



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
400 NORTH STREET
HARRISBURG, PA 17120

GLADYS BROWN DUTRIEUILLE
CHAIRMAN

October 1, 2021

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
Room 225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

In accordance with Section 6701.4(e) of the Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act (UTPMAA),¹ the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) respectfully submits this 2021 Annual Report regarding the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDD Program) and the Print Media Access System Program (PMAS Program, also known as “Newline”). The TDD Program and the PMAS Program are operated by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) pursuant to Sections 6701.3 and 6701.3(a) of UTPMAA, respectively. Both the TDD Program and the PMAS Program are currently funded by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge. The Commission administers the TRS surcharge fund pursuant to Section 6701.4(c) of UTPMAA.

The attached report discusses the following aspects of the programs: 1) Calculation and Statement of the TRS surcharge pursuant to Section 6701.4(c); 2) TDD Program, account balances, revenues, disbursements, and expenses; 3) PMAS Program, account balances, revenues, disbursements, and expenses; 4) OVR reported information; and 5) Commission Conclusion. An electronic version of this report is available on the Commission’s website.²

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gladys Brown Dutrieuille".

Gladys Brown Dutrieuille
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service, Docket No. M-00900239
2021 TRS Annual Legislative Report, Docket No. M-2021-3023546

¹ Section 5(e) of Act 34 of 1995, as amended by Act 174 of 2004, 35 P.S §§ 6701.1 – 6701.4.

² http://www.puc.pa.gov/utility_industry/telecommunications/telecommunications_relay_service.aspx



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CHAIRMAN

October 1, 2021

The Honorable John Fetterman
Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania
Room 200 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Lieutenant Governor Fetterman:

In accordance with Section 6701.4(e) of the Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act (UTPMAA),¹ the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) respectfully submits this 2021 Annual Report regarding the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDD Program) and the Print Media Access System Program (PMAS Program, also known as “Newline”). The TDD Program and the PMAS Program are operated by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) pursuant to Sections 6701.3 and 6701.3(a) of UTPMAA, respectively. Both the TDD Program and the PMAS Program are currently funded by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge. The Commission administers the TRS surcharge fund pursuant to Section 6701.4(c) of UTPMAA.

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GLADYS BROWN DUTRIEUILLE
CHAIRMAN

October 1, 2021

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA:

In accordance with Section 6701.4(e) of the Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act (UTPMAA),¹ the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) respectfully submits this 2021 Annual Report regarding the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDD Program) and the Print Media Access System Program (PMAS Program, also known as “Newline”). The TDD Program and the PMAS Program are operated by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) pursuant to Sections 6701.3 and 6701.3(a) of UTPMAA, respectively. Both the TDD Program and the PMAS Program are currently funded by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge. The Commission administers the TRS surcharge fund pursuant to Section 6701.4(c) of UTPMAA.

The attached report discusses the following aspects of the programs: 1) Calculation and Statement of the TRS surcharge pursuant to Section 6701.4(c); 2) TDD Program, account balances, revenues, disbursements, and expenses; 3) PMAS Program, account balances, revenues, disbursements, and expenses; 4) OVR reported information; and 5) Commission Conclusion. An electronic version of this report is available on the Commission’s website.²

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Gladys Brown Dutrieuille
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Enclosure

cc: Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service, Docket No. M-00900239
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¹ Section 5(e) of Act 34 of 1995, as amended by Act 174 of 2004, 35 P.S §§ 6701.1 – 6701.4.

² http://www.puc.pa.gov/utility_industry/telecommunications/telecommunications_relay_service.aspx

**ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FISCAL STATUS AND OPERATIONS OF
THE TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM
AND
THE PRINT MEDIA ACCESS SYSTEM PROGRAM**

**SUBMITTED BY
THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

OCTOBER 1, 2021

In compliance with Section 6701.4(e), of the Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act (UTPMAA),¹ the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission or PUC) respectfully submits this 2021 Annual Report² relating to the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDD Program) and the Print Media Access System Program (PMAS Program).

Both the TDD Program and the PMAS Program are currently funded by the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge.³ The Commission administers the TRS Fund pursuant to Section 6701.4(c) of UTPMAA. The TRS surcharge is collected from all landline telecommunications customers and some fixed Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telecommunications customers in Pennsylvania.⁴

The TDD Program distributes and provides telecommunication devices for people with disabilities who qualify under the UTPMAA. The TDD Program is overseen by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I), pursuant to Section 6701.3 of the UTPMAA. OVR currently contracts with the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University (IDT), in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to manage the TDD Program. Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT), an IDT program, provides assistive technology services and resources.⁵

The PMAS Program provides access via telephone to print media for persons who are blind. The PMAS Program is operated by L&I's Bureau of Blindness and Visual

¹ Act 34 of 1995, as amended by Act 174 of 2004, 35 P.S §§ 6701.1 – 6701.4.

² An electronic version of this report is available on the Commission's website:

http://www.puc.pa.gov/utility_industry/telecommunications/telecommunications_relay_service.aspx

³ 35 P.S. § 6701.4(c) provides that the TDD Program *shall* be funded by the TRS surcharge and that the PMAS Program *may* be funded by the TRS surcharge. Initially, the PMAS Program was funded through special grants; however, beginning in July 2006, it has been funded entirely from the TRS surcharge. Print media does not contribute to the TRS Fund.

⁴ 73 P.S. § 2251.6(1)(ii) (PUC jurisdiction over VoIP for purposes of TRS fees is preserved under the 2008 VoIP Freedom Act.)

⁵ <https://techowlpa.org>

Services (BBVS) and overseen by OVR pursuant to Section 6701.3(a) of the UTPMAA. Access is currently provided through the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) reading service, known as “NFB Newsline.”

The Commission provides assistance to OVR, BBVS, and PIAT in accordance with the UTPMAA.

On May 25, 2015, at Docket No. P-2015-2484229, OVR filed a Petition with the Commission seeking funding from the TRS surcharge to fund a two-year wireless pilot program entitled “Wireless Expansion Initiative: Promoting Telecommunications Equity for People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania” (WEI Pilot). OVR asserted that the WEI Pilot would provide needed data for a potential expansion of the TDD Program to include the availability, distribution, and funding of adaptive wireless equipment to income-eligible persons with disabilities within Pennsylvania.

By Order entered July 8, 2015, the Commission granted OVR’s Petition, allowing the WEI Pilot to proceed with funding from the TRS surcharge.⁶ Following completion of the WEI Pilot and its review by OVR and Commission Staff, the Commission, by Opinion and Order entered February 27, 2019, adopted a permanent and ongoing wireless expansion initiative program as a funded component of the Pennsylvania TRS and TDD Program.⁷ A copy of that Opinion and Order is attached as Public Utility Commission Attachment A.

CALCULATION OF THE TRS SURCHARGE AND USE OF THE TRS FUND FOR THE TDD PROGRAM AND THE PMAS PROGRAM

Local Exchange Carriers (LECs) report their respective wireline access line counts as of December 31st by filing an Annual Access Line Summary Report with the Commission. Certain LECs also report their fixed VoIP lines.⁸ The Commission sets the amount of the monthly TRS surcharge on each residential and business access line. The monthly TRS surcharge is reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary based on the number of wireline telephone access lines in service, the financial status of the TRS Fund, and the projected expenses of the TRS, the TDD Program, and the PMAS Program. OVR submits projected annual budgets for the TDD Program and the PMAS Program.

⁶ *Petition of Department of Labor & Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a Proposed Pilot for Distribution of Telecommunications Relay Service Wireless Equipment to People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania et al.*, Docket Nos. P-2015-2484229, M-00900239, and M-2015-2460700 (Order entered July 8, 2015).

⁷ *Petition of Department of Labor & Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a Proposed Pilot for Distribution of Telecommunications Relay Service Wireless Equipment to People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania et al.*, Docket Nos. P-2015-2484229, M-00900239, and M-2018-2640814 (Order entered February 27, 2019).

⁸ See 73 P.S. § 2251.6(1)(ii).

Section 6701.4(c) provides, in pertinent part, that:

(c) Additional use of [TRS] surcharge. – The [TDD] Program shall be funded and the [PMAS] program may be funded by the [TRS] surcharge, as calculated by the commission on an annual basis under the methodology established by the commission in order[s] entered May 29, 1990, and July 9, 1990, at Docket Number M-00900239, and as subsequently modified by the commission. . . . A portion of the surcharge may be used to fund the [PMAS] Program. The surcharge shall not be used to fund administrative costs of [TRS], [the TDD] Program or the [PMAS] Program.

The Commission calculates the TRS surcharge component for each program separately on a per wireline access line percentage basis. At its June 17, 2021 Public Meeting, the Commission approved an annual TRS surcharge recalculation for the eleven-month period beginning August 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, at Docket Nos. M-2021-3023544 and M-00900239.⁹ The TRS surcharge rate for residential and business access lines to be applied during that period is set at \$0.04 per month.¹⁰ Attached to this report as Public Utility Commission Attachment B is a copy of the Commission’s Order approving the 2021-2022 TRS surcharge and TDD Program and PMAS Program allocation percentages of the surcharge rate.

TDD PROGRAM

On June 1, 2021, OVR filed a budget with the Commission for the TDD Program for the ensuing year. The TDD Program budget for July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, as submitted by OVR, is \$740,928, compared to \$671,417 for the budget year 2020-2021. OVR’s 2021-2022 budget proposal estimated that the costs for the TDD Program will be \$33,820 for traditional equipment and \$191,063 for traditional consumer education and outreach services. The 2021-2022 TDD Program budget also includes WEI expenses of \$386,902 for equipment and \$129,143 for consumer education and outreach. In addition, the budget calculations showed the unit cost and quantity of each type of telecommunications device projected to be distributed in the prospective budget year.

Based on the bills submitted to and paid from the TDD Program sub-account for the 2020-2021 TDD Program year, the TDD Program account began the 2021-2022 program year with a sufficient surplus to provide for the statutory TDD Program elements and maintain an adequate cash flow reserve.

⁹ We note that the TRS surcharge is typically recalculated for the 12-month period beginning July 1 and ending on June 30. However, this year the new TRS surcharge rate was delayed until August 1 to ensure all LECs had adequate time to make the necessary billing changes and tariff filings. The LECs bill the TRS surcharge as a separate line item on customer’s monthly bills, as well as collect and remit the surcharge funds to the Fund Administrator.

¹⁰ For the prior period, the TRS surcharge rate for residential and business access lines was \$0.08 per month.

TDD Program Sub-Account
For the period of July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021

Beginning Balance on July 1, 2020	\$1,133,146.34
Revenue from the TRS surcharge	\$373,043.14
Earned net investment income	\$371.14
Distributed equipment costs	(\$79,803.25)
Consumer education and outreach	(\$163,025.92)
WEI program equipment	(\$69,958.73)
WEI program education & outreach	(\$121,939.90)
Fiduciary fees (US Bank Institutional Trust & Custody)	(\$2,507.69)
Ending Balance on June 30, 2021	<u>\$1,069,325.13</u>

The Commission is allocating 30 percent of the total TRS surcharge revenues to the TDD Program for the 2021-2022 TRS surcharge recalculation year (M-2021-3023543). See Public Utility Commission Attachment B.

PMAS PROGRAM

On June 1, 2021, OVR, BBVS filed a budget with the Commission for the PMAS Program for the ensuing year. The PMAS Program budget for July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, as submitted by BBVS, is \$193,000, as compared to \$188,000 for the budget year 2020-2021. BBVS' 2021-2022 budget proposal estimated that the costs will include twenty-seven participating newspapers, annual service fee, annual newspaper maintenance and distribution fee, Pennsylvania Specific Alerts service, marketing and outreach, and a one-year telecommunications subscription fee for the system over which users can hear selected print media being read aloud.

Based on the bills submitted to and paid from the PMAS Program sub-account for the 2020-2021 PMAS Program year, the PMAS Program sub-account began the 2021-2022 year with a sufficient surplus to provide for the statutory PMAS Program elements and maintain an adequate cash flow reserve.

PMAS Program Sub-Account
For the period of July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021

Beginning Balance on July 1, 2020	\$626,155.92
Revenue from the TRS surcharge	\$174,296.36
Earned net investment income	\$223.00
NFB Newline annual element costs	(\$85,319.00)
Fiduciary fees (US Bank Institutional Trust & Custody)	(\$1,546.83)
Ending Balance on June 30, 2021	<u>\$713,809.45</u>

The NFB Newslines invoice payment by the BBVS are by way of a quarterly invoice and payment arrangement with NFB Newslines. The Commission is allocating 5 percent of the total TRS surcharge revenues to the PMAS Program for the 2021-2022 TRS surcharge recalculation year (M-2021-3023543). See Public Utility Commission Attachment B.

OVR INFORMATION

Pursuant to Section 6701.4(e)(2), OVR has submitted to the Commission its annual information on the TDD Program. The OVR submission is attached as Public Utility Commission Attachment C.

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION CONCLUSION

The Commission has been responsive to the needs of the residents of Pennsylvania who depend upon the TDD Program and the PMAS Program and is compliant with the directives of the UTPMAA. The Commission will continue to be attentive to OVR's implementation of the TDD Program and PMAS Program and the Commission's funding oversight and responsibilities relative to the TDD Program and PMAS Program.

The Commission's Bureau of Audits, with the assistance of OVR, conducts audits of the TDD Program and the PMAS Program. The objectives and scope of the audits are to determine that only qualified individuals received TDD Program equipment; that the consumer educators properly and accurately charged the fund for services provided; that only qualified bidders were awarded contracts through the Request for Proposals process; that equipment and service contractors properly invoiced the TRS Fund; and that all monies withdrawn from the TDD Program sub-account and PMAS Program sub-account were only used for qualifying TDD Program and PMAS Program services and equipment.

On July 13, 2020, at Docket No. D-2020-3020696, the Bureau of Audits initiated an ongoing audit of the TDD Program and PMAS Program for the twelve-month periods ended 6/30/2019, 6/30/2018, and 6/30/2017. The Audit Bureau's report is expected to be released at an upcoming Public Meeting.

ATTACHMENTS (3):

Public Utility Commission Attachment A: Commission Opinion and Order entered February 27, 2019, adopting a permanent and ongoing wireless expansion initiative program as a funded component of the Pennsylvania TRS and TDD Program (Docket Nos. P-2015-2484229, M-00900239, and M-2018-2640814)

Public Utility Commission Attachment B: Commission Order entered June 24, 2021, approving the current TRS surcharge and TDD Program and PMAS Program allocation percentages of the surcharge rate (Docket No. M-2021-3023544)

Public Utility Commission Attachment C: TDD Program Information Submitted by OVR

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265**

Public Meeting held December 20, 2018

Commissioners Present:

Gladys M. Brown, Chairman
Andrew G. Place, Vice Chairman
Norman J. Kennard
David W. Sweet
John F. Coleman, Jr.

Petition of the Department of Labor & Industry
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a Proposed
Pilot for Distribution of Telecommunications
Relay Service Wireless Equipment to People with
Disabilities in Pennsylvania

Docket No. P-2015-2484229

Petition of the Pennsylvania Telephone
Association Requesting the Commission to
Approve Implementation of Pennsylvania Relay
Service for Deaf, Hearing, or Speech-Impaired
Community within the Commonwealth of
Pennsylvania

Docket No. M-00900239

Recalculation of the Pennsylvania Annual
Telecommunications Relay Surcharge

Docket No. M-2018-2640814

OPINION AND ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

By this Opinion and Order, the Commission adopts a permanent and ongoing wireless expansion initiative program (WEI) as a funded component of the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) and the Telecommunications Device Distribution Program (TDDP).

I. Background

On July 8, 2015 the Commission entered its Order (*July 2015 Order*) in the above-referenced proceeding at Docket No. P-2015-2484229.¹ The *July 2015 Order* granted a Petition (Petition) from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) authorizing the funding of a pilot project involving the distribution of wireless equipment to income-eligible persons with disabilities within Pennsylvania.

The *July 2015 Order* approved a WEI Pilot within the legal and policy framework of the existing telecommunications device distribution program that is administered by OVR-L&I and is funded by the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service Fund (TRS Fund or Fund).² As contemplated in the *July 2015 Order*, following completion of the WEI Pilot and its review by the OVR and Commission staff, the Commission takes the next step to make permanent and ongoing the WEI program as set forth below.

The Commission does this by granting OVR's initial budget in its entirety as set out in the OVR Report that was filed with the Commission in June 2018.³ Such an action relies on the public interest and legal findings we made in the *July 2015 Order*

¹ *Petition of Department of Labor & Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a Proposed Pilot for Distribution of Telecommunication Relay Service Wireless Equipment to People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania et al.*, Docket Nos. P-2015-2484229, M-00900239 *et al.*, (Order entered July 8, 2015) (*July 2015 Order*).

² The Commission administers the Pa. TRS Fund. *See also* 35 P.S. § 6701.4(c).

³ *In re: Petition of the Department of Labor & Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a Proposed Pilot for Distribution of Telecommunications Relay Service Wireless Equipment to People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania*, Docket No. P-2015-2484229, Amended Report of Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (June 13, 2018) (hereinafter OVR Report).

establishing the WEI Pilot and reflects OVR's experience with the WEI Pilot addressed in the OVR Report.

OVR proposed a three-year budget in which the distributed equipment is proposed to be replaced every three years.⁴ OVR proposes a budget of \$199,393 for the first year of the program consisting of \$70,750 for initial start-up costs and another \$129,143 of which \$62,390 is for equipment and \$66,753 is for non-equipment costs. Budget Years 2 and 3 would remain at the \$129,143 with identical allocations of \$62,390 for equipment and \$66,753 for non-equipment costs.

At an anticipated cost of \$547 per wireless device, this translates to providing roughly 114 devices annually. OVR's proposed incremental increase in device distribution is based on programs in Missouri and Colorado, which, when expanding their TRS programs to include wireless communications, encountered increases in device distribution of approximately 30%. Based on those states' experiences, OVR proposes a similar increase for Pennsylvania's TDDP to include wireless devices, although those states have half the population of Pennsylvania.

The Commission accepts this initial OVR budget recommendation at this time for two reasons. First, there is a need to focus on implementation and outreach at the outset. Thereafter, however, OVR should be looking to lower the expense related to administration of the program and increase the proportion of expense associated with the distribution of equipment, effectively lowering the non-equipment costs as a percentage of the overall budget. Second, this is the only budget proposed in support of OVR's Petition. The Commission believes that it is appropriate to require OVR to commit to evaluating the budget with those parameters in mind and submitting the same to the

⁴ OVR Report at 33.

Commission timed to coincide with the Commission's evaluation of a TRS and TDDP budget and the annual TRS surcharge recalculation, typically in May/June of each year.

The OVR budget the Commission adopts today is an initially small but important step towards enhancing communications capabilities to low-income Pennsylvanians with disabilities given Pennsylvania's demographics. However, given the potential universe of persons in Pennsylvania that may be eligible to participate in WEI,⁵ the Commission will require OVR to review its budget and assess its program annually to evaluate how well it is effectuating its purpose. The Commission will also require that OVR operate the program on a more geographically balanced basis across Pennsylvania as proposed in using the Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATCRs) or a functional equivalent. OVR shall present its findings and proposals in conjunction with the Commission's annual calculation of the TRS surcharge in May/June of each year.

A wireless equipment distribution program better ensures compliance with Pennsylvania law requiring the Commission to support a TRS program to facilitate communications for persons with disabilities by wire or radio. This is warranted because communications for impaired citizens by wire or radio must be reasonably comparable to the communications by wire or radio available to non-impaired citizens. Under this program, the Commission is supporting a wireless device distribution program in which the qualified consumer must still buy the underlying wireless access service. Like the current TDDP, however, the Commission is approving a budget that provides equipment

⁵ As one example, the Pennsylvania demographic and economic information from the 2016 American Community Survey data of the U.S. Census Bureau shows that for a poverty determination Pennsylvania's population of 12,369,671 citizens, 30.2%, or 3,736,519, are at or below 200% of poverty and 3.7%, or 469,694 from a 12,579,598 non-institutionalized population have hearing difficulties. Applying the 30.2% poverty level figure to the population with hearing difficulties, about 141,847 Pennsylvanians could be eligible to participate in the WEI expanded program.

with adaptations to qualified individuals that is necessary to provide equal access to communications in today's market.

To appreciate this action in context, it is important to summarize the development of TRS in Pennsylvania over the past 28 years. That summary explains why this incremental proposal is the logical extension of the Commission and Commonwealth commitment to TRS in Pennsylvania. The proposal to limit spending to the OVR budget in the initial phase is fiscally responsible because it can be funded from the existing access line surcharge and budget and be adjusted as OVR provides additional information based on its actual experience in Pennsylvania.

History of the TRS Fund

Our *July 2015 Order* addressed the history and implementation of the current TRS program up until that time. As we stated then, the Commission established TRS service in response to a petition by the Pennsylvania Telephone Association (PTA) urging the Commission to create a program because that was consistent with the law and the public interest. The TRS service established by the Commission has been supported by a monthly fee on wireline access lines. This ensures the delivery of adequate and equivalent access to services by end-user consumers with physical impairments under applicable federal law.⁶ Thereafter, Act 34 of 1995, 35 P.S. §§ 6701.1-6701.4 (Act 34), codified the operation of relay service and the Commission's oversight of the TRS Fund and surcharge mechanism in Pennsylvania.

⁶ Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 *et seq.*

Act 34 also established the TDDP, a device distribution program funded by the TRS Fund.⁷ TDDP supports the distribution of equipment to facilitate telecommunications although neither the rates or operations for that equipment are regulated by, or subject to, the Commission’s jurisdiction. Responsibility for managing the TDDP is vested with OVR. The responsibility for financial oversight and disbursements in support of the TDDP program rests with the Commission pursuant to the submission of annual budgets from OVR.

Act 174 of 2004, 35 P.S. § 6701.3a, moreover, established the Print Media Access System Program (PMASP) that is also funded by the TRS Fund.⁸ PMASP is a service that facilitates access to printed media information for consumers although neither the rates nor related services are regulated by, or subject to, the Commission’s jurisdiction. The statutory provisions addressing this information service are now referred to as the Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act (UTMPAA).⁹ The UTMPAA also requires the Commission to report annually on the TRS Fund, the TDDP, and the PMASP programs supported from the TRS surcharge to the General Assembly. 35 P.S. § 6701.4.

⁷ TDDP provides equipment to enable eligible low-income persons to use telecommunications relay services. The statute was amended by Act 181 of 2002 to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities by expanding the definition of “persons with a disability” to include all disabilities that prevent a person from using standard telecommunications equipment.

⁸ PMASP is a newspaper reading service for persons with certain vision and physical disabilities. Administrative responsibility is vested in OVR. The Commission is responsible for the financial oversight and disbursements supporting this newspaper access program under relevant OVR budgetary submissions although the Commission does not regulate rates or delivery of newspapers in Pennsylvania or similar information services.

⁹ See 35 P.S. § 6701.

The Commission subsequently established Captioned Telephone Relay Service (CAP-Tel), a telecommunications service, in Pennsylvania in response to suggestions from our Telecommunications Relay Advisory Board (TRS Board) about consumer need for this service. The Commission did so by contract pursuant to a request for proposals process. Cap-Tel permits consumers to communicate using modern technology that relies, in part, on Internet Protocol (IP). The Commission also issued an advisory letter on July 9, 2014 that authorized funding for the distribution of IP-enabled wireline devices through the TDDP to eligible end-users in response to changing technology.

The quality of service provided by our certificated TRS provider is subject to the Commission's jurisdiction. Hamilton Relay Service, Inc.¹⁰ (Hamilton Relay), the current certificated traditional relay provider, submits the estimated annual traditional relay minutes of use (MOUs) and charges. Hamilton Telecommunications Company¹¹ (Hamilton Telecommunications), an affiliate of Hamilton Relay, provides Cap-Tel pursuant to a contract with the Commission and submits the estimated annual Cap-Tel MOUs. OVR submits the annual TDDP and PMASP budgets. The TRS Fund covers the TRS Board activities and Fund Administrator costs as well.

The Pennsylvania relay service costs (including the intrastate Cap-Tel) are recovered through the monthly TRS surcharge set by the Commission and currently assessed by the Local Exchange Carriers (LECs) on wireline residence and business customers.¹² The TRS Fund and the monthly surcharge are reviewed by staff and set by

¹⁰ See *Application of Hamilton Relay*, Docket No. A-2014-2447601 (December 4, 2014).

¹¹ See RFP-2012-2, Bp8=2304702 (May 24, 2012).

¹² See 52 Pa. Code §§ 63.31-63.37.

the Commission annually, typically to be effective in June of each year.¹³ Additionally, the Commission's Bureau of Audits periodically audits the TDDP pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding executed between L&I and the Commission at Docket No. M-00900239F0004.¹⁴

The WEI Pilot was part of the Commission's long-standing commitment to support the communications needs of disabled persons in Pennsylvania.¹⁵ The *July 2015 Order* adopting the WEI Pilot program reflected a determination that a wireless device distribution program furthered the statutory mandate to facilitate communications by eligible impaired consumers using wire and radio in the Commonwealth and was in the public interest. The Commission recognized that any program established following the results of the WEI Pilot must also be consistent with that Pennsylvania law and could be supported from the current TRS Fund and surcharge in Pennsylvania.

The WEI Pilot

Among other duties, the OVR is responsible for providing services designed to increase the independence and employability of individuals in Pennsylvania

¹³ Staff shall include the wireless device program in their review and calculation of the surcharge presented for disposition at Public Meeting.

¹⁴ *See, e.g., A Report on the Telecommunications Device Distribution Program and Print Media Access System Program Audits for the Twelve-Month Period Ended June 30, 2015 and June 30, 2012*, Docket No. D-2014-2406981.

¹⁵ On May 24, 1990, the Commission entered an Opinion and Order approving the joint petition of the PTA and AT&T Communications, Inc. for approval to implement a Telecommunications Relay Service for Deaf, Hearing and/or Speech impaired citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and to issue AT&T a certificate of public convenience authorizing the delivery of TRS service supported by a surcharge on consumer's telephone bills. The Telecommunication Act of 1996 (TA-96) subsequently clarified that Section 153 encompassed intrastate communications within the authority of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), effectively authorizing the FCC to certify that Pennsylvania TRS programs comply with federal mandates.

with hearing, visual, speech, or other disabilities. Recent American Community Survey (ACS) data indicate that approximately 3.7 percent of Pennsylvanians have difficulty hearing and, of that number, approximately 30.2% would be eligible for support because they are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. This translates into 469,694 Pennsylvanians with hearing difficulties and, of those, approximately 141,847 are below the 200% poverty level and are eligible to benefit from this program.

As part of those responsibilities to multiple communities, OVR is also in charge of administering the TRS TDDP.¹⁶ In its Petition, OVR requested approval to use the TRS Fund support to conduct a two-year, two-phase TDDP Pilot that would distribute wireless devices to eligible participants to obtain more data on public interest and benefit attributable to a wireless equipment program.¹⁷ The OVR averred that expanding the TRS to include modern technology would increase communications options using both standard wireline as well as specialized wireless features and applications.¹⁸ A wireless device distribution program would also allow participants to receive emergency notifications in real time. In short, they asserted that a wireless distribution program would provide equivalent communications capabilities through more modern technology and that a pilot project might potentially be useful as a way of examining how to establish a permanent program on a statewide basis consistent with Pennsylvania law.¹⁹

¹⁶ 35 P.S. § 6701.3a.

¹⁷ Qualified participants in the pilot program had to be a disabled resident of the Commonwealth who was not younger than six, should have had telephone service, was able to learn how to use a telecommunications device, and had an income not more than 200% of the federal poverty level (FGPI). These requirements were consistent with other requirements imposed under Pennsylvania law. 35 P.S. § 6701.3.

¹⁸ At the time, wireless equipment distribution programs were already underway in 11 states. This has grown to 17 states since then. The OVR Report relies, in part, on experiences in two of those states.

¹⁹ 35 P.S. § 6701.2 authorizes a program to distribute equipment that operates by wire or radio (wireless) and provide eligible persons the ability to communicate by wire or radio as discussed in more detail below.

The Commission published the Petition in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* for comment. Comments in favor of the pilot were filed by the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA), the Honorable Representative Edward C. Gainey, 24th Legislative District, L&I's Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (L&I Advisory Council), the Commission's TRS Advisory Board, L&I's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), and the Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania (HLAA-PAA). No comments opposed the legality or overall purpose and substance of the pilot.

The July 2015 Order

The *July 2015 Order* established the WEI Pilot implemented through Temple University as Administrator of the TDDP on behalf of OVR under Commission oversight. The WEI Pilot was a two-year pilot project designed to test the availability and use of wireless devices by a limited number of eligible Pennsylvanians with disabilities for a limited timeframe in which wireless devices would be supported from and distributed to eligible end-users through the existing TDDP.²⁰

The WEI Pilot, *inter alia*, provided for:

- Recruitment and selection of 60 eligible participants over the two-year, two-phase project;
- Distribution of selected wireless/mobile devices equipped with appropriate applications and software;
- Outreach, training, surveys, and personal interview evaluation activities;

²⁰ See generally 35 P.S. § 6701.3.

- Remote system software updating for the distributed wireless devices by an equipment administrator; and
- Monitoring, measurement, and evaluation of the use of these devices and their use.

OVR sought, and the *July 2015 Order* approved, funding from the TRS Fund for the relevant costs of the WEI Pilot. This included the costs of the wireless device equipment distribution and the costs for managing the overall TDDP WEI Pilot through its two-year duration. The estimated costs of the pilot were approximately \$85,000 for the first year of the WEI Pilot²¹ in which Phase I would seek to enroll 30 eligible²² individuals. The *July 2015 Order* established Phase II based on the results of Phase I which also would seek to enroll 30 eligible individuals based on slightly different selection criteria. Temple University held mandatory meetings to explain the pilot and provide training to assist pilot participants. Temple University also conducted case studies and “longitudinal” surveys to assess the needs and trends that surfaced during the TDDP Pilot.

As with the current distribution program, participants were responsible for some costs. Like the TDDY program, the WEI Pilot still required the participant to pay for the cost of the underlying wireless connectivity service(s) to enable the wireless devices to function.²³ Participants were also responsible for any travel expenses

²¹ The budget table in the WEI Proposal disclosed a projected outlay requirement of \$83,233.38 for “Grant Year 1” or Phase I of the TDDP Pilot.

²² The criteria for eligibility in the TDDP pilot are those that are statutorily mandated at 35 P.S. § 6701.3.

²³ The WEI Proposal explicitly states “Individuals [TDDP Pilot participants] will need to describe how they will access wi-fi service (in their home or in the community e.g., public library) and understand that the program will not pay for such wireless access services.” OVR Petition, WEI Proposal at 8.

associated with program orientation and training in Darby and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This latter requirement negatively impacted OVR's ability to fulfill the full proposed enrollment.

The *July 2015 Order* and OVR Report demonstrate universal support regarding the merits of the WEI Pilot and the desire for statewide access to wireless technologies, communications, and devices by eligible persons with disabilities. The Commission recognized that federal authority over TRS mandates availability within a state and that federal certification of such programs requires corresponding compliance with federal requirements. These requirements include a prohibition on actions that discourage or impair the technology providing TRS.

The Commission agreed with the comments that public benefits accruing to eligible participants under the proposed WEI Pilot promoted the public interest and satisfied Pennsylvania's obligation under federal and state law to provide adequate and equivalent access to communications access for Pennsylvanians with disabilities. The Commission recognized that it possessed the necessary administrative flexibility to deal with these matters and to seek timely and appropriate legislative changes if and when such changes become necessary.

The Commission concluded that the TRS program serves the public interest and that such action was consistent with Section 225(d)(2), 47 U.S.C. § 225(d)(2), of federal law and ensured compliance with the certification requirements under Section 225(f), 47 U.S.C. § 225(f). After commending L&I, OVR, and Temple University in their efforts to refine policies for increased TRS access to wireline and wireless telecommunications services under Pennsylvania and federal law, the Commission noted that an advisory letter had been issued on July 9, 2014 which also authorized the funding of IP-enabled wireline devices to eligible end-users.

The Commission also concluded that a WEI Pilot fit within the definitions of TRS services by radio and wire under Pennsylvania law and that the scope of the WEI Pilot was consistent with the applicable statutory parameters of the UTPMAA as well as federal law.

Based on those determinations and conclusions, the *July 2015 Order* authorized TRS funding for the WEI Pilot for actual costs up to \$85,000 for Phase I and up to \$90,000 for Phase II. The *July 2015 Order* added the caveat that if there were cost overruns OVR could petition for additional TRS funding, curtail the scope of the pilot program to stay within the approved funding or find alternate funding. The Commission recognized certain concerns with the future funding for the TRS Program but declined to address future funding of a TDDP wireless device program on a permanent statewide basis from the TRS Fund but agreed to address that in collaboration with OVR and Temple University.

The *July 2015 Order* also established a subaccount within the TRS Fund for the WEI Pilot given that neither of these sums impaired the solvency of the TRS Fund on a one-time basis. The TDDP portion of the TRS Fund had an appropriate monetary reserve that was sufficient to absorb the projected implementation cost of the proposed wireless pilot.²⁴

Moreover, consistent with the Commission's statutory oversight of the TRS Fund and the public interest in this program, and to ensure compliance with federal law, the *July 2015 Order* required monthly billing detailing the costs incurred. OVR was required to submit detailed monthly bills for costs incurred for the TDDP Pilot to Commission staff in a manner that followed the current TDDP bill payment procedures.

²⁴ 2014 Annual Report pursuant to the UTPMAA to the General Assembly, dated October 1, 2014, http://www.puc.pa.gov/Telecom/pdf/TDD_Program_Legis_Rpt2014.pdf.

Commission staff would submit TDDP Pilot bills for payment in the same manner in which TDDP bills are currently paid. The TDDP Pilot expenses were subject to the Memorandum of Understanding between L&I and the Commission. The Commission required submission of the OVR Report on the Pilot Program from OVR and further instructed staff to submit a report following submission of the OVR Report.

Subsequent Developments

On June 13, 2018, following completion of the WEI Pilot established by the *July 2015 Order*, OVR filed an amended response and recommendations in an OVR Report. The OVR Report provided detailed amended information requested by the Commission on monetary support, the practices in other states, and on the feasibility of creating a permanent wireless equipment distribution program based on the recently completed WEI Pilot.²⁵ The OVR Report outlined the public interest in a wireless distribution program relying, in part, on the benefits and experiences documented by the pilot participants. OVR recommends making the program permanent.²⁶

The Commission staff identified several options: (1) provide standard wireless equipment without special adaptations or training through the TDD Program; (2) provide the adaptations for standard wireless equipment and provide specialized wireless equipment and training through the TDD Program; or (3) decline to provide wireless equipment through the TDD Program and maintain the TDD Program as it was prior to the pilot.

²⁵ *Petition of Department of Labor & Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for a Proposed Pilot for Distribution of Telecommunications Relay Service Wireless Equipment to People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania*, Docket No. P-2015-2484229 (July 8, 2015); *OVR Additional Information on Wireless TDDP Program* (June 13, 2018).

²⁶ OVR Report at 33.

Option 2 was thought to more closely mirror the existing TDD Program by providing adaptations and specialized equipment needed to make telecommunications capabilities accessible although the program does not provide the underlying service or basic equipment available off the shelf. It was further noted that when the adaptation or accommodation is intrinsic to the device, such as an IP-enabled captioning telephone that works with IP-enabled circuits and services — with a regular captioning telephone capable of working only with traditional wireline connections — then the IP-enabled captioning telephone equipment is provided.²⁷

II. Disposition

The Commission hereby creates a permanent and ongoing wireless distribution program in Pennsylvania supported from the current TRS fund. The *July 2015 Order* concluded that the pilot wireless equipment distribution program was within the existing TDDP program and was fully consistent with applicable Pennsylvania and federal statutes, effectively obviating concerns with Commission jurisdiction. It is worth reiterating, again, that Pennsylvania’s Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act that also governs the operation and funding of TDDP, includes the following definitions:

“Telecommunication device.” Equipment necessary for a person with a disability to engage in communication by wire *or radio* with another person with a disability or with a hearing individual.

* * *

²⁷ Report of staff at 14.

“Telecommunications relay service.” Telephone transmission services that provide the ability for a person with a disability to engage in communication by wire *or radio* with a hearing individual in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of a person who does not have a disability to communicate using voice communication services by wire *or radio*. The term includes services that enable two-way communication between an individual who uses a telecommunication device or other nonvoice terminal device and an individual who does not use such a device.

35 P.S. § 6701.2 (emphasis added).

We concluded in the *July 2015 Order*, and reiterate today, that the availability of wireless devices under the TDDP mechanism for eligible persons with disabilities meets the statutory standard for communication by “radio” or “wire” under our statute. This is because mobile wireless devices for end-user consumers operate on the basis of available radio frequencies that are managed by commercial wireless service providers.²⁸

These provisions and our precedent clearly establish the Commission’s legal authority to support a permanent and ongoing wireless device distribution program under Pennsylvania and federal law.

The Commission recognizes the challenge of supporting wireless and wireline device distribution programs solely by surcharging wire access lines with no accompanying support from wireless services even though Pennsylvania law requires the

²⁸ See also *July 2015 Order* at 12-13.

Commission to facilitate communications by wire and radio. However, the resolution of whether wireless service providers can be required to fund a wireless device program under this existing statutory language should not preclude action today. The Commission has a separate legal mandate to facilitate communications by wire or radio irrespective of funding sources. The Commission has authority to support a wireless device program, particularly given the clear public interest and support for such a program determined in the *July 2015 Order* and the results from the WEI Pilot, the OVR Report, and staff review.

Today's action simply effectuates a state-mandated communications assistance program, including equipment, through wire or radio to a very discrete class of beneficiaries – low-income, deaf, hearing, speech impaired, or some combination thereof, to citizens of Pennsylvania. The WEI Pilot we adopted in the *July 2015 Order* simply updates the ways of meeting that mandate to recipients of the program given the statute, changing consumer needs, and technology. Our *July 2015 Order* recognized that a permanent device program might be necessary and appropriate although we deferred action on that issue until we had completed the WEI Pilot and further considered the experience from that pilot.

Although a permanent wireless distribution program is legal and clearly consistent with the public interest, the Commission's implementation of that mandate must be prudent. The initial budget for a permanent program requested by OVR stays well within the funding parameters of the existing monthly \$0.08 per access line surcharge and avoids imposing unacceptable or unsustainable burdens on the existing Fund or those consumers who support that Fund. For these reasons, we believe that approving OVR's initial budget proposal in the OVR Report is appropriate. While that

budget may change if the need demonstrated by OVR changes, the initial OVR budget approval supports a permanent program within the existing surcharge.²⁹

The Commission agrees with the OVR Report that support for a suite of wireless equipment and adaptations is necessary, given the intertwined nature of wireless equipment and the adaptations needed to use that equipment. The OVR Report properly addresses the change in consumer expectations, technology, and the proliferation of devices in the market for non-impaired citizens.

The fact that different adaptations are already provided in Cap-Tel wireline distributed equipment today supports a similar approach for wireless devices. Consumers will receive the device with the needed adaptations to operate it, but they must buy the underlying wireless access service. Given the lower-incomes required for participation in the TDDP, it is worth reiterating our support for the FCC's Lifeline Program because it provides \$9.25 in monthly support so that low-income consumers can buy voice or broadband Internet access service.

This action is not without precedent. Our *July 2015 Order* formally authorized the funding of the WEI pilot project in the following:

In our evaluation of the proposal for a TDDP Pilot to explore accessible wireless options, we are guided by the UTPMAA, which vests administrative oversight of TDDP operations in OVR. *See* 35 P.S. § 6701.3. We are also guided by federal law governing TRS [telecommunications

²⁹ If future developments indicate otherwise, OVR can address those developments in conjunction with submission of their annual budget for TRS-supported operations. While supplemental budgets in the interim may be appropriate, it is better to submit any adjustments in the OVR budget to coincide with our review and approval of a TRS program budget and the surcharge ancillary to supporting that budget.

relay service], particularly the prohibition contained in Section 225(d)(2) of the federal Communications Act of 1934 as amended, 47 U.S.C. § 225(d)(2), against discouraging or impairing the development of new technology.

July 2015 Order at 5. Our *July 2015 Order* found that the WEI pilot project was fully “within the applicable statutory parameters of the UTPMAA” and that it was also “entirely consistent with applicable federal law.” *July 2015 Order* at 13.

The OVR Report has been formally endorsed by the Commission’s TRS Advisory Board during its formal May 9, 2018 meeting.³⁰ OVR’s recommendation contains projected costs that assume a 30% increase in equipment distribution related costs based on prior experience in Colorado and Missouri or a total of 402 wireline and wireless devices. The OVR Report estimate relies on states who implemented a wireless equipment distribution program that are far smaller than Pennsylvania. OVR’s estimate for a total of 402 devices of which at least 114 will be for new wireless devices is a good start given that the device cost has dropped to a projected average figure of \$547 compared to the pilot-program cost of \$1,273 per device although both are higher than the average wireline device cost of \$135.³¹

³⁰ A Kay Tyberg, Chair of the TRS Advisory Board stated the following in her July 5, 2018 letter communication to the Commission: “After due consideration of the findings and recommendations in the report [OVR Report], the Board advises the Public Utility Commission of its desire that the TDDP be expanded statewide to include wireless telecommunications devices – only; (NOT voice or data services) for Pennsylvanians with disabilities who meet all other TDDP eligibility criteria.”

³¹ The significant cost difference was attributed to the wireless devices in a permanent program compared to the pilot program and traditional devices arises because wireless devices, particularly devices with support/service plans, cost 90% more than traditional landline equipment. As indicated in the table below, Pennsylvania’s TDDP program averages \$135 per participant in equipment cost. The wireless initiative averaged \$1,273 per participant in equipment costs. By providing equipment without service/support packages, OVR’s expects to reduce this average equipment cost to \$547 per recipient. See OVR Report at 34.

The OVR Report also provides data supporting the need to support additional administrative costs, demonstration equipment, and an Assistive Technology Lending Library at regional ATRCs. The projected equipment distribution totals \$70,750 in one-time start-up costs and \$129,143 in yearly program-related expenses for a total of \$199,893 for the first year of operation. This estimate contains an annual \$13,000 cost for Education Outreach and focuses on information sessions, online access, and a modestly staffed customer service operation.

The eligibility requirements are identical to those for the existing TRS Program. They require Pennsylvania residency, 200% or less of the federal poverty guideline, access to Wi-Fi or a wireless service with a data plan (purchased by the consumer), and the ability to learn how to use the equipment. There are no direct public awareness and outreach costs to inform the public about this program although there are Education Outreach costs that will apparently focus on the eligible population. OVR anticipates replacing the equipment distributed on a 3-year cycle.

While the Commission can consider several options to move this program forward, for the reasons stated, the Commission concludes that the option to create a permanent program using the very modest incremental need projected in the OVR Report is best. This option relies on OVR's research and data. While this does not reflect specific and more recent ACS census data for Pennsylvania's population, a modest program is preferable at the outset unless and until OVR provides more robust reporting and budgetary analyses.

The Commission also believes that OVR's budget must extend to a broader geographic reach in Pennsylvania. We agree with the OVR Report that the program must support funding ATRCs or their regional equivalent. This ensures that eligible citizens in those areas have access to information and training as easily as those residing in urban

areas. Unlike the WEI Pilot, where the funding and distribution was operated from Darby and Philadelphia, the ATRCs operate throughout Pennsylvania and their input and expertise will be critical to ensuring a Commonwealth-wide program.

Our decision to approve the OVR budget for the initial three years recognizes two facts. First, in approving this program on a permanent basis, the Commission is acting between the annual recalculations of the TRS surcharge that occurs in June of each year. Second, any budgetary change may be reflected in these annual recalculations. Any resource need arising in the future can be addressed by filings timed to coincide with the Commission's annual establishment of a TRS budget and the surcharge recalculation that occurs in time for the establishment of a surcharge in June. Any need arising under the approved OVR budget that occurs under the existing surcharge before the next surcharge recalculation can be met by using any surplus that has arisen this year and then from any accumulated surplus. The use of any accumulated surplus must be tempered by possible FCC regulatory developments, including the allocation of federal TRS program costs to Pennsylvania, and a prudent reserve.

At a minimum, however, the OVR budget for continuation and expansion of the WEI approved today will be used for future funding with the opportunity to consider additional requests, along with supporting information, as the need arises;
THEREFORE,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the Commission hereby adopts a permanent and ongoing wireless equipment distribution program as a funded component of the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service and the Telecommunications Device Distribution Programs;

2. That the Department of Labor & Industry Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has the funding authority to implement the wireless equipment distribution program on the initial and subsequent 3-year cycles presented in the Office of Vocational and Rehabilitation Report of the Wireless Expansion Initiative Pilot dating from entry of this Opinion and Order in the current funding year and thereafter timed as part of the Commission's annual TRS surcharge recalculation, unless interim adjustments are presented and adopted;

3. That the funding for the initial 3-year cycle of this permanent and ongoing wireless equipment distribution program as proposed in the OVR Report is approved as filed unless adjusted by the Commission in consultation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation;

4. That the funding total for the wireless equipment distribution program in the initial 3-year cycle is approved at \$458,179 unless adjusted by the Commission in consultation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation;

5. That the annual budget for a wireless equipment distribution program in any subsequent year that is proposed will be considered as part of the Commission's annual TRS surcharge recalculation;

6. That the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation projected one-time start-up non-equipment costs of \$70,750 for the initial year of the 3-year cycle is approved as proposed in the OVR Report unless adjusted by the Commission in consultation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation;

7. That the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation projected anticipated costs of \$129,143 for the initial year of the 3-year cycle is approved as proposed in the OVR Report unless adjusted by the Commission in consultation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation;

8. That the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation projected anticipated cost of \$129,143 for Year 2 and Year 3 of the initial 3-year cycle is approved as proposed in the OVR Report unless adjusted by the Commission in consultation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation;

9. That the funding and the actions hereby authorized for the distribution of wireless equipment to eligible persons with disabilities does not preclude or otherwise prohibit the simultaneous availability or distribution of wireline devices to the same persons under the Telecommunications Device Distribution Program;

10. That the Commission's Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board and the Office of Special Assistants, in consultation as necessary with the Bureaus of Technical Utility Services and Law, continue to monitor and report to the Commission on the operation and surcharge funding for Pennsylvania's Telecommunications Relay Service and Telecommunications Device Distribution Programs under state and federal law, including this ongoing and permanent wireless equipment distribution program;

11. That the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation prepare an annual evaluation of the budget for Commission consideration with the goal of increasing within the overall budget the proportion of the TRS budget related to the distribution of wireless devices and decreasing the proportion related to administration;

12. That the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation prepare an annual evaluation of the budget for Commission consideration with the goal of increasing the geographic reach of the wireless device distribution;

13. That this Opinion and Order be served upon the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Industry, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Office of Consumer Advocate, the Office of Small Business Advocate, and the Commission's Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board; and

14. That a copy of this Opinion and Order be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* and posted on the Commission's website.

BY THE COMMISSION,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosemary Chiavetta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosemary Chiavetta
Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: December 20, 2018

ORDER ENTERED: February 27, 2019

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

Public Meeting held June 17, 2021

Commissioners Present:

Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, Chairman
David W. Sweet, Vice Chairman
John F. Coleman, Jr.
Ralph V. Yanora

Recalculation of the Pennsylvania
Telecommunications Relay Service Surcharge

M-2021-3023544
M-00900239

ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

In accordance with our May 29, 1990 Order at Docket No. M-00900239 establishing the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS or Relay)¹ and surcharge funding mechanism (TRS surcharge) and subsequent Commission orders and legislation,² we have completed the annual recalculation of the TRS surcharge as it will apply August 1, 2021,³ through June 30, 2022. The TRS surcharge rate for residential and business access lines shall be set at \$0.04 per month.

¹ Additional information on TRS may be found at http://www.puc.pa.gov/utility_industry/telecommunications/telecommunications_relay_service.aspx

² See Act 34 of 1995, 35 P.S. §§ 6701.1 – 6701.4 (the statutory provisions were amended by Act 181 of 2002 to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities), establishing the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) to be funded by the TRS surcharge and which codified Relay and use of the TRS surcharge funding mechanism; and Act 174 of 2004, 35 P.S. § 6701.3a, which established the Print Media Access System Program (PMASP) which may be funded in part or in whole by the TRS surcharge. PMASP is a reading service for persons with certain vision-related physical disabilities. The law is now called the “Universal Telecommunications and Print Media Access Act.”

³ This effective date is intended to allow carriers sufficient time to make the necessary systems changes to accommodate the reduction in the surcharge and to file the necessary tariff supplements. These tariff supplements may be filed to become effective on one day’s notice.

Background

The annual TRS surcharge recalculation is dependent on data from several sources. Local Exchange Carriers (LECs⁴) submit annual wireline access line counts pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 63.37. The traditional relay provider, Hamilton Relay, Inc.,⁵ submitted the estimated minutes of use and charges for July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications submitted the estimated minutes-of-use report for the Captioned Telephone Relay Service⁶ (CTRS). The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Department of Labor and Industry, submitted the 2021-2022 TDDP budget and the 2021-2022 PMASP budget. The surcharge also funds TRS Advisory Board activities and Fund administration costs. U.S. Bank,⁷ the Fund Administrator, provided a statement of the financial status of the Fund.⁸

Calculation for 2021 – 2022

Combined residential and business wireline access lines reported by LECs for 2020 and adjusted for Centrex lines are estimated to be 4,054,485. Based upon the number of access lines, projected TRS program costs (Relay, CTRS, TDDP, and PMASP), anticipated Pennsylvania TRS Advisory Board⁹ expenses, TRS Fund administration costs, and the financial status of the TRS Fund, the 2021-2022 TRS

⁴ LECs include both incumbent and competitive local exchange carriers.

⁵ Hamilton Relay, Inc. (Hamilton) holds the TRS Certificate of Public Convenience to provide TRS throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Commission approved Hamilton's Application by order entered December 4, 2014, at Docket No. A-2014-2447601.

⁶ Hamilton Telecommunications, an affiliate of Hamilton Relay, provides CTRS services.

⁷ As a result of mergers, acquisitions, and name changes, Fund administration has been handled by Hamilton Bank (1990), CoreStates Bank N.A. (1995), First Union National Bank (1999), Wachovia Bank, N.A. (2002), and U.S. Bank Institutional Trust & Custody (2006).

⁸ Separate accounts are maintained for the portions of the surcharge allocated to Relay, TDDP, and PMASP. TRS Advisory Board expenses, CTRS, and outreach activities are funded from the Relay account; TRS Fund administration costs are drawn from each respective account.

⁹ The Pennsylvania TRS Advisory Board was established pursuant to Commission Order entered May 29, 1990. The TRS Advisory Board's By-Laws and quarterly meeting schedule can be found at:

http://www.puc.pa.gov/utility_industry/telecommunications/telecommunications_relay_service/trs_advisory_board.aspx

surcharge rate for residential and business access lines will be reduced from the current rate of \$0.08 per month to \$0.04 per month.

This new rate is a reduction to the current rate and will require the LECs to file tariff supplements. These tariff supplements may be filed to become effective on one day’s notice. All TRS surcharge revenues shall continue to be remitted to the Fund Administrator.¹⁰

Effective August 1, 2021, the TRS monthly surcharge allocation for each fund account will be as follows:¹¹

	2021-2022	
	Monthly Surcharge Percentage	
	<u>Residence %</u>	<u>Business %</u>
Relay	65.0	65.0
TDDP	30.0	30.0
PMASP	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.0</u>
Total Percentage	100.0	100.0

Operations for 2021 – 2022

We shall continue our active oversight of the operations of the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service. Further, in accordance with 35 P.S. §§ 6701.3a & 4, we shall continue to collaborate with OVR and its TDDP administrator¹² to ensure adequate funding for distribution of TDDP equipment to qualified Pennsylvanians. Further, we shall continue to assist OVR in its mission to ensure adequate funding for PMASP.

¹⁰ U.S. Bank Institutional Trust & Custody, Attn: Mark Conte, Liberty Building, 50 S. 16th Street, Suite 2000, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Remittances are payable to the “PA Relay Service Fund” and designated for Relay. Bank wire instructions can be found on the remittance form.

¹¹ The TRS surcharge appears as a single line item on customers’ bills but actually has three components (Relay, TDDP traditional and the Wireless Expansion Initiative, and PMASP).

¹² As of January 1, 2007, the TDDP is administered by Pennsylvania’s Initiative on Assistive Technology, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University.

Audits

On August 3, 2020, the Commission's Bureau of Audits began an audit of the TDDP and PMASP at Docket No. D-2020-3020696. The audit covers the twelve-month periods ended June 30, 2019; June 30, 2018; and June 30, 2017. The audit report is expected to be released later this year. The Bureau of Audits plans to initiate another audit of the TRS in 2022.

Service of Order

Due to the Governor's Proclamation of Disaster Emergency that was issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, service by the Commission on parties is exclusively electronic. *See Re: Suspension of Regulatory and Statutory Deadlines; Modification to Filing and Service Requirements*, Emergency Order, Docket No. M-2020-3019262 (Order entered March 20, 2020). As this order does change the TRS surcharge rate, we shall e-serve a copy on every LEC in the Commonwealth in addition to each Relay service provider, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Office of Consumer Advocate, the Office of Small Business Advocate, the Pennsylvania Telephone Association, and the Fund Administrator. Additionally, we will publish the order in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* and on the Commission's website.

Conclusion

The Commission has completed the annual recalculation of the TRS surcharge rate. The TRS surcharge rate for residential and business access lines to be applied beginning August 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, will be set at \$0.04 per month. All LECs are required to file a tariff supplement with the Secretary of the Commission to implement the new TRS surcharge rate. These tariff supplements may be filed to become effective on one day's notice; **THEREFORE**,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That for the period of August 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, the TRS surcharge rate for residential and business access lines shall be set at \$0.04 per month, unless the Commission takes further action to revise the TRS surcharge rate prior to June 30, 2022.


2. That all local exchange carriers are directed to use the attached blank remittance form to remit the monthly TRS surcharge collections to the Fund Administrator. The blank remittance form shall be posted to the Commission's website. All local exchange carriers are required to collect and remit the TRS surcharge revenue with the completed remittance form monthly by the 20th of each month.

3. That a copy of this Order be served upon all local exchange carriers, Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications, Hamilton Relay, Inc., U.S. Bank Institutional Trust & Custody, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Department of Labor and Industry, the Office of Consumer Advocate, the Office of Small Business Advocate, and the Pennsylvania Telephone Association.

4. That a copy of this Order be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

5. That a copy of this Order be posted to the Commission's website.

BY THE COMMISSION,



Rosemary Chiavetta
Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: June 17, 2021

ORDER ENTERED: June 24, 2021

REMITTANCE FORM FOR MONTHLY TRS SURCHARGE COLLECTIONS
 Effective August 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 M-2021-3023544

All local exchange carriers are required to collect and remit the TRS surcharge revenue monthly, by the 20th of each month using the following format for the monthly remittance:

Pennsylvania TRS Surcharge

For the Month Ending _____

Number of **Residential** access lines _____
 X \$0.04 per line _____

Allocated:
 TRS Relay 65.0 percent _____
 TDDP 30.0 percent _____
 PMASP 5.0 percent _____

Number of **Business** access lines _____
 X \$0.04 per line _____

Allocated:
 TRS Relay 65.0 percent _____
 TDDP 30.0 percent _____
 PMASP 5.0 percent _____

Total Remittance _____

Make check payable to: **Pennsylvania TRS Fund**

Mail Report and payment to:	Wire Instructions:
U.S. Bank Institutional Trust & Custody Attn: Mark Conte Liberty Building 50 S. 16 th Street, Suite 2000 Philadelphia, PA 19102	BANK U.S. Bank N.A ADDRESS 60 Livingston Avenue, St Paul MN 55107-2292 ABA 091 000 022 BNF ITC Depository South & East ACCOUNT 173 103 781 832 OBI PA Relay ATTN: Mark Conte Email remittance form to: Danielle.clay1@usbank.com cc mark.conte@usbank.com

Remittance for:
 Company Name: _____
 Utility Code: _____
 Contact Person: _____
 Voice Phone Number: (____) _____ FAX: (____) _____
 E-mail address _____

Authorized Signature: _____ *Date:* _____

Please direct any questions regarding the TRS Surcharge remittance to Mr. Eric Jeschke at (717) 783-3850 or ejeschke@pa.gov.



September 20, 2021

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
P.O. Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

RE: **Docket Number M-2021-3023546**
2020 Annual Legislative Report to the General Assembly

- Telecommunication Devices Distribution Program (TDDP)
- Wireless Expansion Initiative
- Print Media Access System Program (PMASP)

Dear Ms. Chiavetta:

Attached is the information requested by the Pennsylvania Utility Commission (PUC) from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for inclusion in the Annual Report to the governor and Pennsylvania Legislature.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jeff Cushey at jcushey@pa.gov or 717-783-3882.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Austin".

Shannon Austin, M.S., CRC, CWDP, GCDP, OWDS
Executive Director
PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Attachments: Temple University TDDP Annual Report 2020-2021
NFB Annual Newslines Report 2020-2021

cc: Kim Singleton, Temple University TDDP
Sandy McNally, Temple University TDDP

OVR's Mission: To assist Pennsylvanians with disabilities to secure and maintain employment and independence.
Department of Labor & Industry | Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 North Sixth Street | Harrisburg, PA 17102
717.787.5244 | Fax 717.772.1629

www.dli.pa.gov/OVR | Facebook: @PAVocRehab | Twitter: @PA_OVR | Instagram: @PA_OVR | LinkedIn: PA OVR

*Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*

NFB-NEWSLINE® Annual Report
July 2020 to June 2021

Print Media Access System Program (PMASP)

NFB-NEWSLINE®, offered by the National Federation of the Blind, provides the Print Media Access System Program to those who cannot read regular newsprint. Anyone who cannot read conventional newsprint can qualify for this service that is free to its subscribers.

This service is available in forty-five states and the District of Columbia, providing:

- Five hundred local and national newspapers
- Spanish-language newspapers available to all subscribers
- Over ninety magazines including AARP
- Associated Press (national & state) and United Press newswire service updated every hour
- The capability of delivering a newspaper via email directly to a subscriber's inbox
- Local TV listings
- Jobs Listings (Career Builder added in 2010, USA Jobs in 2016)
- Retail ads (Target added in 2011, Walmart added in 2016)
- Emergency weather alerts, including weather forecast
- Availability twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week with local as well as toll-free access
- Service is available on NFB-NEWSLINE Mobile, iPhone app, and an Amazon Alexa skill added in November 2019

Through the Commonwealth's partnership with NFB-NEWSLINE, a subscriber can choose that day's, the previous day's, or the previous Sunday's issue of any newspaper in the service and choose a section and article using a standard touch-tone telephone. Pennsylvania's participating newspapers provide the subscriber with access to all content when traveling throughout the United States.

Get NFB-NEWSLINE Using Amazon Alexa:

Now you can access NFB-NEWSLINE hands-free on any product that is Alexa capable. This even includes the Windows 10 app and Alexa smart phone app that can function without the use of an Echo or Echo Dot.

Enable the skill by saying "Alexa, open National Federation" and log in to NFB-NEWSLINE with your voice, using Alexa to help guide you through the steps and navigate your favorite publications. Many of the same options that are available through web and telephone are available as commands for Alexa as well. Alexa can store your favorites, email you articles, alter the reading voice, volume, or speed, and much more. Simply say, "Alexa, ask National Federation" and then the desired command to use the service.

NFB-NEWSLINE Pennsylvania Participating Newspapers:

- *Allentown Morning Call*
- *Altoona Mirror*
- *Beaver County Times*
- *Bucks County Courier Times*
- *Butler Eagle*

- *Centre Daily Times (State College)*
- *Citizens' Voice*
- *Daily American*
- *Erie Times News*
- *Hanover Evening Sun*
- *Harrisburg Magazine*
- *Intelligencer*
- *LNP Always Lancaster Online*
- *Lebanon Daily News*
- *Patriot News*
- *Philadelphia Daily News*
- *Philadelphia Inquirer*
- *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*
- *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*
- *Pocono Record*
- *Reading Eagle*
- *Times Tribune*
- *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*
- *Williamsport Sun Gazette*
- *York Dispatch*

As of June 30, 2021, there are 4,307 subscribers to this service throughout the Commonwealth. All customers of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Bureau of Blindness & Visual Services are offered the opportunity to subscribe to this service. In addition, individuals are offered the opportunity to subscribe when enrolling in the Books for the Blind and Print Disabled Program, administered by the Library of Congress and cooperating network libraries.

For the eighth year in a row, during the 2020 holiday season, NFB-NEWSLINE presented circulars for several national chains, allowing subscribers to take advantage of holiday sales. The sales circulars of the additional four retailers were from Best Buy, Kohl's, Staples, and Walgreens, in addition to the always available Target and Walmart retail ads. As with last year, the access to sales circulars for these retailers was very popular.

New Content:

Several new items were added to NFB-NEWSLINE including all of the convention materials for the National Federation of the Blind's annual convention that was held virtually, and the American Council of the Blind's convention. Convention materials included the full agendas and registration information. Fourteen new publications have been added to the service as well, this includes:

- *Deming Headlight* – New Mexico
- *Henderson Gleaner* – Indiana
- *Kitsap Sun* – Washington state
- *Ocala Star Banner* – Florida
- *Tuscaloosa News* – Alabama
- *Ventura County Star* – California
- *Vineland Daily Journal* – New Jersey
- *Tech Xplore* – Breaking News

- *Ability Magazine* – Magazine
- *Animal Tales* – Children’s Magazine
- *Fast Company* – Magazine
- *Forbes* – Magazine
- *J-14* – Teen Magazine
- *Toastmaster* – Magazine

2020 Presidential Election:

A considerable amount of effort was placed on The Election 2020 Information section on NFB-NEWSLINE to assist subscribers in making an informed decision to vote in the presidential election. The 2020 election materials were available to all subscribers including those who reside in non-sponsored states.

The Election 2020 Information section included "Candidate 2020 Searches." This section featured a collection of several searches for "Biden" and "Trump" which scanned the top hundred newspapers, breaking news, international newspapers, and magazines on NFB-NEWSLINE. Also, we provided a section detailing the "States Voting Guide 2020" that listed voting procedures and deadlines by state. Finally, for each candidate, there was a biography section and sections relating to their platforms, issues, coalitions, and recent news.

Activity Detail During the Period: July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021

Content Access Frequency: 49 seconds

Our statistics indicate that a subscriber from Pennsylvania accessed NFB-NEWSLINE to obtain a piece of information every 49 seconds during the year.

Category	First Quarter FY2020	Second Quarter FY2020	Third Quarter FY2020	Fourth Quarter FY2020	12 month period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021
Users:	4,240	4,256	4,291	4,307	4,307
New applications:	30	17	28	22	97
Email Newspapers Delivered:	18,126	18,740	31,510	27,885	96,261
Calls Received:	28,029	25,855	24,652	24,165	102,701
State Newspapers Accessed:	72,882	73,984	74,500	60,355	281,701
Television Listings Accessed:	6,077	6,507	5,345	5,041	22,970
Number of Minutes:	377,074	368,361	366,164	308,197	1,419,796
Local Call Percentage:	62.62	61.18	64.22	62.80	62.80

Newspaper Usage Report

Please find below a chart containing the names of the Pennsylvania publications along with the number of times that they were accessed between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

Content Name	First Quarter FY2020	Second Quarter FY2020	Third Quarter FY2020	Fourth Quarter FY2020	12 month period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021
Local Weather and Emergency Alerts	6,436	5,846	5,846	5,846	23,974
<i>Allentown Morning Call</i>	5,299	5,624	5,263	4,144	20,330
<i>Altoona Mirror</i>	1,855	1,933	1,941	1,711	7,440
Associated Press Pennsylvania	10,586	12,071	11,797	10,653	45,107
<i>Beaver County Times</i>	845	825	943	563	3,176
<i>Bucks County Courier Times</i>	899	1,430	1,318	1,002	4,649
<i>The Butler Eagle</i>	1,003	1,011	897	502	3,413
<i>Centre Daily Times</i>	1,010	1,018	1,059	915	4,002
<i>Citizens' Voice</i>	1,108	1,043	860	366	3,377
<i>Daily American</i>	634	798	816	590	2,838
<i>Erie Times News</i>	6,518	6,348	7,010	5,324	25,200
<i>Hanover Evening Sun</i>	620	397	324	289	1,630
<i>LNP Always Lancaster Online</i>	4,397	4,561	4,638	4,668	18,264
<i>Lebanon Daily News</i>	975	889	1,183	1,103	4,080
Pennsylvania Local Channel	428	543	426	467	1,864
<i>Patriot-News</i>	1,818	1,882	1,845	1,464	7,009
Philadelphia Online	6,224	7,011	6,432	1,822	21,489
<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i>	8,413	7,969	7,867	7,775	32,024
<i>Pittsburgh Tribune Review</i>	12,155	11,645	11,940	10,681	46,421
<i>Pocono Record</i>	1,385	539	1,536	854	4,314
<i>Reading Eagle</i>	1,479	1,835	1,723	1,606	6,643
<i>Times Tribune</i>	872	473	784	797	2,926
<i>Wilkes-Barre Times Leader</i>	913	891	781	760	3,345
<i>Williamsport Sun Gazette</i>	1,412	1,483	1,397	1,112	5,404
<i>York Dispatch</i>	538	362	305	357	1,562

Actual Costs Incurred During the Period (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)

Please refer to the four quarterly invoices for this period for detail:

NFB-NEWSLINE annual maintenance service fee: \$44,000 (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)

The newspapers included with the annual service fee are:

- *Centre Daily Times*
- *Hanover Evening Sun*
- *Intelligencer*
- *Lebanon Daily News*
- *LNP Lancaster Always Online*
- *Patriot News*
- *Philadelphia Inquirer*
- *Philadelphia Daily News*
- *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*
- *York Dispatch*

Annual newspaper operational fee: \$75,000 (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)

This includes fifteen newspapers at \$5,000 each

- *Allentown Morning Call*
- *Altoona Mirror*
- *Beaver County Times*
- *Bucks County Courier Times*
- *Butler Eagle*
- *Citizens Voice*
- *Daily American*
- *Erie Times News*
- *Harrisburg Magazine*
- *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*
- *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*
- *Pocono Record*
- *The Reading Eagle*
- *Times Tribune*
- *Williamsport Sun Gazette*

Marketing and Outreach: \$45,000 (July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021)

Marketing and Outreach tasks will consist of the following: subscriber registration and follow-up, including the distribution of materials needed for instruction for new subscribers in print, Braille, or audio format; distribution of brochures and other promotional materials at community events and exhibits; and the staffing of a help desk to answer calls from subscribers and those requesting NFB-NEWSLINE information and materials. Additionally, administration of the state specific channel for Pennsylvania and posting of items of interest to the blindness community in the commonwealth will be included in this fee.

Annual Unlimited Nationwide Direct Inward Dial Telecommunications Access fee: \$4,000 (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)

A pro-rated fee assessed to each state for NFB-NEWSLINE telecommunications service.

Total invoice: \$168,000 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021)

Submitted by:

Scott A. White
Director of Sponsored Technology Programs
National Federation of the Blind
Swhite@nfb.org
410-659-9314 extension 2231
August 18, 2021

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ACT 181-2002:
TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM
Docket Number M-2021-3023544

IN OVERSEEING THE TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICE DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM (TDDP), THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (OVR) REPORTS THE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEAR ACTIVITIES BEGINNING JULY 1, 2020 TO JUNE 30, 2021:

Background:

Act 181-2002 provided for the creation of the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program. The Act authorizes the collection of funds as calculated by the PA Public Utility Commission (PUC) on an annual basis in order to pay for telecommunication equipment for eligible applicants. The Act identifies OVR in the Department of Labor and Industry as responsible for the oversight of the TDDP but does not allow for administrative costs to be levied against the surcharge funds.

The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, as designated by OVR, continues to administer the TDDP. Administrative activities are funded by OVR, with supplemental funds contributed by Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (federal dollars).

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TDDP:

- Be a resident of Pennsylvania.
- Qualify as a person with a disability or disabilities that prevents him/her from making or receiving telephone calls independently. An Audiologist, Licensed Physician, Speech Language Pathologist, Physician's Assistant, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Registered Nurse Practitioner, Optometrist, Ophthalmologist or a Service Professional (public or private agency that serves deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind, Center for Independent Living employee, credentialed Assistive Technology Professional) must certify the disability.
- Have current landline telephone service and be capable of using the requested device(s).
- If applying for wireless equipment: have a current mobile plan or be able to obtain a mobile plan after the equipment is received and provide proof of service/activation.
- Be six years of age or older.
- Have an individual (not including family/household income) gross income of 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or less (currently \$25,760 per year for a single individual).

OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM:

- During the fiscal year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, the Institute on Disabilities provided the day-to-day operations of the TDDP. The Institute on Disabilities has a proven track record of providing assistive technology devices and services to Pennsylvanians with disabilities of all ages, as the lead agency for the implementation of the federal Assistive Technology Act in Pennsylvania (TechOWL, formerly known as Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology) and since 2012, as the certifying entity in Pennsylvania for the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, funded through the 21st Century Telecommunications Act. The Institute also serves as OVR's contractor for the implementation of the state-funded program, Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library.
- On February 27, 2019, PUC published an Order approving the Wireless Expansion Initiative (WEI) allowing TDDP to fulfill requests for wireless devices. The WEI launched on July 1, 2019. The eligibility requirements are stated above. This is year 2 of the initiative.
- The cross-disability Assistive Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology serves in an advisory capacity for the TDDP program. The ATAC is established by statute under the federal Assistive Technology Act.

APPLICATION FORMS:

- Applications are distributed by request through the US Mail, as well as through email and in person. Applications can also be completed on or downloaded from the TechOWL website: <https://techowlpa.org/tddp/>. Applications are also distributed through the statewide network of Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRCs) and TDDP Information Centers. During this program year, TechOWL received and reviewed a total of 126 individual, wireline applications. Of these, 98 were determined eligible, and 6 were determined ineligible. As of June 30, 2021, eligibility determinations were still in process on approximately 9 incomplete applications. In addition, 10 applicants who submitted incomplete applications and did not respond to repeated requests for information were marked inactive; this number included people from the end of the previous program year. An application is deemed inactive when the applicant does not respond to repeated contact attempts from TDDP to provide missing documentation or other information.
- During this program year, TechOWL received and reviewed a total of 226 individual, wireless applications. Of these, 149 were determined eligible, and 18 were determined ineligible. As of June 30, 2021, eligibility determinations were still in process on approximately 38 incomplete applications. In addition, 16 applicants who submitted incomplete applications and did not respond to repeated requests for information were marked inactive.

EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTED TO APPLICANTS:

- Wireline equipment distributed to 96 eligible applicants between July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 is detailed in TDDP Attachment 1-TDDP Devices Distributed 20-21, page 1.
- Wireless equipment distributed to 193 eligible applicants between July 1, 2020 – July 30, 2021 is detailed in TDDP Attachment 1-TDDP Devices Distributed 20-21, page 2.

FUNDING:

- The market value of the TDDP fund as of June 30, 2021 was \$1,069,333.96. The US-Bank Account Summary for the period ending June 30, 2021 is attached and referenced as TDDP Attachment 2-US Bank Statement ending 6-30-2021.

VENDORS:

- From July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 the program used the following 4 vendors to supply equipment for the TDDP:
 - Teltex, Inc. -- Kearney, MO
 - WCI -- Weitbrecht Communications, Inc., Santa Monica, CA
 - Griffin Laboratories, Inc. – Temecula, CA
 - Raz Mobility, LLC – Tysons Corner, VA
- The vendors supplied equipment from the pre-approved list as well as devices approved through the Exceptions Process, as applicable. The agreements with these vendors extend until June 30, 2022. An equipment price list is included in this report as TDDP Attachment 3-TDDP Equipment Price List 20-21.

Fund disbursements to vendors during the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 are as follows:

Teltex for Wireline Equipment	\$13,354.00
WCI for Wireline Equipment	\$1,714.75
Griffin Lab for Wireline Equipment	\$970.00
<u>Subtotal for Wireline Equipment</u>	<u>\$16,038.75</u>
Teltex for Wireless Equipment	\$105,801.23
Raz Mobility for Wireless Equipment	\$27,922.00
<u>Subtotal for Wireless Equipment</u>	<u>\$133,723.23</u>
<u>Total vendor disbursements:</u>	<u>\$149,761.98</u>

These disbursements also include payments for wireline equipment ordered toward the end of the previous program year (July 1, 2019 -June 30, 2020).

CONSUMER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:

Subcontracts with eight (8) regional Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRCs) to provide "local" activities related to consumer outreach, education and training began on July 1, 2020. In addition to coordinating statewide consumer education and outreach efforts, the TechOWL serves as an ATRC for southeastern Pennsylvania. Between July 2020 and June 2021 TechOWL staff (including but not limited to, the Consumer Educator),

and ATRCs participated in 36 outreach activities, including 3 statewide events, held in 18 counties, and reaching over 867 Pennsylvanians. The list of activities is included in this report as TDDP Attachment 4-TDDP Consumer Education & Outreach Events 20-21.

Total fund disbursements (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) to Temple University for Consumer Education and Outreach activities for TDDP (wireline) were \$174,510.77. Total fund disbursements (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021) to Temple University for Consumer Education and Outreach activities for the Wireless Expansion Initiative were \$110,455.05. These figures include remaining amounts due for July 2019 to June 2020.

CONTINUING AND EMERGING BARRIERS TO ACCESS TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

- Underestimated interest in Wireless Expansion Initiative (WEI). Wireless equipment requests exceed allotted wireless equipment budget. As a result, a waiting list for wireless equipment was started in October 2020. After clarification from the Public Utility Commission in April 2021, it was learned that the commission passively approved the budget estimate for FY2021. Ordering equipment commenced in April 2021.
- With the state closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some consumers were unable to obtain necessary supporting documents to complete their application. Staff assisted as best they could remotely. Cancellation of scheduled events due to COVID-19 curtailed Consumer Education and Outreach efforts. Virtual events were continued and contributed to the consumer's education and support.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021):

- During this program year, 12 recipients from TDDP and WEI who requested assistance with their TDDP equipment received support from ATRCs. Altogether, 13.5 hours of device support were provided via telephone support or in person.
- Twenty-two (22) new Information Centers were added this program year. There are now a total of 69 Information Centers.
- Satisfaction surveys were mailed, emailed, or contacted via telephone to equipment recipients. Overall satisfaction rate for wireline and wireless consumers is 79% (highly satisfied).
- Articles were published in 10 newsletters reaching 94,216 people. Four (4) press releases reached 68,000 people. Twenty-six (26) mailings containing TDDP and WEI information were sent to organizations and professionals, including but not limited to: senior centers, behavioral health agencies, Area Agencies on Aging, senior citizen groups, community service providers, home health agencies, hearing loss professionals, state representative offices, local municipalities, and churches. These mailings and publications reached at least 3,536 Pennsylvanians, and social media posts reached over 21,649 people based on number of views.
- All policies and procedures were reviewed and updated to include the Wireless Expansion Initiative.

ATTACHMENTS:

- TDDP Attachment 1-TDDP Devices Distributed 20-21

- TDDP Attachment 2-US Bank Statement ending 6-30-2021
- TDDP Attachment 3-TDDP Equipment Price List 20-21
- TDDP Attachment 4-TDDP Consumer Education Outreach Events 20-21
- TDDP Referenced Attachment-TDDP Application 20-21

Attachment B
TDDP Equipment Ordered

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

Traditional Wireline Device Name	Unit Price	Quantity Ordered	Value of Equipment Ordered
Clarity Alto, Amplified Telephone	\$98.95	2	\$ 197.90
Clarity AltoPlus, Amplified Telephone	\$104.95	7	\$ 734.65
Clarity HA-40, In-Line Handset Amplifier	\$20.95	0	-
Clarity JV35, Talking Amplified Telephone	\$92.95	7	\$ 650.65
Clarity JV35W, Talking Amplified Telephone	\$92.95	1	\$ 92.95
Serene Innovations HD-40P, Amplified Photo Telephone	\$62.95	0	-
**Serene Innovations HD-60J, Amplified Large Button Telephone	\$93.95	4	\$ 375.80
Clarity XLC2+, Amplified Cordless Telephone	\$93.95	7	\$ 657.65
Panasonic KX-TGM430B, Amplified/Bluetooth/Ans.Machine	\$94.95	15	\$ 1,424.25
Panasonic KX-TGM450S, Amplified/Cordless/Ans. Machine	\$97.95	25	\$ 2,448.75
CapTel 2400i, (Touch Screen) Captioned Telephone	\$90.25	5	\$ 451.25
CapTel 840 Plus, Captioned Telephone	\$90.25	6	\$ 541.50
CapTel 840i, Captioned Telephone	\$90.25	0	-
CapTel 880i, Captioned Telephone	\$90.25	4	\$ 361.00
Ultratec Superprint 4425, TTY	\$330.00	0	-
Ultratec Uniphone 1140, VCO/HCO/TTY	\$195.00	4	\$ 780.00
ActiVocal Vocally 3 Freedom	\$154.95	1	\$ 154.95
Reizen, Big Button Speakerphone	\$28.00	4	\$ 112.00
**Serene Innovations RCx1000, Remote Hands-Free Telephone	\$369.95	3	\$ 1,109.85
Clearsounds CR2000, Loud Ring Signaler	\$41.95	10	\$ 419.50
*Silent Call MyAlert, Vibrating Phone Signaler Kit for TTYs	\$55.00	0	-
Sonic Alert TR75VR, Flashing Light Signaler	\$39.95	9	\$ 359.55
**Headset with Microphone	\$25.00	1	\$ 25.00
**Lapel Microphone	\$35.00	1	\$ 35.00
Exceptions Equipment: TelTalk Electrolarynx with handset	\$970.00	1	\$ 970.00
TOTALS		117	\$ 11,902.20
*Silent Call, Omni-Page Vibrating Signaler Kit (discontinued-replaced with			
Silent Call MyAlert, Vibrating Phone Signaler Kit for TTYs)			
** Discontinued equipment during 3rd Quarter			

Attachment B
TDDP Equipment Ordered

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

Wireless Device Name	Unit Price	Quantity Ordered	Value of Equipment Ordered
Apple iPhone SE	\$ 629.00	22	\$ 13,838.00
Apple iPhone XR	\$ 899.00	74	\$ 66,526.00
Samsung Galaxy S10 Smart Phone	\$ 789.00	24	\$ 18,936.00
Google Pixel 4a Smart Phone	\$ 599.00	5	\$ 2,995.00
BlindShell Classic	\$ 400.00	13	\$ 5,200.00
Apple iPad 4G Tablet	\$ 749.00	46	\$ 34,454.00
Samsung Galaxy S5E Tablet for GSM network	\$ 689.00	5	\$ 3,445.00
Samsung Galaxy S5E Tablet for Verizon network	\$ 689.00	4	\$ 2,756.00
Serene Innovations SA-40 HearAll Cellphone Amplifier	\$ 74.95	0	\$ -
Smart Signaler: Serene Innovations RF200 Alerting Device	\$ 51.95	10	\$ 519.50
Smart Signaler: Sonic Bomb Bluetooth Bed Shaker	\$ 35.95	9	\$ 323.55
Exeptions Equipment-Applications for Smart Devices			
LAMP Words for Life	\$ 299.99	1	\$ 299.99
Visuals2Go Expert	\$ 189.99	1	\$ 189.99
TOTALS		214	\$ 149,483.03

2020-2021 TDDP Equipment List

WireLine Equipment

Clarity Alto, Amplified Phone
Clarity Alto Plus, Amplified Phone
Clarity JV35, Talking Amplified Phone
Clarity J35W, Talking Amplified Phone
Clarity HD-40, In-Line Handset Amplifier
Serene Innovations HD-40P, Amplified Photo Phone
Serene Innovations HD-60J, Amplified Large Button Phone
Clarity XLC2+, Amplified Cordless Phone
Panasonic KX-TGM430B, Amplified Cordless BT Phone w/ Answering Machine
Panasonic KX-TGM450S, Amplified Cordless Phone with Answering Machine
CapTel 840 Plus, Captioned Telephone
CapTel 840i, Captioned Telephone
CapTel 880i, Captioned Telephone
CapTel 2400i, Captioned Telephone
Ultratec Superprint 4425, TTY
Ultratec Uniphone 1140, VCO/HCO/TTY
ActiVocal Vocally 3 Freedom, Voice Activated Dialer
Reizen Big Button Speakerphone
Serene Innovations RCX1000, Remote Hands Free Telephone

WireLine Accessories

Headset (for RCX1000)
Lapel Microphone (for RCX1000)

WireLine Signalers

ClearSounds CR200, Loud Ring Signaler
Sonic Alert TR75VR, Flashing Light Signaler
Silent Call MyAlert TP-KIT, Vibrating Phone Signaler Kit for TTYs (TR100T)

Wireless Equipment

iPhone SE 64GB (4.7 inch)
iPhone XR 64GB (6.1 inch)
Samsung Galaxy S10 (5.8 inch)
Google Pixel 4a (5.81 inch)
BlindShell Classic
Memory Cell Phone (6.3 inch)--GSM unlocked (must be managed by a CG)
iPad 4G Tablet 32GB (10.2 inch)
Samsung Galaxy Tab S5E 64GB (10.5 inch)--GSM unlocked
Samsung Galaxy Tab S5E 64GB (10.5 inch)--Verizon
Serene Innovations SA-40 HearAll Cell Phone Amplifier

Wireless Signalers

Smart Signaler: Serene Innovations RF200 Cell Phone Signaler
Smart Signaler: Sonic Alert Sonic Bomb BT Bed Shaker

<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Vendor</u>
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\$98.95	Teltex
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\$104.95	Teltex
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\$92.95	Teltex
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\$92.95	Teltex
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\$20.95	Teltex
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\$62.95	Teltex
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\$93.95	Teltex
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\$93.95	Teltex
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\$94.95	Teltex
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\$97.95	Teltex
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\$90.25	WCI
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\$90.25	WCI
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\$90.25	WCI
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\$90.25	WCI
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\$330.00	Teltex
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\$195.00	Teltex
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\$154.95	Teltex
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\$28.00	Teltex
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\$369.95	Teltex
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\$25.00	Teltex
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\$35.00	Teltex
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\$41.95	Teltex
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\$39.95	Teltex
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Upgrade	\$55.00	Teltex
---------	---------	--------

Upgrade	\$629.00	Teltex
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Upgrade	\$899.00	Teltex
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Upgrade	\$789.00	Raz
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NEW	\$599.00	Raz
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NEW	\$400.00	Teltex
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Exception	\$399.00	Raz
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\$749.00	Teltex
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Upgrade	\$689.00	Raz
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Upgrade	\$689.00	Raz
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\$74.95	Teltex
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\$51.95	Teltex
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\$35.95	Teltex
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Attachment A

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

TDDP Consumer Education Outreach Events

Type of Consumer Outreach Event	ATRC	Date(s) Held	Event Name/Sponsor	Estimated Attendance	County of Event
Presentation	CLASS	8/4/20	South GreenGate Commons Senior Residence	12	Westmoreland
Presentation	UCPNEPA	8/11/20	NEPA Aging Network Alliance: Virtual	11	Lackawanna
Presentation	UCPNEPA	9/10/20	Wright Center for community workers	8	Lackawanna
Presentation	UCPNEPA	9/17/20	Pike County Interagency Group: Virtual	25	Pike
Presentation	UCPCPA	9/23/20	Vision Corps Blind Low Vision Support Group	12	Lancaster
Presentation	PIAT	9/30/20	TDDP 101: Virtual Presentation for BBVS	120	Statewide
Presentation	CILNCP	9/30/20	TDDP Presentation for Adults with Disabilities	20	Lycoming
Presentation	CLASS	10/14/20	TDDP for statewide LINK partners	86	Statewide
Presentation	CILNCPA	10/28/20	TDDP information session for CILNCPA adult consumers	10	Lycoming
Presentation	LVCIL	10/30/20	TDDP for Lehigh Valley Jewish Family Service	3	Lehigh
Presentation	UCPNE	11/3/20	TDDP for Wyoming Inter-Agency Council	26	Wyoming
Presentation	TRPIL	11/9/20	TDDP/WEI for LTC Facility Task Force	11	Statewide
Presentation	TRPIL	12/9/20	TDD Program Developments for CIL staff (VFI/TRPIL)	120	Statewide
Presentation	CLASS	12/13/20	TDDP for Disability Options Network Services	13	Westmoreland
Presentation	CLASS	12/17/20	TDDP for HearWell Center	3	Allegheny
Presentation	UCPNE	1/4/21	LINK: Wayne Information Network	16	Wayne
Presentation	LVCIL	1/8/21	Reading Planned Parenthood	1	Berks
Presentation	PIAT	1/13/21	Philadelphia Corporation on Aging: TDDP and AT	64	Philadelphia
Presentation	UCPCPA	1/21/21	Cumberland County Parkinsons Group	9	Cumberland
Presentation	UCPCPA	1/26/21	Panel Discussion: ARC of Lancaster Lebanon	44	Lancaster/Lebanon
Presentation	UCPNE	2/2/21	Wyoming Interagency Council	25	Wyoming
Presentation	LVCIL	2/2/21	Virtual Caregiver Workshop	30	Lehigh
Presentation	PIAT	2/11/21	Norristown Interagency Council Meeting	45	Montgomery
Presentation	TRPIL	2/23/21	Cambria County Intermediate Unit	3	Cambria
Presentation	UCPNE	3/18/21	Pike Interagency Group	29	Pike
Presentation	TRPIL	4/12/21	Facebook Live: TDDP Equipment Selection	3	Washington
Presentation	LVCIL	4/20/21	OVR-Allentown office	17	Lehigh
Presentation	TRPIL	4/26/21	Facebook Live: TDDP Equipment Selection	15	Washington
Presentation	UCPNE	4/28/21	Epilepsy Foundation Support Group-NEPA	8	Lackawanna
Presentation	LVCIL	5/26/21	LVCIL Board of Directors	10	Lehigh
Presentation	LVCIL	5/27/21	Bradbury Sullivan LGBTQ Center	1	Lehigh
Presentation	UCPC	6/1/21	Dauphin County Blind Visual Services	13	Dauphin
Presentation	UCPNE	6/7/21	Wayne County Interagency Network/LINK	14	Wayne

Attachment A

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

TDDP Consumer Education Outreach Events

Presentation	UCPC	6/8/21	HMJ Intellectual Disabilities Quality & Information Council	19	Huntingdon
Presentation	UCPNE	6/8/21	NEPA Aging Network	20	Lackawanna
Presentation	LVCIL	6/24/21	Bnai Brith Apartment Complex	1	Lehigh
			Total Attendance (estimated)	867	
			Number of Events	36	
			Events reaching underserved populations	1	
			Counties Reached	18	
			Statewide Events	3	
			Legend: Assistive Technology Resource Centers		
PIAT=PA Initiative on Assistive Technology	UCPNE		UCPNE=United Cerebral Palsy of Northeastern PA		
CRI=Community Resources for Independence			LIFT=Life and Independence for Today		
CLASS=Community Living and Support Services			LVPIL=Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living		
UCPC=United Cerebral Palsy of Central PA			TRPIL=Transitional Paths to Independent Living		
CILNCPA=Center for Independent Living of North Central PA					



RETURN TO: TechOWL Free Special Phone Program
1755 N. 13th Street / Student Center, Ste. 411S
Philadelphia, PA 19122
Tel: 800-204-7428 / TTY: 711
Fax: 215-204-6336 / Email: TDDP@temple.edu

APPLICATION FOR FREE SPECIAL PHONES

*We highly recommend a device demonstration or loan since there is a **no exchange** policy.

- I will call to schedule an equipment demonstration or loan.
- I do not want an equipment demonstration or loan.

Do you already own equipment similar to what you are requesting from TechOWL? Yes No

If yes, what equipment do you own? _____

If yes, please check one answer below:

My equipment:

- is broken or only works sometimes
- is borrowed
- does not meet my needs because: _____

I will use this device at: (check all that applies)

- Home
- School
- Work

APPLICANT INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT)

Personal Information (to be completed by applicant)

Name (Last) _____ (First) _____ (MI) _____

Address (P.O Box not accepted): _____

City _____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone (_____) _____ Date of Birth ____ / ____ / ____

Email _____

Person assisting you with application, if any

Name _____ Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Name of parent or guardian (for applicants under 18 years old)

Name (Last) _____ (First) _____ (MI) _____

Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

APPLICANT ANNUAL INCOME AND FAMILY MEMBERS

You must attach the applicant's most current proof of income. Examples of proof of income include W-2's, 1099s or award letters from retirement and/or Social Security income. If you need a copy of your Social Security income statement, please call 1-800-772-1213.

Number of people living at this (applicant's) address including applicant: _____

OTHER APPLICANT INFORMATION (REQUIRED)

Reason for using the Free Special Phone Program

- I cannot afford equipment
 This equipment is only available through the Free Special Phone Program
 I could use other programs, but the system is too complex and/or the wait is too long

How did you hear about us?

- friend/relative support person web brochure/flyer
 presentation/exhibit by _____ other (specify) _____

If applying for a Free Wireless Device, please complete the following

questions: Do you currently subscribe to a mobile plan? Yes No

If yes, what is the name of the mobile provider? _____

If no, are you able to obtain a mobile plan? Yes No

Have you ever used a wireless device? Yes No

Do you currently use any of the following types of technology? (Check all that apply):

- Hearing aid Relay (IP, VRS, TTY, Other (List) _____
 Cochlear Implant STS, VCO, HCO, _____
 Speech generating device Captioned Telephone) Not applicable/don't use

PLEASE NOTE: YOU MUST OBTAIN AND MAINTAIN AN AGREEMENT WITH A MOBILE PHONE COMPANY IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR A FREE WIRELESS DEVICE.

OPTIONAL

Race: Black or African-American Asian or Asian-American White or Caucasian
 American-Indian or Alaska Native Other (specify) _____
 Prefer not to answer

Ethnicity: Hispanic Non-Hispanic

Gender: Male Female Other Prefer not to answer

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT AND SIGNATURE

IMPORTANT: Submit application no later than 30 days after you have signed and dated it.

- I certify that all information provided on this application and supporting documents is true, complete and correct.
- I understand that if I purposely provide false information, I may be subject to legal action.
- Program officials have my permission to verify the information provided.
- I certify that I have read, understand and accept all conditions set forth in this application and have the ability to learn to use the equipment selected.
- I understand that I may not sell, give, or lend to another person any equipment provided to me by the program.
- For free wireless devices only: I will be responsible for all services related to the equipment, including activation fee, monthly service plan, software and app updates, and will use the device to access phone and telecommunications-related services, such as video relay, email and texting. I will activate the device I receive within 30 days of receipt on a mobile service plan. I will send in proof of activation or current wireless plan to TechOWL wherever necessary.

Applicant signature _____ Date _____

Parent/legal guardian/signature _____ Date _____
(if applicant is under 18)

***Demonstration Centers:** If you are having trouble making a decision about which equipment might work for you, please contact or visit one of the Assistive Technology Regional Centers (ATRCs).

You can also request a device to try out from our Lending Library.

Visit: TechOWLpa.org

Email: TDDP@temple.edu

Call: 800-204-7428

CERTIFICATION OF DISABILITY

(PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY OR TYPE)

All information must be completed by a professional.

Applicant Name

(Last) _____ (First) _____ (MI) _____

Please check one.

I am a(n):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audiologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Optometrist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physician | <input type="checkbox"/> Ophthalmologist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speech-Language Pathologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Service Professional (public or private agency that serves deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind, Center for Independent Living employee, credentialed Assistive Technology Professional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physician's Assistant | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Registered Nurse Practitioner | |

Please check the disability(ies) being certified:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cognitive* | <input type="checkbox"/> low vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> deaf | <input type="checkbox"/> blind |
| <input type="checkbox"/> deafblind | <input type="checkbox"/> physical* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hard of hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> speech |

*If you marked cognitive or physical disability, please explain why the applicant needs a specialized phone and/or wireless device. _____

Certifying Professional

Full Name _____ Title _____

Agency _____

PA Professional License Number, if applicable _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

I certify that the applicant named above has the disability indicated, and that they require this technology to independently access telecommunication services.

Signature of Certifier _____ Date _____

**BEFORE YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION,
READ THIS LIST AND CHECK THE BOXES TO ENSURE YOUR APPLICATION IS
COMPLETE. FAILURE TO SUBMIT ALL THE ITEMS WILL RESULT IN A DELAY.**

- Completed application with all questions answered and all blanks filled in.
- Completed Disability Certification (filled out by a certifying professional).
- Completed Equipment Selection Sheet with one piece of equipment and/or one signaler that will work for you.

Submit photocopies of documents with the following information:

- Proof of PA residency with the applicant's name and current street address (current driver's license, non-driver ID, utility bill, dated Social Security correspondence, copies of W-2s, school report card, or other documentation pre-printed with the applicant's name and current street address).
- Proof of applicant's income (Examples of proof of income include W-2's, 1099s or award letters from retirement and/or Social Security income. If you need a copy of your Social Security income statement, please call 1-800-772-1213). Your **most recent** information is required.
- For a free home phone: Proof of **most recent** telephone service bill (e.g. If you sign your application in May, include the April bill.)
- For a free wireless device: If you have a mobile service plan, include page 1 from your current phone bill with this application. (e.g. If you sign your application in May, include the April bill.) You are still eligible even if you don't have a mobile service plan at this time. You have agreed to obtain a mobile service plan in the Applicant Statement and Signature section of the application. The program will follow-up to request confirmation.

Keep a copy of your entire completed application for your records.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- We process your application.
- We send you a letter saying your application is eligible, incomplete or denied.
- The letters come from Temple University. It is NOT a bill or junk mail.
- Tell us if you have changed your contact information.
- This whole process can take up to 4-8 weeks. Please be patient with us.

TechOWLPA.org

Tel: 800-204-7428

Email: TDDP@temple.edu

The Free Special Phone Program (Pennsylvania's Telecommunication Device Distribution Program) is implemented by TechOWL, a program of the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, in conjunction with the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the PA Public Utility Commission (PUC).

January 2021

Eligibility Criteria

■ PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

- This disability prevents a person from making or receiving telephone calls independently. A qualified professional must complete the certification of disability.

■ INCOME LIMITS

- We only use the applicant's proof of income. This does not include family/household income.

FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA GUIDELINES <i>(as of January 18, 2021)</i>	
size of family unit	GROSS INCOME <small>(200% of federal poverty guidelines)</small>
1	\$25,760
2	\$34,840
3	\$43,920
4	\$53,000
5	\$62,080
6	\$71,160
7	\$80,240
8	\$89,200

■ AGE

- Six (6) years or older.

■ RESIDENCE

- Resident of Pennsylvania.

■ RESOURCES

- Must have an existing landline telephone service and/or
- Must certify to obtain a wireless service agreement to use with the wireless device.
- Must be able to learn how to use requested equipment.

■ EQUIPMENT OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

- Your selection is FINAL and CANNOT BE EXCHANGED. It is your property and responsibility. A durable, protective case and/or screen protector for your wireless device is not included with your equipment. It is highly recommended that you purchase one.

Information will be kept confidential except as required by law.

All equipment is covered by a limited manufacturer defect warranty. If it is defective or stops working, the recipient contacts the vendor for repairs. Repairs for damages due to abuse or neglect are not covered. Stolen equipment can be replaced only when a police report of theft is provided.

If you need help completing this application, or need it in an alternate form, please contact us:

phone: (800) 204-7428

TTY: 711

fax: (215) 204-6336

email: TDDP@temple.edu

web: TechOWLpa.org The Free Special Phone Program (Pennsylvania's Telecommunication Device Distribution Program) is implemented by TechOWL, a program of the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, in conjunction with the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the PA Public Utility Commission (PUC).

Free Special Phone Equipment Selection

You must submit your equipment selection with your application.

Category A: Select only ONE device from any row below that best fits your needs.**

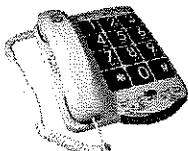
AMPLIFIED PHONES



Clarity Alto



Clarity AltoPlus



Clarity JV35

Clarity JV35W
(white buttons)



Serene Innovations HD-40P



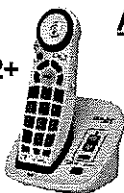
Serene Innovations HD-60J



Clarity HA40 In-line Handset Amplifier

AMPLIFIED CORDLESS PHONES

Clarity XLC2+



Panasonic KX-TGM430B (bluetooth)



Panasonic KX-TGM450S



CAPTIONED PHONES and TTYs

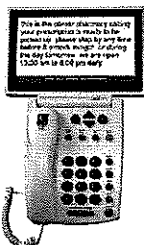
(*high speed internet needed)



CapTel 840 PLUS (analog or DSL service compatible)



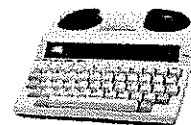
CapTel 840i*



CapTel 880i* (large display)



CapTel 2400* (touch screen display)

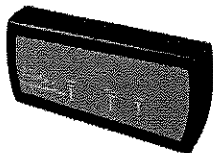


Superprint 4425 TTY



Uniphone 1140 TTY/HCO/VCO

OTHER PHONES



ActiVocal Vocally 3 Freedom Voice Dialer



Reizen Big Button Speakerphone

Category B: Select only ONE signaler below.

SIGNALERS

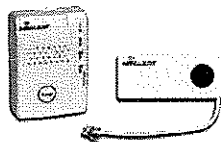
ClearSound[®] CR200 Loud Ring Signaler



Sonic Alert TR75VR Flashing Light Signaler



MyAlert[™] Telephone Pager Kit



NONE (No device from Category B needed.)

For details go to: <https://techowlpa.org/tddp>

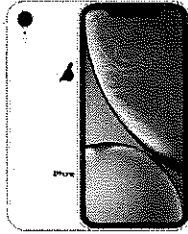
**If none of the listed equipment will meet your needs, please contact TechOWL. TEL: 800-204-7428 VOICE: 711 TTY / EMAIL: TDDP@temple.edu

Free Wireless Devices and Equipment Selection

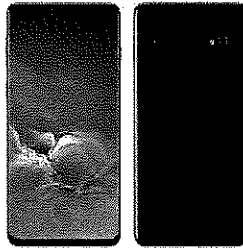
You must submit your equipment selection with your application.

Category A: Select only ONE device from any row below that best fits your needs.**

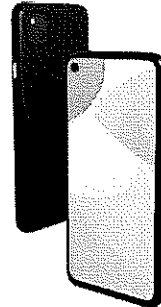
PHONES



- Apple iPhone SE
(4.7 Inch Screen)
OR
 Apple iPhone XR
(6.1 Inch Screen)



- Samsung Galaxy
S10 Smart Phone

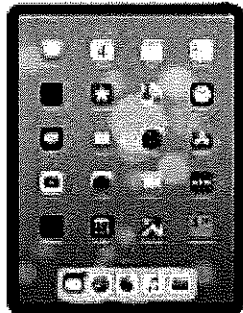


- Google Pixel
4a Smart Phone

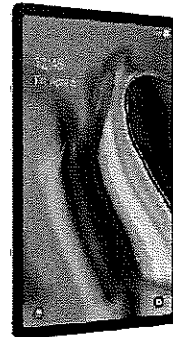


- BlindShell
Classic

TABLETS



- Apple iPad
4G Tablet



- Samsung Galaxy
S5E Tablet
compatible with
 Verizon
 Other plan

CELLPHONE AMPLIFIER



- Serene Innovations
SA-40 HearAll
Cellphone Amplifier

Category B: Select only ONE signaler below.



- Smart Signaler:
Serene Innovations
Ringer Flasher RF200
Alerting Device

- Smart Signaler:
Sonic Bomb BT Bed Shaker
(iOS compatible only)



- NONE
(No device
from Category B
needed.)

For details go to: <https://techowlpa.org/tddp>

**If none of the listed equipment will meet your needs, please contact TechOWL.

TEL: (800) 204-7428 TTY: 711 EMAIL: TDDP@temple.edu