



KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR


MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2011

TO: Robert S. Sherman, Director
Legislative Research Commission

CC: Joseph U. Meyer, Secretary
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Jeff 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 2010 - 2011

Enclosed is the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for the fiscal year 2010 - 2011. 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 provided equipment to 19,282 applicants. From time to time the program receives letters of thanks from grateful recipients. Below are some of the excerpts from 2010-2011.

"I want to say to you all thank you so much for the wireless phone you gave me. It helps me so much when I get stuck without communication. Once it saved my life when I had an accident and could only text for help. I am really impressed!! I am feeling very lucky to live in Kentucky where things like this are happening for people with a hearing loss. Thank you!"

(Deaf consumer – Louisville)

"I received my amplified telephone and visual / auditory signaler and I am enjoying it very much. It has been a wonderful gift at this time in my life. At 97 I never thought I would hear on the phone again and now I can have conversations with everyone!"

(Severely Hard of Hearing Consumer – Lexington)

"I received my wireless phone and am truly blessed and so grateful for this way to communicate, especially during emergencies! I am thankful for all you do for the deaf in Kentucky and hope God blesses you in return for all you do for us.

(Deaf Consumer – Shelbyville)

"Thank you so much for the Captioned telephone that I can talk on. Now I don't have to keep asking someone to repeat what was said, sometimes more than once. My family is especially happy for me also. God Bless all your endeavors."

(Late Deafened Consumer – Covington)

"I received my wireless device and am still learning to use it but wanted to thank you for granting deaf and hard of hearing such a wonderful device to enhance our life styles. I now feel so much safer when I am out or traveling. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

(Deaf Consumer – Ludlow)

"I am 16 and received the wireless device and now I feel like all the other kids in school. Also my parents can stay in contact with me so I feel more normal going out with other kids from school. Thank you for helping the deaf of all ages."

(Deaf Consumer – Owensboro)

**Telecommunications Access Program
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2010 - 2011**

**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 1st 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 **2,782** applications during FY 11. The status of those applications for Specialized Telecommunication Equipment (STE) is as follows as of 6/30/2011.

Status	Total
Approved	166
Complete	1,268
Incomplete	308
Denied	21
Not Active	1,019
Total **	2,782

** Total status count does not match the number of new applications received during the FY due to receipt of some applications in a previous FY and processing in the current FY, or pending incomplete into the next FY.

DEFINITIONS:

Approved - Applications approved and on the ordered list. 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.

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.

1,230 consumers received 1,419 pieces of equipment during FY 10-11. A breakdown of these applicants by degree of hearing loss is listed below:

** Total status count does not match the breakdown of individuals served by hearing loss as some applications are received during one FY and processed during another FY.

Degree of Hearing Loss	Total
Deaf	391
Deaf w/ Limited Vision	6
Deaf-Blind	2
Hard-of-Hearing	557
Late-Deafened	13
Severely Hard-of-Hearing	258
Speech-Impaired	3
Total	1,230

During FY 10–11, the overall number of applications increased by 37%, primarily due to the fact that wireless devices were added to the program. The numbers of deaf consumers served increased by 1,800% compared to a 2.25% decrease in the previous year. Wireless devices have been a much needed addition to serve the communication needs of particularly the deaf, but also of many severely hard of hearing and speech impaired consumers. During FY 11-12 we anticipate an additional increase of at least 25% overall, once some of the glitches in the wireless distribution have been better resolved with the vendor. We need to continue to promote outreach to all facets of this community and stay on the cutting edge with provision of emerging technology to serve these consumers. The overwhelming surge in deaf consumer participation during the last FY has been enhanced by the development of technology to serve the various modes of communication needed by these consumers.

The number of hard of hearing individuals in the Commonwealth, which includes those self identified as hard of hearing, severely hard of hearing and late deafened, continues to increase as the population ages. However, over the last FY our distribution of devices to this population decreased by 11% as the surge of consumers requesting the CapTel phone has plateaued. Some hard of hearing individuals have been served or are waiting to be served by a wireless device but have been slower in requesting the alternate communication devices, somewhat due to the fact that these consumers tend to be aging and reluctant to learn how to use new technology. The TAP also served 1% deaf-blind individuals, a slight increase over FY 09-10 and .2% of speech impaired individuals, a slight decrease from FY 09-10. However, as the wireless program expands and outreach to partner agencies continues, the diversity of consumers served is expected to increase. Deaf individuals have been waiting for this opportunity for many years and flooded the program with applications during FY 10-11 and are now spreading the word about the availability of wireless through the TAP.

**Revenues and Expenditures of the Telecommunications Access Program
For fiscal year 2010-2011**

REVENUE	Budgeted Expenditures	Actual Expenditures
FY 2011 Allotment	783,000	783,000
Appropriation Increase		
Total Allotment		
Total Revenue collected	1,127,692.20	1,127,692.20
PERSONNEL EXPENSES		
State Employee Salary	155,000	153,520
State Employee Benefits/Fringe	64,000	63,326
Other Personnel Services	60,000	60,355
Other	36,800	36,800
Total Personnel Services	315,800	314,001
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Utilities	5,400	5,361
Other Rentals	22,000	21,892
Maintenance and Repairs	0	0
Postage and Related Services	2,600	2,784
Miscellaneous Services	2,000	2,335
Telecommunications	5,200	5,165
Computer Services	6,700	6,662
Supplies	20,000	20,819
TAP Equipment Purchases	380,000	380,750
Travel Expense/ Allowances	6,800	6,728
Miscellaneous Commodities	16,500	16,503
Total Operating Expenses	467,200	468,999
TOTAL EXPENSES	783,000	783,000
13-33-340-TBOO BALANCE	AS OF 6/30/11	FY 10-11

Breakdown of Expenditures and the Cost Analysis during FY 10-11

STE (Telephone equipment)	Units	Unit Price	Cost per FY
Ultratec 1140 Uniphone	0	\$235.00	0
Superprint 4425 w/ASCII	5	\$382.99	\$1,914.95
ClearSounds CSC 1000 white corded	131	\$106.00	\$13,886.00
Clarity RC-200	0	\$329.00	0
Serene CL60 Black Cordless	267	\$92.00	\$24,564.00
ClearSounds CS Talk500 ER	14	\$89.00	\$1,246.00
Ultratec CapTel 800	33	\$420.50	\$13,876.50
Ultratec CapTel 800i	10	\$457.50	\$4,575.00

Ultratec CapTel 800-99	41	\$99.00	\$4,059.00
Ultratec CapTel 800i-99	8	\$99.00	\$792.00
Geemarc Ampipower 60 black corded	127	\$80.33	\$10,201.91
Clarity W425 PRO white cordless	54	\$75.98	\$4,102.92
TeliTalk Speech Aid phone	1	\$925.00	\$925.00
Deaf Blind Communicator	1	\$8,284.00	\$8,284.00
Blackberry Bold	20	\$650.00	\$13,000.00
Motorola Backflip	11	\$650.00	\$7,150.00
iPhone 3	5	\$650.00	\$3,250.00
iPhone 4	383	\$650.00	\$248,950.00
Jitterbug – Graphite	7	\$540.00	\$3,780.00
Jitterbug – Red	11	\$540.00	\$5,940.00
Jitterbug – White	2	\$540.00	\$1,080.00
Total telephone equipment	1,131		\$371,577.28
Signaling Devices			
Bellman Tactile Signaler	0	\$155.00	0
Krown TA005 Visual Combo Signaler	288	\$31.85	\$9,172.80
Total Signaling Devices	288		\$9,172.80
Total Equipment pieces / cost	1,419		\$380,750.08

One Tactile Signaler or Combo Visual Alert / Auditory Signaler, in addition to the specialized telephone equipment is distributed per consumer, but not all applicants request or receive a signaler unit with their telephone equipment and some may request a signaler only.

Discussion of any major policy or operational issues:

KCDHH staff developed a strategy to archive 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. The procedure was approved by staff from the Department of Libraries and Archives (KDLA) and they are working with us to scan documents on file since the program's inception in 1995.

TAP equipment vendor contract renewals were processed during 2011 and contracts continue with the same vendors, with one equipment change, effective July 1, 2011. Several pieces of technology the TAP desired to offer were not available by companies on contract and therefore sole source agreements were processed to provide state of the art equipment, especially for deaf blind consumers.

In order to increase awareness of the program and its offerings, and ensure that consumers select the most appropriate piece of equipment for their needs, additional demonstration sites were established within the state to display available equipment.

Partnerships with private, public and state agencies were utilized to minimize cost for this project. Consumers can now test equipment at a more convenient location and professionals working at the established sites are able to see and use the equipment before making recommendations.

In order to effectively explain operations to individuals receiving wireless devices the agency produced and posted vlogs to the KCDHH website, including captioning. A list of frequently asked questions was also developed and sent to each consumer at the time the device was shipped to their homes. The number of calls to the agency has increased as the learning curve for device usage was anticipated and all agency staff is assisting with the additional workload for TAP.

A Request for Bid (RFB) was submitted by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for Kentucky's Relay provider service and Sprint won the contract effective March 1, 2011. A new partnership is in progress and Sprint has agreed to support outreach efforts across the state by training consumers to assist other consumers with installation and training issues for equipment utilizing the relay service. AT&T continues to partner with the TAP by once again including billing inserts to advertise the program, and to extend our outreach capabilities. TAP program staff utilizes videoconferencing, video relay interpreting, instant message and email, as well as traditional voice lines, interpreters, and face to face contacts to promote the program and explain its requirements to professionals and consumers. The KCDHH Outreach team includes information on the TAP during every presentation, demonstration, booth, visitation or other outreach method utilized.

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 electronic advertising (i.e., newsletter, eblitz). However, TAP took advantage of the opportunity to meet people face-to-face at the 2010 State Fair. Fairgoers took advantage of the KCDHH "Puzzled by Hearing Loss" booth sponsored by a partnership with Heuser Hearing Institute (HHI), and Hamilton 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 new technology. TAP displayed specialized equipment and allowed those interested to actually make local telephone calls to test the equipment effectiveness for their hearing loss. TAP is scheduled to participate in the State Fair in 2011 and will again partner with Heuser Hearing Institute and Sprint, Kentucky's Relay provider.

The TAP Advisory Board, which consists of consumers and agency representatives, meets at least once annually face-to-face. During the October 2010 and April 2011 meetings, members discussed the inclusion and implementation of wireless devices into the program, and challenges and barriers consumers might be expected to face. Members agreed to facilitate training within their area if needed to support the distribution of all equipment within TAP. At the October meeting, members also discussed renewal of three membership terms and glitches that were occurring with the wireless vendor. Updates on daily program activities and modified procedures are also provided to members via electronic mail between face-to-face meetings.

The current voting members*, Ex-Officio members** and TAP staff*** of the TAP Advisory Board are listed below. Consumer terms expire on a rotating basis effective June 30th and are replaced as needed by the board. During FY 10-11, three member terms expired and all three agreed to serve another term, which was approved by the full Commission during the April 2011 meeting. New terms begin July 1, 2011. Elected members may serve three consecutive four-year terms while law mandates other member positions. The current Chair of the board will be replaced at the July 2011 full Commission meeting with another Commissioner as her term on the KCDHH Board is expiring. A new Chair will be announced to the Advisory Board via email in July.

Last Name	First Name	Membership Status	Term Ends
Timon	Betty	*KCDHH Commissioner / Severely Hard of Hearing Consumer / Advisory Board Chair	2012
Ziehr	Jeremiah	*Deaf Consumer	2013
Fowler	Lewis	*Deaf Consumer	2015
Lawson	Johnny	*Speech-impaired Consumer	2013
Caldwell	Shannon	Deaf / Severely Hard of Hearing Consumer	2015
McGirt	Melinda	*Hard of Hearing Consumer	2015
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	***Document Processing Specialist III	Staff
Wright	Wilma	***Administrative Specialist II	Staff
Holloway	Rowena	***Internal Policy Analyst III	Staff

The Internal Policy Analyst (IPA) III served during FY 10 as Secretary for the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program Administrators (TEDPA) national organization but stepped down effective January 1, 2011. The IPA III also 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 was appointed by the Governor in 2009 to serve on the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network Advisory Board and the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC) Board, effective until February 2013. 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. Several Federal Communication Commission (FCC) rules have been issued in FY 10-11 to enforce new generation 911 services and KCDHH continues to track this progress. Text messaging has become the norm for most citizens, but is especially utilized by the deaf and hard of hearing community during emergencies. In the U.S. more than 55 million people have been identified as having a disability, constituting over 21% of the total population. Within the disabled population 80% utilize wireless devices as their primary source of communication. Providing alerts on wireless devices must be

considered during the state's emergency communication scenario planning to truly meet accessibility standards and serve the needs of today's citizens of the Commonwealth.

Staff members attended the following to promote the TAP during FY 10 -11:

Hearing Loss Association of America chapter meetings across the state;
National Senior Citizens conference and workshops;
National Association of the Deaf 50th Biennial Conference;
Kentucky Speech-Language Hearing Association conference;
Pennyriple Area Development District training;
Barren River Area Development District training;
Attorney General End Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Conference;
Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Administrators conference;
National Association of State Relay Service Providers conference;
Northern Kentucky Health Fair;
Kentucky Black Deaf Advocates Conference and workshops;
Kentucky Association of the Deaf 43rd Biennial Conference;
Kentucky Telephone Association conference;
Lexington Hearing and Speech Center event;
Northern KY Senior Citizens Expo;
Northern KY Services for the Deaf training;
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;
American Association of Retired Persons Health Fair;
Hearing Loss Association of America National Conference;
Southeastern Association of Area Agencies for Aging Conference'
KY Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf conference;
Mental Health Advisory Board;
DeaFestival Kentucky 2010 – Horse Cave;
Main Street and Shiloh Baptist Church Activity Day presentations;
Jessamine County Senior Citizen presentation;
Transportation Cabinet Health Day;
Department of Aging Conference;
Heuser Hearing Institute Symposium;
Community Health Fairs statewide;
American Bar Association;
Kentucky Society of Medical Assistants;
Senior Citizen Associations statewide; and
Kentucky School for the Deaf - Pancake Bazaar.

Legislative Update:

Per the National Health Institute, one in five teenagers (20%) will incur a hearing loss at a much earlier age due to devices used in the ears. This represents an overall increase in hearing loss of 30% for that age group. Approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss, with that number expected to double by 2030. Kentucky has the 2nd highest disability rate among adults age 21-64 (22%) and ranks 3rd per capita nationally in people identified as deaf or hard of hearing, which equates to a greater need for the specialized equipment provided by TAP.

Although a provider for wireless equipment was finalized in July 2010, distribution did not begin until October 2010. Several glitches with accounting, tracking and reporting requirements have been identified during the pilot portion of the distribution and are currently being addressed with the vendor. This slightly reduced the numbers of consumers served as some delays in receipt of equipment became time consuming.

The inclusion of wireless devices not only allows technologically current access to telephone communication but could also provide equitable access to notification during emergencies. 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.

Legislative Plans for FY 11-12:

Implementation of an effective emergency notification system for all citizens of the Commonwealth is vitally needed. Deaf and hard of hearing consumers often do not have access to live newscasts or radio broadcasts which give instructions for dealing with natural disasters. TAP's distribution of wireless devices could enable our consumers to receive emergency notification warnings, if only they can be provided in text format. The Department of Emergency Management (DEM), the Commercial Mobile Radio Services (CMRS), or a similar agency, must take on the responsibility for implementing emergency notification. KCDHH plans to support legislation proposed by the Office of Homeland Security, or other such agencies, to make emergency notification services available to all citizens and continues to work with a variety of partner agencies to improve on the awareness that deaf and hard of hearing consumers must receive information in alternate formats.

Plans for FY 11-12, not involving Legislative changes include:

Wireless communication has rapidly become the most preferred and accessible technology for deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired consumers. In FY 95-96 when the program was first implemented the agency experienced a surge in applications for specialized equipment. During FY 10-11 we also experienced this surge in applications for emerging equipment.

This significant increase in applications has required additional staff within the agency to assist with daily processing and ordering tasks of TAP. This had placed a greater burden on the agency staff overall and an additional staff position is needed to maintain

the continued influx of applications. Through the TAP, we are only reaching about 3% of the 647,000 deaf and hard of hearing consumers throughout the Commonwealth. With increased outreach to this population, and expansion of program offerings, an allotment increase may be needed in FY 11-12 to fully allow the program to reach its potential and equalize telecommunications access for this underserved population.

The expansion of TAP, administered per KRS 163.525, to include wireless devices is still in its infancy. 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. However, updates to the current regulations are required to incorporate nuances of the program's operation (including wireless policy and procedures) and are planned during FY 11-12.

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 to include the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

The Internal Policy Analyst III plans to attend the National Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) conference to be held in October 2011 in Utah. This conference showcases 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.

In order to make the application process more accessible, a video rendition of the application process has been developed and added to the KCDHH website. The application process is explained in American Sign Language (ASL), with captioning and will be converted to a DVD in FY 11-12. Once the DVD's are available a mail out to professionals dealing with hearing loss will be completed and information included about KCDHH and the TAP so that these professionals can provide consumers with a visual explanation of the program. This will allow outreach to continue without the added expense of travel involved for training professionals on the application process.

Outreach plans for FY 11-12 include partnerships with the following entities:

Sprint Relay Service;

AT&T;

Kentucky Telephone Association;
Kentucky Association of the Deaf;
National Association of the Deaf
Alexander Graham Bell Association;
Hearing Loss Association of America;
American Association of Retired
Persons;
Kentucky School for the Deaf;
Kentucky Office of Vocational
Rehabilitation;
Kentucky Office for the Blind;
Kentucky Assistive Technology Services
Network;

Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan
Corporation;
Kentucky Office of Aging;
Kentucky Department of Education;
Commission for Children with Special
Health Care Needs;
Kentucky Speech-Language and
Hearing Association;
Heuser Hearing Institute;
Lexington Speech and Hearing Center;
Speech and Language Pathologists;
Audiologists, Hearing Instrument
Specialists; and
Area Developmental Districts

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.