aware during emergencies with Convo TV in schools and at work. No Deaf individual should be barred from having full access to information again.

"With Convo Announce, I feel safe and assured that things will be all right in an emergency. As a Deaf person, I am no longer left behind and everyone is on the same page."

To learn more, please email [press@convorelay.com](mailto:press@convorelay.com).

# Convo Announce

**420,000+**

Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in the U.S.

**419**

Schools and programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the U.S.

**0**

Effective emergency broadcast systems for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Until now.

Introducing

**convo**announce



# Convo Announce

An effective notification system for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community is . . .

## Integrated

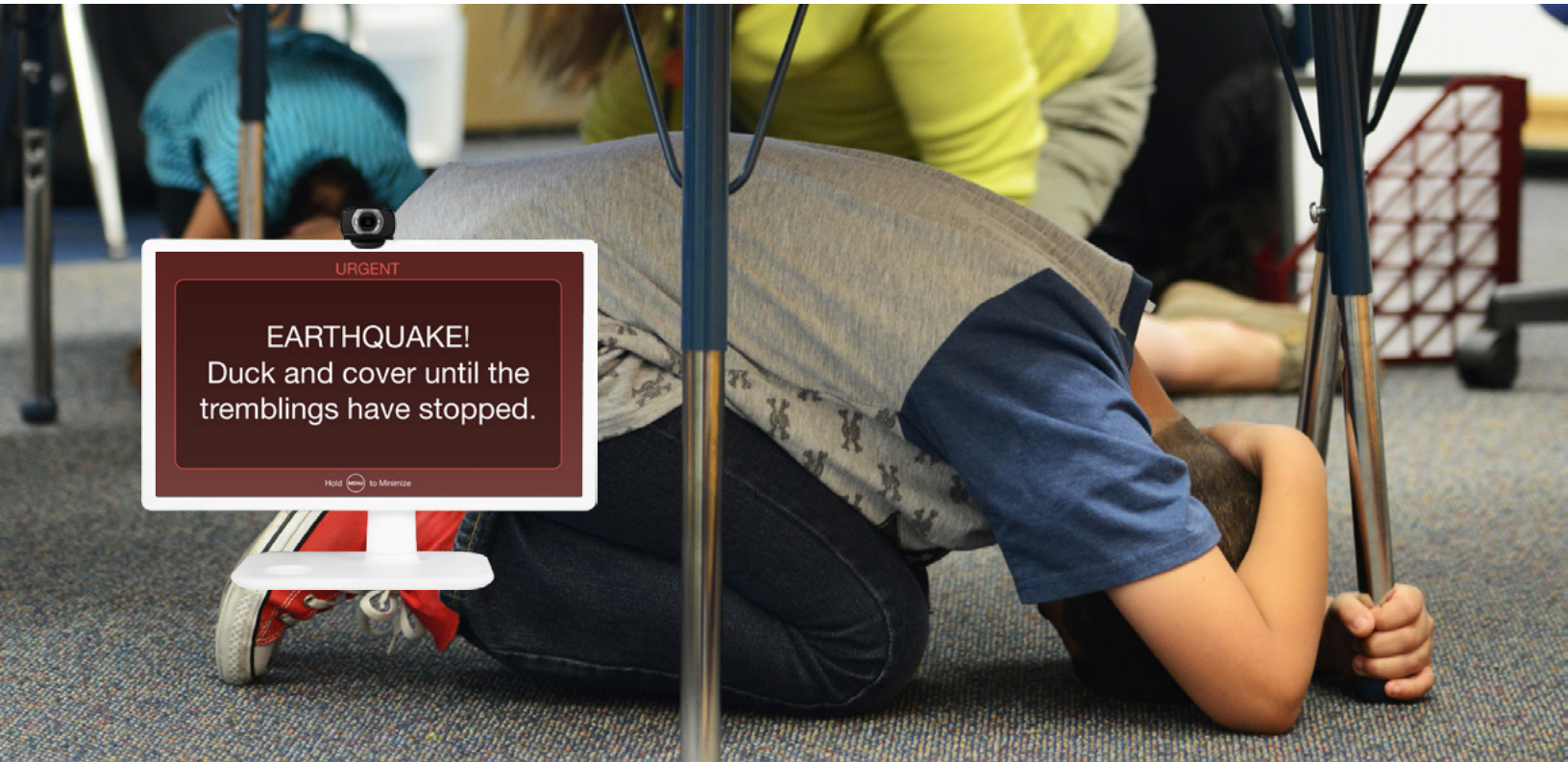
Video relay service\*, visual notification system, and video broadcasting capabilities on one platform.

## Deaf-centric

Developed with Deaf Lens. Language access, user experience, and community resources are revolutionized.

## Simultaneous

Public, emergency, or video announcements can be mass-communicated at the same time.



Due to concerns about the lack of a safe and functionally equivalent emergency and public broadcast system in Deaf schools, Convo saw an immediate need for a safer and effective visual emergency and public broadcasting system.

Convo Announce is the world's first platform to integrate visual emergency and public notification system with video relay service for schools, businesses, and organizations. Convo Announce has capabilities for customized and targeted announcements and it is run on Convo TV, a multi-purpose hardware.

*\*To learn more about video relay service, see page 14*

# Convo Announce

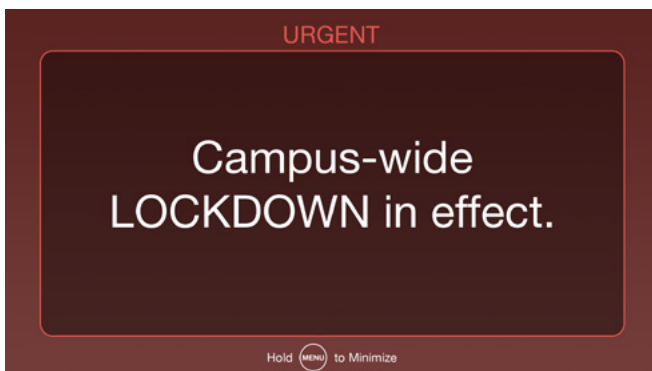
## Types of Announcement

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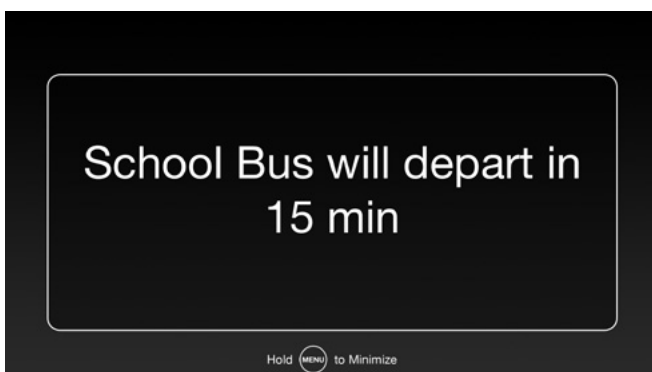
### Live Video Announcement

- Real-time video recording option allows administrators to make announcements in sign language
- Audio recording available
- Can be branded with school, business, or organization logo



### Emergency Announcement

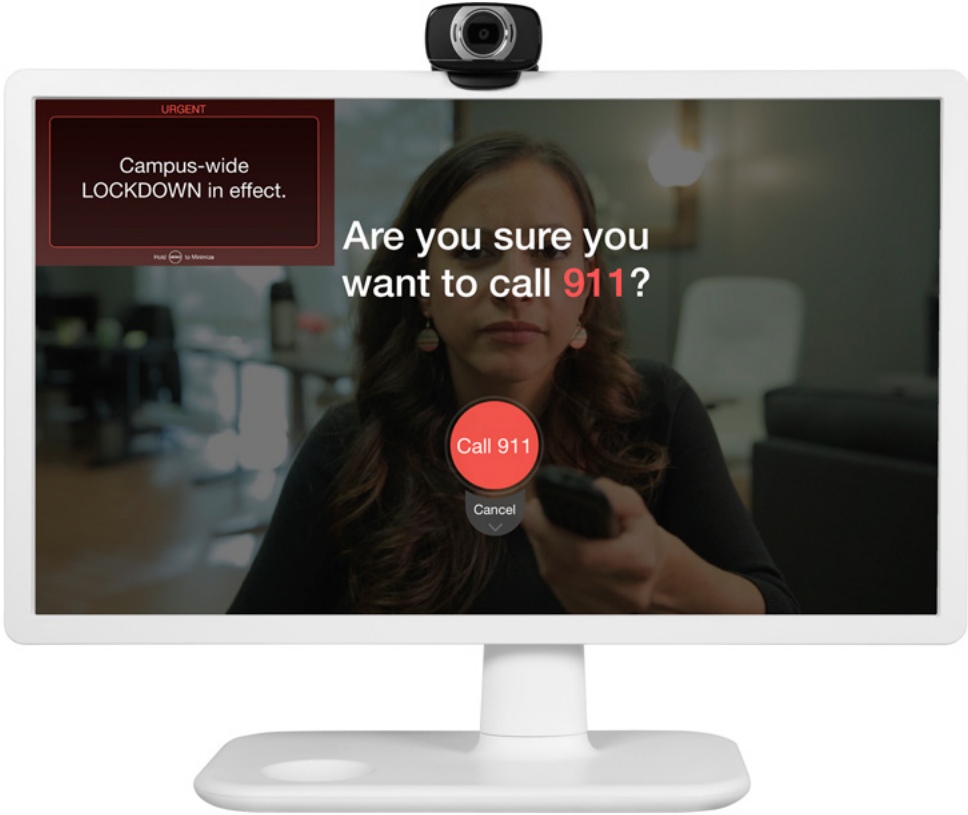
- Alerts of emergencies and protocols will appear with a red flashing interface
- No time limit on how long an emergency message can run
- Comes with pre-set messages
- Can edit or add new messages
- Can be broadcasted everywhere on-site or within designated areas



### Public Announcement

- General and daily messages will appear as text messages across the interface
- Comes with pre-set messages
- Can edit or add new messages
- Can be broadcasted everywhere on-site or within designated areas

# Convo Announce



## Functions of Convo Announce

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### Multi-Functional Interface

With our Picture-in-Picture feature, users can make or stay in calls during emergency, public, and video announcements.



### Access Points

Administrators can quickly make an announcement from any Convo TV on campus or workplace accessible by a pin code in order to broadcast a message.



# Convo TV



More than just a videophone

## What is Convo TV?

Convo TV is a multi-purpose platform that can be designed to fit your lifestyle and needs. With Convo TV, users can make point-to-point and video relay service calls, be notified of announcements, and customize the experience for their work or academic environment.

Run on a dedicated hardware, a standard Convo TV incorporates the following items:

- Apple Mac Mini
- BenQ VA Series VW2235H 21.5" TV monitor
- Logitech C615 webcam

# Convo TV

## Features of Convo TV

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### Convo Announce

The most advanced visual emergency and public broadcasting system for schools, businesses, and organizations with capabilities for customized and simultaneous announcements everywhere on-site or within designated areas.



### Deaf Ecosystem Directory

A central resource for finding and supporting Deaf-owned businesses in the U.S.



### Internal Directory

A convenient way of contacting Deaf or hearing employees through point-to-point calls within a school, business, or organization.

## Functions of Convo TV

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### Spatial Awareness

With our self-view and clean interface design, you can be aware of your surroundings while you work.



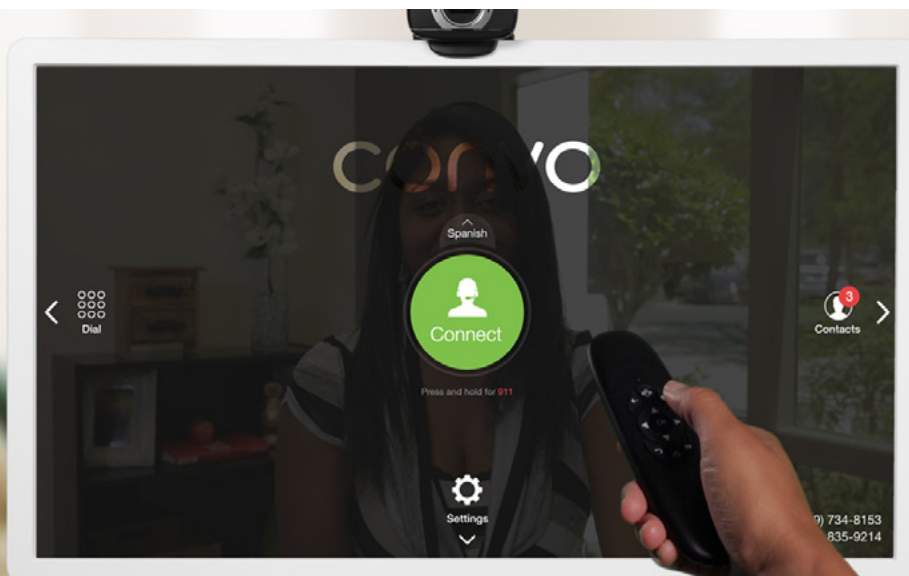
### Screen Ringing

A visual incoming-call notification that is adjustable from urgent, flashing strobe to slow, gentle glow.



### Intuitive Navigation

Gets you from point A to point B with ease and in the fewest clicks possible.



# Case Study: California School for the Deaf, Fremont



Convo learned from California School for the Deaf, Fremont (CSD) Superintendent Dr. Sean Virnig that CSD's Public Announcement (PA) system had serious limitations. For fire-related emergencies, a strobe light that is installed in every classroom and in common areas would begin flashing to indicate the evacuation protocol. However, for any other emergencies—such as a bomb threat, shooting on campus, gas leak, and many more—the only way to communicate safety protocol is for a supervisor to run in every classroom and tell the teacher what to do.

"There are too many classrooms for a supervisor to run to in case of emergency. That method doesn't feel safe enough to me," Veronica Harmon said, a parent of CSD students.

"I want immediate and live emergency announcements at school for my kids," James Harmon said. Veronica and James have three children at CSD who are in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and 7th grade.

With 236 installations of Convo TV, CSD is first school to experience Convo Announce. It is the first time the school has had a way to simultaneously distribute notifications. "Now I feel more secure in my ability to make administrative decisions for the students because I'm no longer behind with information whenever an emergency happens," said Adele Eberwein, Elementary Principal. "Convo Announce makes us safer."

## Fast Facts

1860

Founded

797

Number of  
Students & Staff

44

Emergency  
Drills Per Year

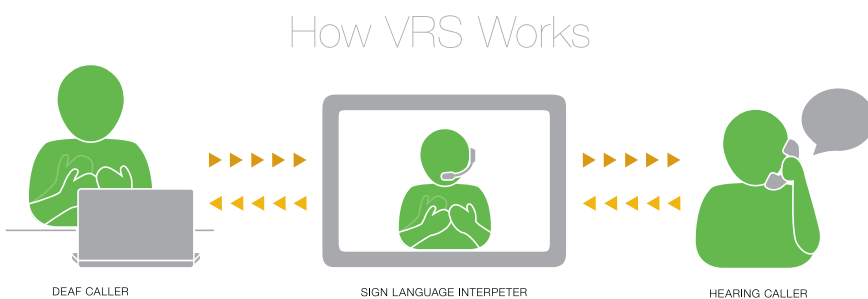
236

Convo TV  
Installations

# What is Video Relay Service?

The emergence and spread of video-conferencing solutions led to the birth of Video Relay Service (VRS), a concept that was pioneered in 1995 by Ed Bosson, who eventually became a Convo co-founder. With VRS, Deaf people can connect to a sign language video interpreter on a television or computer with a video camera and high-speed Internet to make video telephone calls in real-time. Deaf users can make VRS calls to and receive VRS calls from hearing people.

VRS is regulated by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and providers abide by FCC's policies to ensure functional equivalency, such as making their service available 24/7 and ensure that Video Interpreters connect to 80% of the calls within 120 seconds. VRS providers are also compensated for their costs from the Interstate TRS Fund, which the FCC oversees.



**How VRS Works:** There are three parties involved in a VRS call: the Deaf caller, the sign language video interpreter, and the hearing caller. When the Deaf caller signs his/her message for the hearing caller to the video interpreter, the video interpreter will relay the message through spoken English. When the hearing caller responds in spoken English, the video interpreter will relay the message through American Sign Language to the Deaf caller.

# Company Overview

In 2009, a group of Deaf experts from the telecommunications industry founded Convo Communications. Driven by the same communication vision, these individuals worked together to create the most natural calling experience possible for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Convo believes in drawing from the authentic experiences of its team of Deaf people and signers to develop its technologies and services. Because of this philosophy, Convo has continuously released products that not only provide functional equivalency but transcend the status quo. Recent examples include Convo Lights, released in 2014, and the latest product, Convo TV.

Today, Convo has expanded to six call centers and employs 180+ workers in the US and in the rest of the world.

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## Fast Facts

### About the Company

- Convo is the only Deaf-Owned and Deaf-Operated VRS company.
- Convo is privately owned with zero equity funding.
- Convo received a conditional Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Certificate in 2011.
- There are six Convo Call Centers, located in Pleasanton, CA (HQ); Roseville, CA; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Mobile, AL; Rochester, NY; and Austin, TX.
- There are currently over 180 employees working for Convo.

### Awards

*Marsters James C. Marsters Promotion Award, August 22, 2015*

Awarded to Convo for efforts to improve accessibility to telecommunications and media through promotion, marketing, or public relations.

*FCC Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility, June 1, 2015*

Awarded to Convo for innovation and advancing accessibility for persons with disabilities.

# Leadership Team



## **Jarrod Musano, Chief Executive Officer**

Jarrod brings 20 years of business acumen from the fields of real estate, sales, management, and development to the company. As CEO for Convo, he is primarily responsible for strategic planning and capital funding, as well working towards functional equivalency and home automation for the Deaf community. Jarrod's dream is to build a globally recognized brand known for its support and fostering of the Deaf Ecosystem.

He currently serves Mark Seven Deaf Foundation Board as well as Lexington School and Center for the Deaf.



## **Wayne Betts, Jr., Chief of User Experience**

Wayne is one of the founders of Convo. A Deaf person from a Deaf family, he understood the need for a VRS provider that truly understands the Deaf experience. As Chief of User Experience (CUX), Wayne works with all departments to ensure that the experience of using Convo is uniform as well empowering for the user.

A filmmaker at heart, Wayne teaches a summer course at Gallaudet University and works with children at Camp Mark 7 during the Deaf Film Camp session.



## **Jeff Rosen, Chief Strategy Officer and General Counsel**

Jeff is a third-generation Deaf person and has been active in the disability rights movement. In 2013 he was appointed by President Obama as the Chairperson of the National Council on Disability, which provides consultation and recommendations to the Administration and Congress on issues which impact people with disabilities.

Prior to Convo, Jeff worked as the general counsel to two other VRS providers from 2007 to 2014. He now handles Convo's legal needs and offers consultation for strategic development.



## **Evan Winegard, Chief Financial Officer**

Evan graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) with a B.A. in Economics. He has served as the CFO for companies such as Maraolo Italian Shoes & Accessories, Biscuits & Bath, and Communication Service for the Deaf. In 2010, Evan returned to RIT to obtain his Executive MBA degree.

In addition to his responsibilities at Convo, he also serves as CEO for AZS Express Shakopee and CFO for Infini Consulting.

# Press Coverage

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*Disability Statistics*. Cornell University. Web. 11 Nov. 2015. <<https://www.disabilitystatistics.org>>

# Contact Us

Send all inquiries and follow-up interview requests to [press@convorelay.com](mailto:press@convorelay.com).

We look forward to our convo!

## Social Media

  /convo     /convorelay