

Communication Facilitator (CF):

The Communication Facilitator (CF) program enables DeafBlind (DB) individuals with sign language (American Sign Language) to access any kind of video communications (for example videophone (VP), video relay services (VRS), Facetime (FT), Zoom, Skype, Google Hangout Meet, a few more to mention). CF is running and monitoring by Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program to provide CF services and video communication awareness for DB community members in Maryland.

A facilitator is a skilled signer who copies sign language from a caller as shown on a videophone screen and provides visual information to a DB person through close vision or tactile sign language during calls. CF service also benefits DB individuals by allowing them to freely express themselves in their own language and to communicate directly without worrying about English being their second language.

CF program trains both facilitators and CF users and coordinates services. CF service can be provided upon request at the DeafBlind person's home or in public places such as Starbucks or the library.

A facilitator is a sighted person, whether they be hearing or Deaf who uses tactile signs with the DB person so they can access a screen device with any video communication to make phone calls. It could be done on a computer, iPad, iPhone, TV monitor. DB people can use technology to make phone calls to their doctor (telemedicine/telehealth), dentist, or hair-cutter to make appointments or chat with his/her friends/family. CF provider would relay information to the DB individual.

If the DB individual does not have the proper equipment, the facilitator will have to bring equipment, provided by the MAT program, and the DB individual could use it with any video communication. CF Scheduler would encourage DB to apply for the MAT program and iCanConnect (ICC) to receive the equipment to meet their telecommunications needs.