



Fact Sheet

Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Accessibility of Next Generation 9-1-1

The Department of Justice’s Review of the Standards for Direct, Equal Access to 9-1-1 for Persons with Disabilities

As communication technologies are developing, many persons with disabilities are transitioning from analog or legacy devices to digital and Internet Protocol-based devices. Many emergency 9-1-1 call-taking centers are not yet equipped to receive text or video calls or text calls over the Internet, but more and more centers are moving towards an Internet-enabled network—Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1)—to allow the general public to make a 9-1-1 “call” via voice, text, or video over the Internet and directly communicate with personnel at the centers. In light of these developments, the Department of Justice is announcing a review of the standards governing how the centers provide direct access to 9-1-1 for persons with disabilities. The Department’s goal is to ensure that as centers move to NG 9-1-1, they will be able to directly receive various kinds of text- and video-based “calls” by persons with disabilities. This advance notice presents for public review and comment a series of technical and policy issues regarding standards for accessibility of NG 9-1-1, and possible approaches by which current standards might be revised.

Summary: The Department of Justice is providing advance notice that it is considering revising the title II requirements for direct, equal access to 9-1-1 centers for individuals with disabilities to reflect changes in telecommunication technology that have occurred since the publication of the Department’s 1991 regulation. The purpose of the proposal is to discuss possible revisions to the regulation to establish new requirements and guidance to ensure that individuals with disabilities will have direct access to 9-1-1 during an interim period until, and after, NG 9-1-1 is implemented.

In this notice, the Department is asking two key questions: (1) what devices and modes of communication (text, video, etc.) are individuals with disabilities using to make “calls,” including emergency calls; and (2) how do we ensure that any new Internet Protocol-based 9-1-1 centers can receive direct calls from these devices?

The Department is also soliciting comments on certain other changes under consideration: text options (i.e., real-time text, short message service, instant messaging, email, analog gateway); video communications (i.e., direct video-to-video calls between a person with a disability and the 9-1-1 center); video interpreters; performance standards as opposed to technical standards; technical issues; emergency alerts; and State and local plans to ensure access to NG 9-1-1 for individuals with disabilities.

Comments on this notice will be available for public review at www.regulations.gov. The Regulations.gov Docket ID is DOJ-CRT-2010-0006. The comments will also be available by appointment at 1425 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005. For access to the Docket materials, call (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY) to make an appointment. The Department will hold at least one public hearing to solicit additional comments on the issues raised in this notice.

For more information: The Federal Register notice and this fact sheet are available in electronic format on the Department’s ADA Website at <http://www.ada.gov>. For additional information or to order copies of any documents, call the toll-free ADA Information Line (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY). Copies will be available in accessible formats.