Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

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# Overview

In April the final report on NIDRR’s long-range plan for 2013-2017 was released and included continued support of research development focused on employment, community participation, and the health and function of individuals with disabilities. In addition, funding opportunities were announced and a new Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) was proposed by NIDRR. The two funding opportunities are for research on individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds, specifically and for research focused on hearing enhancement. The proposed RERC would be dedicated to Universal Interfaces and Information Technology Access that could be applicable in the home, community and workplace.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a *Report and Order* and a *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FCC 13-45) focused on increasing the accessibility of emergency information via video programming. The *Report and Order* requires all emergency information communicated through video programming to be fully accessible to individuals with vision loss. The FCC also seeks comments on whether a multichannel video programming distributor service should be covered by the emergency information rules adopted in this *Report and Order*.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Project Civic Access entered a settlement agreement with the City of Jacksonville, Florida in April. Under Project Civic Access, the DOJ found several of the city’s facilities to be non-compliant with ADA standards and under the five year agreement, required Jacksonville to correct all deficiencies to ensure individuals with disabilities could fully participate in community life.

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Events

# Regulatory Activities

## Making Emergency Information via Video Programming Accessible

April 08, 2013— The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a *Report and Order* and a *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FNPRM) (FCC 13-45) related to the accessibility of emergency information provided in video programming. The *Report and Order* specifies that emergency information communicated via video programming should be accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This includes the requirement of an aural presentation of the emergency information on a secondary audio stream, to be conveyed at least twice in full. The use of text-to-speech (TTS) technologies is permitted for providing the aural presentation. In addition, the *Report and Order* establishes apparatus requirements for the transmission of emergency information and video description to individuals with disabilities, specifically, to “receive, play back, or record video programming transmitted simultaneously with sound.” TTS capability is permitted, but not required.

The Commission also seeks comments on whether a multichannel video programming distributor (MVPD) service should be covered by the emergency information rules adopted in the *Report and Order* and required to comply specifically when subscribers access linear video programming that contains emergency information via tablets, laptops, personal computers, or smartphones. In addition, comments are sought regarding the requirement for broadcast receivers to “detect and decode audio streams marked for the visually impaired” and whether such entities should be required to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in traversing between main and secondary audio streams.

#### Additional Information

[Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 13-45)](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-13-45A1.pdf)

[<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-13-45A1.pdf>]

## Project Civic Access Settles with Jacksonville

April 19, 2013 — The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) entered a settlement agreement with the City of Jacksonville, Florida in April. The DOJ Project Civic Access initiative is a wide-ranging effort to ensure that communities comply with the ADA by eliminating physical and communication barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in community life. The DOJ evaluated 64 of the city’s facilities and identified deficiencies at each location. Under the five year agreement, Jacksonville is required to “review and correct identified deficiencies” at the 64 facilities evaluated, in addition to hundreds of other facilities. The DOJ will continue to monitor Jacksonville’s compliance. Eve L. Hill, Senior Counselor to the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division notes the importance of the city’s commitment to compliance, as “access to your city is a basic civil right, and the doors to government programs, services and activities must be open for people with disabilities.”

#### Additional Information

[USDOJ Press Release](http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/April/13-crt-454.html)

[<http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/April/13-crt-454.html>]

[PDF of Agreement](http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/8272013419133343957414.pdf)

[<http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/8272013419133343957414.pdf>]

## Moving the Needle Forward in Technology Access

April 29, 2013 – The FCC adopted a *Second Report and Oder* [CH Docket No. 10-213, WT Docket No. 96-198, CG Docket No. 10-145] confirming that Internet browsers are subject to accessibility requirements as outlined by the Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA). Specifically, Section 716 requires that all equipment (mobile and fixed) used for advanced communications services that includes or requires the use of browser adhere to the accessibility requirements and Section 718 reinforces accessibility requirements for mobile browsers in cell phones, specifically.

#### Additional Information

[Second Report & Order](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0429/FCC-13-57A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0429/FCC-13-57A1.pdf>]

# Reports

## Promoting Accessible Technologies in the Workplace

April 2013 — The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) released the report *ODEP Accomplishments 2009—2012,* highlighting ODEP’s progress in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are considered and included when improving the job opportunities for American workers. Regarding the application of technology in the workplace, ODEP notes their efforts to promote accessible workplace technologies and enable all individuals with the “productivity tools they need to succeed.” ODEP developed two “Roadmap” reports for organizations to strategically incorporate accessible technologies into standard policies and practices. ODEP worked with the Department of Education and the Social Security Administration to conduct the Disability Employment App Challenge and collaborated with the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) to engage government agencies, IT developers and advocates in a discussion on the advancement of “accessible, interoperable, and usable information and communication technology.” Additionally, through ePolicyWorks, a Web-based policymaking tool that facilitates collaborative policymaking, ODEP contributed to the development of policies concerning accessible workplace technologies.

#### Additional Information

[ODEP Report](http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTMwNDEyLjE3NjQ0MjUxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDEzMDQxMi4xNzY0NDI1MSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3NTA0NDk1JmVtYWlsaWQ9c2FsaW1haEBjYWNwLmdhdGVjaC5lZHUmdXNlcmlkPXNhbGltYWhAY2FjcC5nYXRlY2guZWR1JmZsPSZleHRyYT1NdWx0aXZhcmlhdGVJZD0mJiY=&&&101&&&http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/2009-2012Accomplishments.pdf)

[<http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTMwNDEyLjE3NjQ0MjUxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDEzMDQxMi4xNzY0NDI1MSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3NTA0NDk1JmVtYWlsaWQ9c2FsaW1haEBjYWNwLmdhdGVjaC5lZHUmdXNlcmlkPXNhbGltYWhAY2FjcC5nYXRlY2guZWR1JmZsPSZleHRyYT1NdWx0aXZhcmlhdGVJZD0mJiY=&&&101&&&http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/2009-2012Accomplishments.pdf>]

# Wireless RERC News

## Wireless RERC Comments on the Accessibility of Next Generation 911 Deployment and Application

The Wireless RERC submitted reply comments to the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: “Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications” [PS Docket No. 11-153] and “Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment” [PS Docket No. 10-255]. The Wireless RERC expressed their continued support for obligatory rules concerning the deployment of text-to-911. The Wireless RERC recommended that pre-installed messaging applications be included in any text-to-911 mandates, as it could help “pave the way for transitioning to an all-IP environment.” Regarding the timetable for text-to-911 deployment, the Wireless RERC agreed with the National Emergency Number Association’s (NENA’s) recommendation that the FCC make May 15, 2015 the deadline for small and rural carriers to meet the text-to-911 requirements. The Wireless RERC supported AT&T’s recommendation to officially require 911 to be used as the short-code and those devices that “cannot send a three digit short code should be phased out of the market.”  Finally, the Wireless RERC concurred with NENA’s recommendation that a five year timeframe be established to further evaluate the implications of sun-setting mobile TTY requirements.

#### Additional Information

[Wireless RERC Comments](http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022138051)

[<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/view?id=7022138051>]

## App Factory Releases 2013-2014 Call for Proposals

The Wireless RERC App Factory released its 2013-2014 Call for Proposals on April 8th. Each year, the App Factory invites experienced U.S. based organizations or individual developers to submit proposals for financial support to develop assistive and/or accessibility apps for mobile platforms (e.g. Android, Blackberry 10, iOS, Windows Phone). Previous apps funded and developed through the App Factory include: AccessNote by the American Foundation for the Blind, BrailleTouch by BrailleTech, LLC, and Sprint ID Accessibility Packs, Currency Identifier, and IDEAL Group Reader by Apps4Android. Submissions are due on June 30, 2013 and the selection of proposals for funding will be made by October 15. Additional information on submission guidelines can be found in the PDF referenced below.

#### Additional Information

[Apps Factory 2013-2014 Call for Proposals](http://wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/2013%20App%20RFP%204%2001%2013.pdf)

[<http://wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/2013%20App%20RFP%204%2001%2013.pdf>]

## Research Brief: Technology Use by People with Hearing and Speech Loss for Communicating with Emergency Response Services

The research brief entitled “Technology Use by People with Hearing and Speech Loss for Communicating with Emergency Response Services” was recently released and presents survey data collected by the Wireless RERC from November 1, 2012 to March 30, 2013 on actual and preferred methods for contacting emergency response services by people living with hearing and/or speech loss. The data analyzed in the brief is part of the Survey on Emergency Communications and People with Disabilities, which asks questions related to access to emergency services by people with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities.

From the analysis, individuals with hearing and speech loss were shown to have a strong interest in video relay services and text-based systems for communicating with emergency response services. *Actual use* of TTY over landline in these situations is consistently greater than *preferences* for use of this technology. This difference is greatest between the percentage of deaf respondents who have used TTY over landline (22%) and the percentage that prefer to communicate via this technology (11%). These percentages still represent a substantial portion of the population, especially the percentage of deaf respondents who have used TTY to communicate with emergency services. By contrast, there were low levels of reported use of TTY over cellphones to contact emergency services but a higher preference for using mobile TTY. These findings are of critical importance as they can be applied in the development of mobile wireless technologies and of policies and regulations that ensure equitable access to emergency response services by people with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[Research Brief](http://wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Research%20Brief_Tech_Hearing%20and%20Speech%20Loss_911_2013-04-04_Final.pdf)

[<http://wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Research%20Brief_Tech_Hearing%20and%20Speech%20Loss_911_2013-04-04_Final.pdf>]

## Open House Promotes HEALing

Georgia Tech hosted a successful *5th Annual Healthy Environments & Active Lifestyles* (HEAL) *Open House* on Tuesday, April 23.  The open house showcased demonstrations of student projects and research from several Georgia Tech organizations, including: The Aware Home Research Initiative (AHRI), Design and Technology for Healthy Aging, The Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA), the Wireless Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (Wireless RERC) and others.

This year, the program included speakers organized by the Wireless RERC to kickoff the evening and set the stage. After a welcome address given by Dr. Archie Ervin, Vice President of Institute Diversity, the keynote address was given by Lee Mabie, director of Emerging Consumer Markets at AT&T. His comments focused on how the AT&T value, "Deliver the Future First," drives his team toward developing innovative product, service and customer experience solutions for people with disabilities, the aging population and their respective caregivers.  Mabie also described how The Connected Child, a child-centered educational concept born out of AT&T’s Advisory Panel on Access and Aging (AAPAA), inspired him to innovate a new educational approach for his own special needs daughter and how that experience has fed back into his work at AT&T. Attendees then moved to the exhibits at the Wireless RERC, Aware Home and CATEA locations.

HEAL brought together projects from the participating organizations that revolved around a common theme: better design of environments and application of design and technology to improve the lives of people of all abilities. Georgia Tech students and faculty were on hand to share their projects and research and to hear constructive feedback. Several Virginia Tech projects were also presented via videos and further emphasized the importance of universal design in creating products appropriate for specific needs with mass appeal. Visitor feedback from the event was very positive with some VIPs leaving “inspired” by the number of project. We thank all who helped with and participated in the event and to our visitors for making it a success.

#### Additional Information

[HEAL Website](http://www.healatgt.gatech.edu/)

[<http://www.healatgt.gatech.edu/>]

# Other Items of Interest

## NIDRR’s Long Range Plan for 2013-2017

April 4, 2013 — The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education released a Notice [FR Doc No: 2013-07879] announcing the publication of the final *Long-Range Plan for Fiscal years 2013-2017* for the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The goals and objectives of NIDRR, as outlined in the publication, include: the creation of a portfolio of research, development and other activities that have a balanced focus on employment, community living and participation, and health and function, as they relate to individuals with disabilities; supporting centers and projects conducting relevant research and development; promoting the effective use and accessibility of NIDRR research to individuals with disabilities and their families; and improving program administration. The plan will be effective on May 6, 2013.

#### Additional Information

[Notice [FR Doc No: 2013-07879]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-04/html/2013-07879.htm)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-04/html/2013-07879.htm>]

## The 2013 Access Awards

April 16, 2013 — The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) announced that AT&T, Best Buy, Panasonic, Regal Entertainment Group and Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) are the 2013 Access Award winners. This award is given annually to those individuals, corporations and organizations that AFB recognizes as substantially improving the accessibility experiences of individuals with vision loss. Carl R. Augusto, president and CEO of AFB, stated that “this year’s Access Award recipients are leveling the playing field for the more than 20 million Americans with vision loss by increasing access to current events and pop culture.” In particular, each award recipient is recognized for the following work and product development:

* *AT&T*: U-verse® Easy Remote App that allows users to control the TV through an iPhone or iPad.
* *Best Buy*: Development of the Narrator, a fully accessible HD FM digital radio.
* *Panasonic*: Accessible television models in the United Kingdom that offer “Voice Guidance” as a built in standard at a no additional cost.
* *Regal Entertainment Group*: First movie theater chain to provide technology that allows for captioning and video description at all digital cinema locations.
* *RNIB:* Served as an advisor to Panasonic with regard to the development of their accessible technology and has specifically “invested considerable resources to advance the development of accessible TV.”

#### Additional Information

[AFB Press Release](http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=1&SectionID=47&DocumentID=6309)

[<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?FolderID=1&SectionID=47&DocumentID=6309>]

## Funding Opportunities Through NIDRR

April 17, 2013 — The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services released two final priorities [FR Doc No: 2013-09060] and [FR Doc No: 2013-09079] that are under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) administered by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). Both priorities can be used for a DRRP competition in fiscal year (FY) 2013 and later years. One priority [FR Doc No: 2013-09060] allows a DRRP to serve as the Center on Knowledge Translation for Technology Transfer (Center), which will research, develop and disseminate the rehabilitation technology products and devices developed by NIDRR-funded technology grantees. The second priority [FR Doc No: 2013-09079] focuses on a Rehabilitation Engineering Center (RERC) on Hearing Enhancement that will research, develop, and evaluate the accessibility, usability and performance of hearing enhancement technologies. Both funding opportunities for the discretionary grants are administered by NIDRR and the estimated available funds for each notice are $925,000 (maximum of $950,000). Each project period is up to 60 months. The deadline for transmitting an application to either funding opportunity is June 17, 2013.

#### Additional Information

[Center on Knowledge Translation for Technology Transfer Notice [FR Doc No: 2013-09062]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09062.htm) [<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09062.htm>]

[RERC Hearing Enhancement Notice [FR Doc No: 2013-09082]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09082.htm)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09082.htm>]

[Final Priority [FR Doc No: 2013-09060]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09060.htm)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09060.htm>]

[Final Priority [FR Doc No: 2013-09079]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09079.htm)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09079.htm>]

## NIDRR Proposes RERC for Universal Interfaces and Information Technology Access

April 17, 2013 — The Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services proposed a priority [FR Doc No: 2013-09043] for a Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) focused on Universal Interfaces and Information Technology Access under the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers program administered by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The proposed RERC would be responsible for researching, developing and evaluating how to increase the accessibility of information technologies and technology interfaces for individuals with disabilities. This could include cloud computing applications, which would allow for “personalized accessible interfaces.” In particular the RERC research would focus on the promotion of accessible technologies used in the home, community and workplace and as a result, “improve rehabilitation services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities.”

#### Additional Information

[Proposed Priority [FR Doc No: 2013-09043]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09043.htm)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-04-17/html/2013-09043.htm>]

# Events

## NENA Conference

The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) will be hosting their annual conference at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina from June 15 – 20, 2013. The conference will discuss many public safety topics, including Next Generation 9-1-1, social networking and emergency response, and accessibility within public safety. The conference will also include an exhibit hall with over 120 “providers of emergency communications products and services.”

#### Additional Information

[NENA 2013](http://www.nena.org/?page=NENA2013)

[<http://www.nena.org/?page=NENA2013>]

## International CTIA Wireless Conference

CTIA, The Wireless Association will host its annual conference from June 21 – 23, 2013 at the Sands Expo & Convention Center in Las Vegas, NV. The conference annually hosts over 40,000 attendees, 1,000 exhibitors and many prominent speakers.

#### Additional Information

[2013 International CTIA Wireless](http://www.ctia2013.com/)

[<http://www.ctia2013.com/>

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights**

April 2013

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights reports on national and local public policy events and recent wireless technological advances and political activities; and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities. *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* is published monthly by the Wireless RERC. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our web site at [<http://www.wirelessrerc.org>].

To subscribe send an e-mail to [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu](mailto:salimah@cacp.gatech.edu) with “Subscribe TDPH” as the subject line. For further information on items summarized in this report, or if you have items of interest that you would like included in future editions, please contact this edition’s editors, Hillary Alberta [Hillary@cacp.gatech.edu], Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu], or James White, Ph.D., [james@cacp.gatech.edu].

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