



National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program

Background

The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) authorizes the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provide funding for local programs to distribute equipment to low-income individuals who are “deaf-blind” (see definition below.) The FCC may use up to \$10 million annually from the interstate Telecommunications Relay Service fund for this purpose.

Pilot Program

In 2011, the FCC established the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) as a pilot program. The pilot program will run for two years, beginning July 1, 2012, and the FCC may extend the program for a third year. The pilot program will provide valuable information that the FCC will use to help develop and implement an effective and efficient permanent deaf-blind equipment distribution program.

How does the pilot program operate?

For the pilot program, the FCC selected and certified one entity in each of the 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, to receive FCC support to distribute equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind. The FCC allocated a minimum of \$50,000 to each of the 53 certified programs, plus additional funding based on the size of each state's population. As a result, states with large populations were allocated larger amounts of funding than states with small populations.

The FCC also set aside \$500,000 each year for the Perkins School for the Blind to coordinate outreach to promote this new equipment distribution program nationwide.

Who is eligible to receive equipment?

Under the CVAA, only low-income individuals who are deaf-blind are eligible to receive equipment. Applicants must provide verification of their status as low-income and deaf-blind.

For this program, the CVAA requires that the term "deaf-blind" has the same meaning given in the Helen Keller National Center Act. In general, the individual must have a certain vision loss and a hearing loss that, combined, cause extreme difficulty in attaining independence in daily life activities, achieving psychosocial adjustment, or obtaining a vocation (working).



The FCC defines "low income" to mean not more than 400% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, as indicated in the following chart:

2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines			
Number of persons in family/household	400% for everywhere, except Alaska and Hawaii	400% for Alaska	400% for Hawaii
1	\$44,680	\$55,880	\$51,440
2	60,520	75,680	69,640
3	76,360	95,480	87,840
4	92,200	115,280	106,040
5	108,040	135,080	124,240
6	123,880	154,880	142,440
7	139,720	174,680	160,640
8	155,560	194,480	178,840
For each additional person, add	\$15,840	\$19,800	\$18,200

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml)

What kind of equipment can be distributed?

The equipment distributed must be designed to make telecommunications (such as wireline and wireless telephone communication), advanced communications (such as Internet-based voice communication, e-mail, instant messaging, and interoperable video conferencing services), and access to the Internet (including information services) accessible. The equipment distributed may be hardware, software, or applications, separate or in combination, mainstream or specialized. The equipment must meet the needs of the deaf-blind individual to achieve access. Certified programs may also provide equipment warranties, maintenance, and repairs for such equipment, depending on available funding.

Besides distributing equipment, what will the NDBEDP certified programs do?

Certified programs will inform their communities about this new program to distribute equipment to low-income residents in their states who are deaf-blind. They will verify that applicants are eligible to receive equipment. They will assess each applicant's communications equipment needs to select appropriate equipment to meet those needs. They also may help install and provide training for the equipment distributed.

How do I find the certified program that serves my state?

Information about how to find the NDBEDP certified program in your state will become available during the summer of 2012 on the FCC website at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/national-deaf-blind-equipment-distribution-program, by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY, or by sending an email to dro@fcc.gov.

How can I help the NDBEDP be successful?

Tell people about the program. Tell the FCC how the NDBEDP helped you or someone you know. Tell the FCC how the program can be improved. Tell the FCC about new types of technologies that should be included for distribution.



You also may file an informal complaint with the FCC if you think someone has violated the NDBEDP rules. Informal complaints may be filed by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232, or by writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

For More Information

For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau website at www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs-bureau, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to the address listed above.

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