



EDUCATION and LABOR CABINET
Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: July 1, 2023

TO: Jay D. Hartz, Director
Legislative Research Commission

CC: Jamie Link Secretary
Education and Labor Cabinet

Kent A. Chandler, Chairman
Public Service Commission

FROM: Anita Dowd, Executive Director
Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anita Dowd".

RE: Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023

Per KRS 163.527, the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 is to be submitted to the Kentucky General Assembly through the Legislative Research Commission on July 1 of each year the program is in operation.

If you have any questions, please contact me at Anita.Dowd@ky.gov or at 502-573-2604.

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 700,000 + deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, and speech impaired consumers in Kentucky (17% of the population) that apply for specialized telecommunications equipment. From time to time, we receive calls, emails, cards, and letters of thanks from grateful recipients. Below are some of the excerpts from FY 2023.

“Appreciate everything you all do, thank you for this equipment.”

(Hard of Hearing Senior - Versailles)

“I appreciate so much that there are people like you trying to help me hear and use things like a phone.”

(Hard of Hearing Senior – Bethelridge)

“Appreciate the program.”

(Severely Hard of Hearing Senior-Georgetown)

“I have received! my equipment and it is wonderful!”

(Severely Hard of hearing Senior -Foster)

“I really appreciate the iPad and it helps me with my communication needs.”

(Deaf Consumer – Danville)

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

**Telecommunications Access Program
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2023**

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Anita Dowd, Executive Director**

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

“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 (Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf) TDDs (*equipment*) 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.”

NOTE: There are currently no major policy or operational issues. The Commission does not intend to make changes in the program and there are currently no proposals for legislative changes in the program.

The number of persons served, and STE distributed:

The Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) served **647** consumers during FY 2023 and provided **762** pieces of Specialized Telecommunications Equipment (STE) to eligible applicants. In addition, KCDHH provided TAP applications in bulk to service providers who work with deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-impaired patients/clients. These providers typically work with their clients to ensure that applications are filled out correctly and signed by an appropriate licensed professional in accordance with 735 KAR 1:010. They may also offer recommendations as to which devices will best meet their clients' needs. Many of them have taken time to become familiar with the TAP program as well as other programs and services offered by KCDHH, becoming informal partners in the agency's ongoing efforts to serve the needs of this marginalized population.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) collects funds for TAP and the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), per KRS 278.5499, through a small surcharge on all telecommunications access lines. The PSC distributes those funds as appropriated to KCDHH to administer the TAP and to the state contracted relay provider (Hamilton Telecommunications, Inc.) to administer TRS within the state.

The iPhone and iPad continue to be the most requested devices, as mobile technology continues to meet the diverse and unique communication needs of many consumers who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired. For many in this vulnerable population, these devices, which are preloaded with specialized telecommunications apps, are essential during an emergency and dealing with daily life. When activated, certain apps can caption any speech detected by the device's existing microphone. FaceTime and similar apps which provide face-to-face communication allow users to read lips and/or communicate using sign language based on which communication mode is effective for them. Other apps provide access to sign language interpreters when necessary. Amplified and captioned phones continue to be beneficial to individuals who may not use sign language, have lip reading skills, or have usable residual hearing that allows for understanding spoken language at an increased volume. The TAP devices help deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and speech impaired Kentuckians access vital services, emergency information, stay in touch with family, and reduce the sense of isolation, especially for seniors who live alone or in nursing homes. In addition, specialized signaling devices alert consumers of incoming calls and provide the added benefit of connecting with smoke/CO2 detectors for home safety.

**Revenues and Expenditures of the Telecommunications Access Program
For fiscal year 2023**

REVENUE		Budgeted Expenditures		Actual Expenditures
FY 2023 Allotment		1,391,000		1,391,000
Total Revenue collected				1,391,000
PERSONNEL EXPENSES				
State Employee Salary		252,800		182,572
State Employee Benefits		242,000		207,646
Other Personnel Services		125,800		127,124
Other		0		0
Total Personnel Services		620,600		517,342
OPERATING EXPENSES				
Utilities		6,500		6,347
Other Rentals		32,000		31,979
Maintenance and Repairs		0		0
Postage Services		4,500		3,697
Miscellaneous Services		26,500		29,010
Telecommunications		5,800		3,094
Computer Services		9,700		5,718
Supplies		12,400		11,319
TAP Commodities		3,500		3,557
TAP Equipment Purchases		610,500		504,740
Travel Expense/ Allowances		10,600		5,853
Miscellaneous Commodities		48,400		47,381
Total Operating Expenses		770,400		652,695
TOTAL EXPENSES		1,391,000		1,170,037
13-33-340-TB00 BALANCE		0		220,963