



KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2013

TO: Robert S. Sherman, Director
Legislative Research Commission

CC: Thomas O. Zawacki, Secretary
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Jeff R. DeRouen, Executive Director
Public Service Commission

FROM: Virginia L. Moore, Executive Director
Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing 

RE: Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for
Fiscal Year 2012 - 2013

Enclosed is the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for the fiscal year 2012 - 2013. As per KRS 163.527, this report is to be submitted annually to the Kentucky General Assembly through the Legislative Research Commission.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Virginia.moore@ky.gov or at 502-573-2604 (V/T).

The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Since its inception in 1995, the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP), administered by the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH), has strived to serve the 647,000 deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired and deaf/blind consumers in Kentucky that apply through the TAP for specialized telecommunications equipment. From time to time, the program receives letters of thanks from grateful recipients. Below are some of the excerpts from FY 12-13.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank you for this phone! I served in the war and suffered a severe hearing loss. I use hearing aids but they do not do much good on the phone. The phone you provided, being hearing aid compatible and having a volume control, has been very helpful in allowing me to continue to communicate. Thank you so much for your services."

(Hard of Hearing Veteran – Berea)

"Thank you for my phone that allows me to read what people are saying to me (CapTel). Without it, I felt so alone and now you have given me self-confidence to keep trying. Your staff really inspired me and I am so glad I learned about KCDHH and the telephone program. I feel like I have a connection to a special group of people now, thank you."

(Severely Hard of Hearing Consumer - Paducah)

"I received my CapTel phone and was able to get assistance through Lifeline thanks to your staff! I want to thank you deeply for giving me a phone to talk to my family again."

(Severely Hard of Hearing Consumer - Georgetown)

"This is the first time in my life I have felt independent and able to contact someone if I had an emergency or needed help. I can also text my friends and communicate with them to do fun things and stay in touch so I don't feel so lonely."

(Deaf Consumer – Louisville)

"I wish to express my gratitude to you for all the good work you do in helping so many people communicate with the ones they love, as well as taking care of all your other everyday business. This is a wonderful service and I love my new phone, thank you, thank you, thank you."

(Late Deafened Consumer – Lexington)

"I am fifteen years old and received the wireless device and I feel more normal going out with other kids from school. My parents can contact me if needed but are not so protective since I can get help if I need it now. It makes me feel like I don't stand out as disabled any more, thank you!"

(Deaf Consumer – Bowling Green)

**Telecommunications Access Program
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2012 - 2013**

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Virginia L. Moore
Executive Director**

In compliance with KRS 163.527, this annual report is submitted to the Kentucky General Assembly through the Legislative Research Commission.

“The Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing shall provide to the General Assembly an annual report on the operation of the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP). The report shall be due on July 1 of each year, beginning July 1, 1995, and, at a minimum, provide:

The number of persons served and the number of TDDs distributed;

The revenues and expenditures of the program;

Discussion of any major policy or operational issues;

Any changes the Commission plans to make in the program that does not require legislative action; and

Any proposals for legislative changes in the program.

The number of persons served and the number of STE's distributed:

The Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) processed **2,534** applications during FY 13. The status of those applications for Specialized Telecommunication Equipment (STE) is as follows as of 6/28/2013, and definitions of the status are below:

Status	Total
Approved	132
Complete	773
Incomplete	236
Denied	22
Not Active	1329
Ready for Review	42
Total	2,534

DEFINITIONS:

Approved - Applications approved by receipt of the last needed piece of documentation and are placed on the waiting list to be ordered. Alternatively, equipment has been ordered but is pending delivery or has yet to be paid for during the FY.

Completed - Applications were approved and the STE was ordered, delivered to the consumer and paid for during the FY.

Incomplete - Applications are pending receipt of missing verification. Applications lacking information required to determine eligibility (approval/denial) are returned to the applicant with a request for additional information.

Denied – Applications denied because the applicants did not meet the eligibility criteria in order to receive the STE. Notification is sent to each applicant outlining the reason for ineligibility and an explanation of why they are ineligible within 60 days outlined by law.

Ready for Reviews – Applications have been reviewed at two levels and are pending the last supervisory review to ensure the correct approval date has been assigned per regulations and the equipment is the best selection for the consumer. These are the next applications to be moved to the approved status and have equipment ordered at the end of the month on a first come first served basis.

Not Active – These applications have been pending verification for more than twelve (12) months. During the twelfth month, the applicant is notified and given an additional 30 days to submit the missing verification. If no response is received, the application is changed to NA in the database and archived. If the applicant reapplies, he/she must complete a new application with all required verification.

773 consumers received 1,184 pieces of equipment during FY 12-13. A breakdown of these applicants by degree of hearing loss is listed below:

Degree of Hearing Loss	Total
Deaf	116
Deaf w/ Limited Vision	1
Hard-of-Hearing	402
Late-Deafened	18
Oral Deaf	2
Severely Hard-of-Hearing	228
Speech-Impaired	6
Total	773

During FY12-13, the TAP has verified our procedures for administering the program and determined that the equipment provided to consumers fits their needs and is able to provide them with accessible communication. We implemented changes in the regulations, limiting the use of wireless devices to applicants age thirteen and older, and clarified language regarding vendor distribution. We continue to work with the vendors to improve their service to our deaf and hard of hearing consumers. The program has added additional signaling devices to its offerings late this year, which will enhance the growth of the applications in FY 13-14.

Due to the addition of a new version of the captioned telephone, both landline and internet based, and increased television advertisements, the number of hard of hearing consumers served is on the increase. Wireless consumers that have received a device from the TAP are well satisfied, but continue to need a means of obtaining a lower rate of service, or assistance with service rates, to afford the plans that provide total access.

The number of speech-impaired consumers increased this year as those individuals learned the value of the wireless devices and the many viable applications available to make communication easier for them. The number of deaf with limited vision, or deaf-blind individuals served will increase in the next fiscal year due to our agencies involvement in the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program grant.

During FY 13-14, we are launching an aggressive public relations (PR) effort to contact all the professional providers, especially the audiologists, hearing instrument specialists and speech pathologists, to educate them on the benefits of participating in the TAP. We continue to broaden our focus from the urban areas to the rural areas to reach those who have yet to realize the offerings of both the TAP and KCDHH. As outreach to partner agencies continues, the diversity of consumers served and the number of TAP applicant's increases. This PR push began in May 2013 and will expand throughout the FY 13-14, with database tracking, which includes a method of determining where the referrals are coming from so we can determine which PR method is the most effective in serving the entire statewide population.

**Revenues and Expenditures of the Telecommunications Access Program
For fiscal year 2012 - 2013**

REVENUE	Budgeted Expenditures	Actual Expenditures
FY 2012 – 13 Allotment	864,500	864,500
Appropriation Increase		
Total Allotment		
Total Revenue collected	1,300,000	1,471,794
PERSONNEL EXPENSES		
State Employee Salary	183,200	182,719
State Employee Benefits/Fringe	84,400	83,996
Other Personnel Services	35,500	36,536
Other	21,400	21,249
Total Personnel Services	324,500	324,500
OPERATING EXPENSES- as the program expands, additional staff and supplies are needed to maintain the demand for applications and equipment		
Utilities	6,500	6,292
Other Rentals	34,000	33,552
Maintenance and Repairs	0	0
Postage and Related Services	12,500	15,785
Miscellaneous Services	124,000	128,052
Telecommunications	5,000	5,523
Computer Services	18,000	17,348
Supplies	20,000	21,546
TAP Equipment Purchases	250,000	229,667
Travel Expense/ Allowances	25,000	25,917
Miscellaneous Commodities	45,000	56,318
Total Operating Expenses	540,000	540,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	864,500	864,500
13-33-340-TBOO BALANCE	AS OF 6/28/13	0.00

Breakdown of Expenditures and the Cost Analysis during FY 12-13

STE (Telephone equipment) ALL TYPES and replacement of disconnected models	Units	Cost per FY
GeemarcAmpli 600-ER	24	2136
Ultratec 1140 Uniphone	9	2115
Superprint 4425 w/ASCII	4	1536
ClearSounds CSC 1000	82	8692
Clarity RC-200	1	329
UltratecCapTel 840	117	18077
UltratecCapTel 840i	42	7119
UltratecCapTel 880i	0	0
UltratecCapTel 800i	0	0
GeemarcAmpipower 60 black corded	98	7968
XLC 3.4 white cordless	169	15548
TeliTalk Speech Aid phone	1	1757
Deaf Blind Communicator	0	0
Blackberry Curve	6	299
Pan Tec	4	4
iPhone 4	183	18299
iPhone 4s	1	100
Wireless Access Devices	193	115800
Jitterbug – Graphite	11	5940
Jitterbug – Red	21	11340
*Total telephone equipment	966	217,059
Signaling Devices		
Bellman Signaler Package	15	5100
Bellman Tactile Signaler	2	310
Krown TA005 Visual Combo Signaler	201	7198
*Total Signaling Devices	218	12,608
*Total Equipment pieces / cost	1184	229,667

**Pricing on equipment fluctuated throughout the year as the vendors replaced equipment for backordered or discontinued models, or updated models were provided under contract. One Tactile, Visual or Auditory Alert Signaler can be distributed per applicant, in addition to the specialized telephone equipment selected, but not all applicants request a signaler unit and a tactile package unit was added toward the end of the fiscal year.*

Discussion of any major policy or operational issues:

KCDHH staff continues to work on archiving TAP applications digitally using an office scanner. This involves a systematic procedure to convert hardcopies of the applications into PDF documents and then upload them to the database for easy retrieval. Staff from the Department of Libraries and Archives (KDLA) approved the procedure and we are working to scan documents on file since the program's inception in 1995.

TAP equipment vendor contract renewals were processed during 2012 and contracts continue with the same vendors, with minor equipment changes for discontinued models. An agreement with the state's wireless provider allows us to order wireless devices through that contract rather than an individual contract. Some challenges were faced during the pilot and changes to administration of the program, qualifications policy and tracking of billing and documentation was revised to streamline the process ongoing. A new system went into effect May 1 and has simplified the process for administrative staff and consumers.

In order to increase awareness of the TAP and its offerings, and ensure that consumers select the most appropriate piece of equipment for their needs, demonstration sites are set up within the state to display available equipment. Partnerships with private, public and state agencies are utilized to minimize cost. Consumers can test equipment in eight convenient locations, an expansion of two sites this year, and professionals working at the established sites are trained to use the equipment so they can assist the consumer with selections make appropriate recommendations.

KCDHH's website was completely revamped this year, with additional information added regarding the TAP and vlogs loaded to explain the program, application process, and transition process for wireless consumers and any procedural changes that occur during the year. The program's FAQ's were updated with new procedures, equipment changes and explanation of the new system process. Additional challenges that have been faced with the wireless vendor have been resolved as we continue to learn about administering this program more effectively. All in-house forms for the program have been simplified and made more automated, although original applications are still required. Program brochures and the extensive inserts for landline, wireless and signalers have been streamlined to reduce consumer frustrations with equipment choices. The TAP application format has been simplified, with all information remaining the same until formal regulation changes are made to incorporate the new application by reference.

Kentucky's Relay provider (Sprint) renewed their contract with the state for another year. Sprint hired two outreach assistants in 2012, and those individuals are providing additional assistance in training consumers one-on-one, resolving equipment issues, and are collaborating in outreach efforts and instructing consumers in how to utilize the relay service. Corporate AT&T continues to collaborate with the TAP and Relay Service by including billing inserts annually advertising the availability of both programs and includes this information in on-line and hardcopy telephone directories. TAP program staff utilizes v-logs, videoconferencing, video relay interpreting, face time, instant

messaging, text messaging and email, as well as traditional voice lines, TDD, VCO, HCO, interpreters, and face-to-face contacts to promote the program and explain its requirements to consumers and professionals as well. The KCDHH PR team includes information on the TAP during every presentation, demonstration, booth, visitation or other outreach method utilized to promote the agency as a whole.

The vast majority of outreach for the TAP is accomplished through partnerships with other agencies, attendance at conferences and health fairs, word of mouth, and in-house advertising, which is primarily electronic based. However, the TAP once again took advantage of the opportunity to meet people face-to-face at the 2012 State Fair. Fairgoers took advantage of the KCDHH “Puzzled by Hearing Loss” booth sponsored by a partnership with Heuser Hearing Institute (HHI), and Sprint Relay. A fully interactive booth was provided during the 10-day event and educated fairgoers on living with a hearing loss and resources available to those affected by it, including assistive technology. TAP displayed the specialized telephone equipment provided through the program and allowed interested individuals to make telephone calls to test the equipment effectiveness for their hearing loss. Consumers were advised that the equipment is available at no cost to them, due to the small surcharge on all telecommunication access lines to support both TAP and the relay service. Hundreds of referrals, including applications for equipment and general requests to the agency, are generated from this outreach. TAP is scheduled to participate in the State Fair in 2013 and will again collaborate with Heuser Hearing Institute and Sprint to again provide an informational and interactive booth.

The TAP Advisory Board, which consists of consumers, agency oversight representatives and TAP staff, meets at least once annually face-to-face. During the April 2013 meeting, members discussed the changes made to the program process, the transition of 1,200 consumers to their own wireless accounts, the outreach plan, and the success of the Sprint CapTel advertisement on TV that brought in 162 referrals in two months. Sprint also brought wireless devices for the board members to test and give feedback. TAP also discussed the possibility of developing an application to be downloaded to wireless devices that would notify consumers of emergencies. This project would mirror one currently operating in Indiana.

Member terms were discussed and the three members with expiring terms all agreed to serve another term. Elected members may serve three consecutive four-year terms while law mandates other member positions. The current Chair of the board was replaced in April and serves through 2015, unless her term on the full Commission Board expires first, then a new Advisory Board Chair would be selected. Meetings will be held in October 2013 and April 2014.

Last Name	First Name	Membership Status	Term Ends
Crawford	Rebecca	*KCDHH Commissioner / Severely Hard of Hearing Consumer / Advisory Board Chair	2015
Ziehr	Jeremiah	*Deaf Consumer	2017
Fowler	Lewis	*Deaf Consumer	2015
Lawson	Johnny	*Speech-impaired Consumer	2017
Caldwell	Shannon	*Deaf/Blind Consumer	2015
McGirt	Melinda	*Hard of Hearing Consumer	2015
Timon	Betty	*Hard of Hearing Consumer	2017

Stevens	Jim	**Public Service Commission Representative	Law
Coyer	Nina	**KCDHH Commission Chair	Law
Skaggs	Forrest	*KY Telephone Association Representative	Law
Moore	Virginia	**KCDHH Executive Director	Law
Zulauf	Cole	***Program Coordinator	Staff
Wright	Wilma	***Administrative Specialist III	Staff
Holloway	Rowena	***Internal Policy Analyst III	Staff

*voting members **non-voting members, serve by law or ex-officio ***TAP staff

Amy Hatzel replaces Nina Coyer effective 7/1/13 as the KCDHH Commission Chair serving on the Board

The Internal Policy Analyst (IPA) III serves on the AT&T Advisory Board, the Telephone Relay Service (TRS) Advisory Board, the Vocational Rehabilitation Interagency Coordinators Council (ICC) and the Kentucky Outreach and Information Network (KOIN). The IPA III is appointed by the Governor in 2013 to again serve on the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network Advisory Board and the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC) Board, effective until February 2017. Written reports from these meetings are compiled and included in the agency's quarterly reports and archived as part of the agency's records retention.

The IPA III also serves on several emergency notification teams to represent KCDHH in the state's efforts to make wireless communication in emergencies a reality. With the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) rules issued 2011 requiring new generation 911 services, KCDHH continues to be involved in teleconference meetings to keep up with the progress of making this change a reality. Text messaging is the norm for most citizens, but is especially utilized by the deaf and hard of hearing community during emergencies. 80% of the national's disabled population utilizes wireless devices as their primary source of communication and the PSAPs need to be fully accessible by text messaging. Kentucky' emergency communication agencies must begin to meet these accessibility standards and serve the needs of today's citizens of the Commonwealth.

Staff members attended the following to promote the TAP during FY 12-13:

- Hearing Loss Association of America chapter meetings across the state;
- National Senior Citizens conference and workshops;
- Louisville Deaf Senior Citizens meetings;
- Kentucky Speech-Language Hearing Association conference;
- Paducah Public Library / Town Hall meeting;
- Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Administrators conference;
- National Association of State Relay Service Providers conference;
- Northern Kentucky Health Fair;
- Park Duvall Health Fair;
- Kentucky Audiologist Association conference;
- Kentucky Telephone Association conferences;
- Hearing Loss Association of American national conference;
- Kentucky Black Deaf Advocates Conference and workshops;
- Kentucky Association of the Deaf conference;
- Kentucky Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf conference;
- Kentucky Telephone Association conference;
- Lexington Hearing and Speech Center;
- Northern KY Senior Citizens Expo;
- Northern KY Services for the Deaf;

Western KY – Wendell Foster Campus Assistive Technology training;
Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Family Learning Vacation;
Kentucky Storytelling Conference and workshops;
Northern KY Senior Expo;
Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness Conference;
Infant & Toddler Institute on Deafness Conference;
Early Hearing and Identification Detection conference;
American Association of Retired Persons Health Fair;
Hearing Loss Association of Kentucky, Louisville, Lexington, Bardstown, Bowling Green
Chapter meetings and trainings;
Southeastern Association of Area Agencies for Aging Conference'
Mental Health Advisory Board workshops;
Main Street and Shiloh Baptist Church Activity Day presentations;
Transportation Cabinet Health Day;
Department of Aging Conference;
Heuser Hearing Institute Symposium;
Community Health Fairs statewide;
American Bar Association training and workshops;
Kentucky Society of Medical Assistants;
Kentucky Emergency Preparedness presentations and workshops;
Senior Citizen Associations statewide; and
Kentucky School for the Deaf - Pancake Bazaar.

Legislative Update:

- Per the 2005 *National Health Interview Survey*, Kentucky has 647,000 deaf and hard of hearing consumers within the Commonwealth.
- According to the *National Institutes of Health*, hearing loss is now the third most common health problem in this country, behind only arthritis and heart disease.
- Per the *Hearing Health Foundation*, 1 in 5 Americans (48 million people) suffer from some degree of hearing loss. There is a direct link to age and hearing loss with 18% of adults between 45 and 54 suffering a loss, 30% between 65 and 74 and 47% of adults over 75 have a hearing loss.
- Per the *2010 Census Brief on Older Populations*, the population 65 years and older increased by 15.1% in the last 10 years and the projections are that this number (220,000) will double by 2030.
- Per the *2011 Center for Disease Control and Prevention*, 14.9% of children between 6-19 years of age have a hearing loss in one or both ears.
- Per a 2010 report by the *National Institutes of Health*, one in five teenagers (20%) will incur a hearing loss at a much earlier age due to electronic devices used in the ears. This represents an overall increase in hearing loss of 30% for that age group.
- Per the *Department of Veterans Affairs* the most prevalent service-connected disability for veterans (60%) was tinnitus and hearing loss, a total of 1.5 million veterans receiving compensation, and 148,000 new recipients receiving compensation in 2011 for “profound unusable hearing”
- American’s with a disability, including hearing loss, are now the largest minority in the United States, *Per the 2010 American Community Survey Data issued by the Census Bureau*

- Per a 2009 *Federal Communications Commission (FCC) report*, 25% of the US population has a disability that effects communication. As a national priority this issue is being addressed by the FCC with changes to the new generation 911 (NG911) network, which states that by 2014 PSAP's must be able to accept text emergency messages, giving our population equal access to this mode of notification

Kentucky became a state model for the national association and other state programs with implementation of our wireless distribution plan and other states are requesting to duplicate the programs policy and procedures. Kentucky again has become a leader in providing access to state of the art telecommunications for deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired consumers and could become a leader in providing access to emergency notifications via text messaging statewide with implementation of an application to access notifications and working with PSAPs to modernize acceptance of text messaging during emergency requests.

Legislative Plans for FY 13-14:

KCDHH is working with the Cabinet Secretary, the Kentucky Department of Education and Legislators to introduce legislation that would require children to have a hearing test by a certified professional prior to entrance in school. Children are currently required to have dental exams and vision testing, so hearing testing should also be required.

We are also working with legislators to introduce a bill that would require audiologists to provide information regarding KCDHH services to clients they see for hearing testing and provision of equipment (i.e., hearing aids)

We are also seeking support for possible Legislation to assist with the purchase of hearing aids for adults, as very few insurance companies provide any coverage and this is a common request received by consumers contacting KCDHH for services.

Plans for FY 13-14, not involving Legislative changes include:

The expansion of TAP, administered per KRS 163.525, to include wireless devices will continue to evolve and grow as demand increases and technology changes. The selected device(s) provide affordable, portable, consistent, reliable and secure wireless data and voice communications for all eligible applicants. Regulations are in place outlining criteria for approving applications, outlining a processing system for vendor participation and specifying maintenance and repair procedures. Amendments to the regulations will be completed to incorporate changes to the current application to make it less confusing and simplified for applicants.

Deaf individuals increasingly require access to videophone technology, which allows them to communicate with deaf or hearing callers through their native language, American Sign Language (ASL), because many deaf consumers consider English as their second language. Connect Kentucky is a template for the world in the expansion and implementation of broadband technology throughout the Commonwealth to reduce the digital divide. Although broadband may now be more accessible it is still not affordable for many of the "have nots" throughout the state. Deaf and hard of hearing

constituents often survive on a limited income and cannot afford high speed technology in their homes. Through Connected Nation, Project Endeavor and other such federally based programs, funds should be utilized to reduce the cost of broadband services for this population, as access to communication is a basic human right as well as a safety concern for many of our citizens. KCDHH continues to work in partnership with agencies implementing these programs, such as the National Association of the Deaf, to include the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing citizens, especially in the realm of emergency notifications.

The Internal Policy Analyst III, Program Coordinator and Administrative Specialist III plan to attend the National Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) conference to be held in September 2013 in New Mexico. This conference highlights new and emerging technology utilized by state programs and provides an opportunity to network with other state program managers to improve services to our consumers and include emerging equipment in our state distribution program as well as learn of Federal changes in funding regulations. This year many states are considering adding a variety of wireless devices to their programs and this conference will provide invaluable input as to which devices are most successful in other distribution programs.

As part of the expanded outreach TAP has planned, a mail out of posters, tabletop displays, sample applications and inserts and a DVD explaining the program will be sent to audiologists and other professionals that work with TAP.

Outreach plans for FY 12-13 include partnerships with the following entities:

Sprint Relay Service;	Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation;
AT&T;	Kentucky Office of Aging;
Kentucky Telephone Association;	Kentucky Department of Education;
Kentucky Association of the Deaf;	Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs;
National Association of the Deaf	Kentucky Speech-Language and Hearing Association:
Alexander Graham Bell Association;	First Steps;
Hearing Loss Association of America;	Heuser Hearing Institute;
American Association of Retired Persons;	Lexington Speech and Hearing Center;
Kentucky School for the Deaf;	Speech and Language Pathologists;
Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation;	Audiologists, Hearing Instrument Specialists; and
Kentucky Office for the Blind;	Area Developmental Districts
Kentucky Assistive Technology Services Network;	

What TAP accomplishes as a program, providing basic telecommunication services, goes to the core of what our consumers are able to give back to society. We impact the lives of these citizens by providing services that allow them to communicate on the phone, receive emergency notifications should a state or national emergency occur, and participate equitably in work and life activities.

