



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, 2024

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 2024

Per KRS 163.527, the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for the fiscal year 2024 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 FY2024.

“Appreciate what we offer to help accommodate the hearing-impaired population.”

(Middle-aged Male – Argillite)

“My 17-year-old son received his iPhone from KCDHH this week! He is so incredibly grateful! Thank you so much!”

(Mother of Hard of Hearing Son – Independence)

“I am very thankful and appreciative to have received the equipment.”

(Hard of Hearing Senior – Somerset)

“Just wanted to let you know that my mother-in-law received her new telephone and signaler yesterday. Thank you for all your help in getting the application to us and then processed. It is very much appreciated!”

(Daughter in law of Severely Hard of Hearing Senior-Dunmor)

“We greatly appreciate the services and assistance you provide.”

(Daughter of Hard of Hearing mother – Florence)

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 2024**

**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 **835** consumers during FY 2024 and provided **948** 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 for managing daily life. These apps not only enable real-time captioning of any speech detected by the device's microphone but also include functionalities such as FaceTime and similar apps. These provide face-to-face communication, allowing users to read lips and/or communicate using sign language, depending on the most effective mode for them. Other apps offer access to sign language interpreters when necessary. Amplified and captioned phones are crucial for individuals who may not use sign language, lack lip-reading skills, or have usable residual hearing that enables understanding of spoken language at increased volumes. Additionally, KCDHH is working to reintegrate telephones with electrolarynx devices into the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) pending completion of the procurement process. These devices are vital for speech-impaired consumers, providing them with essential tools to communicate more effectively.

The TAP (Telecommunications Access Program) devices assist deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and speech-impaired Kentuckians in accessing vital services, emergency information, staying in touch with family, and reducing the sense of isolation, particularly for seniors who live alone or in nursing homes. Additionally, specialized signaling devices not only alert users to incoming calls but also integrate with smoke/CO2 detectors for enhanced home safety. This comprehensive use of telecommunications technology in mobile devices like iPhones and iPads underscores their indispensable role in fostering accessible communication and safety for the hearing and speech-impaired communities.

Telecommunications Access Program FY 2023-2024 Revenue and Expenditures		
TAP Appropriation		1,405,400
Total TAP Revenue Collected		1,405,400
PERSONNEL EXPENSES		
State Employee Salary	76,115	
State Employee Benefits	81,410	
Other Personnel Services	29,776	
Other Misc Services	121,295	
Total Personnel Services	308,596	308,596
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Utilities	4,696	
Other Rentals	29,088	
Maintenance and Repairs	1,453	
Postage Services	2,381	
Miscellaneous Services	22,859	
Telecommunications	6,335	
Computer Services	18,107	
Supplies	13,700	
TAP Commodities	3,215	
TAP Equipment Purchases	813,204	
Travel Expense/ Allowances	4,449	
Miscellaneous Commodities	51,930	
Total Operating Expenses	971,416	971,416
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,280,011	1,280,011
Total TAP Revenue Collected		1,405,400
13-33-340-TB00 BALANCE		125,389