Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

July 2016



# Overview

July 2016 marked the 26th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). While progress has been made in inclusive and equitable access to social and civic life, encumbrances still remain. In a [Presidential Proclamation](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/25/presidential-proclamation-anniversary-americans-disabilities-act-2016), President Barack Obama addressed the musts, or imperatives of access and inclusion: “We must continue increasing graduation rates for students with disabilities to give them every chance to receive the education and training they need to pursue their dreams. We must make the information and communication technologies we rely on accessible for all people, and ensure their needs are considered and incorporated as we advance the tools of modern life. And we must keep fighting for more consistent and effective enforcement of the ADA in order to prevent discrimination in public services and accommodations.” In the regulatory arena, efforts to prevent discrimination came in the form of a letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) urging them to ensure consumer protection and high-quality services as the Commission moves toward a new streamlined technology transition process. As service providers begin to supplant the use of copper in favor of fiber and the Public Switched Telephone Network (PTSN) transitions to Internet Protocol-based communications technologies, the letter’s signees stress the importance of ensuring consumers are informed and that access to programs like Lifeline not be interrupted as a result of the tech transition.

In Wireless RERC news, related to technology transitions, some of the journal papers presented at the *Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit* have been published online in the [Futures](http://www.journals.elsevier.com/futures/recent-articles) journal. The Summit focused on 1) key social, economic, political and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy, analog technologies to mobile, digital technologies, and 2) the consequential futures for people with disabilities. Available papers include:

* [Scientific eventuality or science fiction: The future of people with different abilities](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716300131)
* [The future of accessibility in disaster conditions: How wireless technologies will transform the life cycle of emergency management](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716300143)
* [Envisioning the future for older adults: Autonomy, health, well-being, and social connectedness with technology support](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328715300094)
* [Envisioning inclusive futures: Technology-based assistive sensory and action substitution](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716300271)

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# Regulatory Activities

**New Warning Codes Added to the Emergency Alert System**

July 11, 2016 – In an effort to increase specificity, the FCC updated its rules regarding extreme weather warning codes used with the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Three new “event codes” will be used to warn the public about storm surges and extreme winds. The additional codes signify an “Extreme Wind Warning,” “Storm Surge Watch,” and “Storm Surge Warning.” EAS equipment manufacturers are required to integrate the new codes into new equipment and the implementation timeline allows for EAS participants to update equipment before the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[FCC ADDS NEW WARNING CODES TO THE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0711/DOC-340243A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2016/db0711/DOC-340243A1.pdf>

**Human Rights Organizations Take on FCC’s Tech Transitions**

July 7, 2016 - Members of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and other community members including the Benton Foundation, Communications Workers of America, Common Cause, National Consumer Law Center, National Hispanic Media Coalition United Church of Christ, OC Inc., Appalshop, Inc., Kentucky Resources Council, Inc., Center for Media Justice, Center for Rural Strategies, and The Greenlining Institute wrote a letter to the FCC urging them to ensure consumer protection and high-quality services as the Commission moves toward a new streamlined technology transition process. They want the Commission to ensure that consumer rights are protected and include in their pending Technology Transitions Report and Order the following considerations for public review and comment: affordability, consumer education notice, impacts to the Lifeline program, internet access, and impact assessments. The signees assert that these aspects of consumer protections will facilitate a technology transition that maintains for some, and enables for others, access to high quality, affordable and reliable voice and high-speed broadband services regardless of income, race, or geography.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Read the Letter](https://prodnet.www.neca.org/publicationsdocs/wwpdf/0711ben.pdf)

[<https://prodnet.www.neca.org/publicationsdocs/wwpdf/0711ben.pdf>]

**Petition for Direct Sign Language Customer Support**

July 6, 2016 – VTCSecure, submitted to the FCC, a Petition for Waiver and Declaratory Ruling for Direct Sign Language Customer Support Service Provider Access to TRS Numbering Directory. The petition requests that the FCC amend rules so they, and other providers, can offer direct sign language (SL) customer support to consumers that are deaf. They assert that using direct SL services will make the customer support experience functionally equivalent to that of a hearing consumer and that business and government agencies can save money on the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund by using direct SL instead of Video Relay Service (VRS) calls.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Petition](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filing/10706095320933/document/10706095320933b0f3)

[<https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filing/10706095320933/document/10706095320933b0f3>]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**Envisioning Inclusive Futures Journal Papers Available Online**

The *Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit* journal papers are being published online in the [Futures](http://www.journals.elsevier.com/futures/recent-articles) journal. The Summit focused on 1) key social, economic, political and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy, analog technologies to mobile, digital technologies, and 2) the consequential futures for people with disabilities. Currently available papers include:

[Scientific eventuality or science fiction: The future of people with different abilities](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716300131)

DeeDee Bennett

[The future of accessibility in disaster conditions: How wireless technologies will transform the life cycle of emergency management](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716300143)

DeeDee Bennett | Brenda D. Phillips | Elizabeth Davis

[Envisioning the future for older adults: Autonomy, health, well-being, and social connectedness with technology support](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328715300094)

Wendy A. Rogers | Tracy L. Mitzner

[Envisioning inclusive futures: Technology-based assistive sensory and action substitution](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716300271)

Helen T. Sullivan | Shrirang Sahasrabudhe

**Upcoming Dates for Wireless Independence Now (WIN) - Smartphone Education Workshops for Consumers**

This is the third year the AT&T Corporate Accessibility Technology Office and the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC) are conducting workshops for people with disabilities, caregivers, and professionals on how to use accessibility features found on smartphones and tablets.  The 2016 schedule is as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| September 16 | **Boston, MA** | Abilities Expo |
| September TBD | **Boston, MA** | AT&T Store of the Future |
| TBD | **Dallas, TX** | AT&T Store of the Future |
| TBD | **Atlanta, GA** | AT&T Store of the Future |

[**Wireless Independence Now! Workshops**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001XZaDSS8K5hxI_Qwygej9Wp6hSWfGE9pEQuWz1mfdH_adK0ug3ZEkYanq3e5Z7P2XNgtqAOZyVxAUo3M-8-GLS2hq72rx6-c7rWPLtOqrRYjGUK5fX-CeNYA8HjpEbuOC4vx_rocScaHUY7D5sHb8WCYfFNHfe-bz-CEmQMSfeWa-UI9Rv6XWgkEJih1qRZ-I5UzA2GGbYGsIgBNdyK75AIFnleEo6ecTC3L0_W_BcjZ7lhkLRohTsmRmHsa1lbtZYbWc2T3OVtBDIFnuwHZHXsv8xecVkVhSKW8-I4yJ7fPpoNegb-kPNOHZHXXYoxQSKGTUeZhlODdAdJ11-D7iQbtwSqYBl4_M&c=06O8dpagl1FCWl-icOMuYtUj6hzq8DpSE2Qdq23URVURxGgD-UrP6w==&ch=Jq1qdsI7L3hlgsiJnR_l2cDInVdcAPiQCW017m38ZTdiJJjSpur8aw==) are free of charge, open to the public, and are not marketing or sales events. Participants do not need to be AT&T customers in order to attend. CART and Sign Language Interpreters will be provided as needed.

Workshops will review:

* Accessibility features found on smartphones, phablets, and tablets that use Apple or Android Operating Systems
* Accessibility resources for services, devices, and mobile applications
* Ways to improve the accessibility of devices and services

Workshops will focus on accessibility features helpful for the following users:

* People who use hearing aids
* People who use text and video services
* People who have communication difficulties
* People who have difficulty seeing
* People with attention, concentration, or sensory difficulties
* People with dexterity or mobility impairments
* Caregivers and Professionals who assist people with disabilities

#### Additional Information:

[**Check the Wireless RERC's WIN! Workshop web page**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001XZaDSS8K5hxI_Qwygej9Wp6hSWfGE9pEQuWz1mfdH_adK0ug3ZEkYanq3e5Z7P2XNgtqAOZyVxAUo3M-8-GLS2hq72rx6-c7rWPLtOqrRYjGUK5fX-CeNYA8HjpEbuOC4vx_rocScaHUY7D5sHb8WCYfFNHfe-bz-CEmQMSfeWa-UI9Rv6XWgkEJih1qRZ-I5UzA2GGbYGsIgBNdyK75AIFnleEo6ecTC3L0_W_BcjZ7lhkLRohTsmRmHsa1lbtZYbWc2T3OVtBDIFnuwHZHXsv8xecVkVhSKW8-I4yJ7fPpoNegb-kPNOHZHXXYoxQSKGTUeZhlODdAdJ11-D7iQbtwSqYBl4_M&c=06O8dpagl1FCWl-icOMuYtUj6hzq8DpSE2Qdq23URVURxGgD-UrP6w==&ch=Jq1qdsI7L3hlgsiJnR_l2cDInVdcAPiQCW017m38ZTdiJJjSpur8aw==)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.org/node/699?utm_source=Industry%2FCAN+Newsletter_2016-03-30&utm_campaign=Re%3AWireless+2016-03-21&utm_medium=email>]

# Publications/Reports

**Help Update the Functional and Access Needs Support Services Toolkit**

The Functional and Access Needs Support Services Toolkit, published by the Georgia Coalition for Emergency Preparedness for Individuals with Disabilities and Older Adults in 2014, is being updated. This document provides tools and resources to local planners to guide their emergency preparedness and response efforts to be inclusive of people with functional and access needs, people with disabilities, and older adults. The toolkit development team is looking for people’s experience with and opinions of the toolkit and how they have used it. They are also interested in suggestions for improving the toolkit.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

If you would like your thoughts heard, complete this short survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/C67BSKZ>

The toolkit can be found here:

[State of Georgia Functional and Access Needs Support Services Toolkit](https://ada.georgia.gov/sites/ada.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/FNSS%20Toolkit%20Final%20Copy%204-17-14%20%281%29.pdf)

[<https://ada.georgia.gov/sites/ada.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/FNSS%20Toolkit%20Final%20Copy%204-17-14%20%281%29.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

**Healthcare Kiosks to be Made Accessible to People with Vision Disabilities**

July 27, 2016 – On the 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and Attorney General Maura Healey announced an agreement with Pursuant Health, Inc. to make their self-service health kiosks accessible to consumers that are blind or have low vision. The Atlanta based company manufactures and operates self-service health care kiosks in retail stores across the United States. Because of this agreement, these kiosks will be reformatted to include audio instructions and eyes-free navigation so that consumers with vision disabilities can use the kiosks’ biometric health screenings, vision assessments, blood pressure screenings, and weight and BMI assessments capabilities. Pursuant Health, Inc. will also make their accompanying website accessible. Mark A. Riccobono, President of the NFB stated, “Living the lives we want as blind people includes monitoring our own health so that we can take steps to maintain or improve it. Health information has the potential to be more accessible than ever to the blind with twenty-first-century technology, but only if the manufacturers of technology keep accessibility in mind. We are delighted to have reached this agreement with Pursuant Health, working with the outstanding civil rights advocates in Attorney General Healey’s office, and believe that it will result in health information kiosks that set an industry-leading example.”

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[NFB Press Release](https://nfb.org/ag-healey-and-national-federation-blind-announce-agreement-make-health-care-kiosks-accessible-blind)

[<https://nfb.org/ag-healey-and-national-federation-blind-announce-agreement-make-health-care-kiosks-accessible-blind>]

**New Teach Access Tutorial Now Available**

July 20, 2016 – The Paciello Group and Teach Access have teamed up to create the Teach Access Tutorial. Teach Access is a group of tech companies, higher education institutions, and advocacy organizations working to teach computer science, engineering, design, information technology and other STEM field students the skill of accessible design and development. With this tutorial, users are able to learn from a set of hands-on coding exercises and practice basic training for developers and designers to learn to create inclusive and accessible user experiences. Teach Access has released this tutorial in hopes to address this key objective: building online learning tools to teach accessibility best practices and making these tools available to individuals, companies and organizations. This effort has the potential to increase the amount of professionals with accessibility skills entering the workforce.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Announcing the Teach Access Tutorial](https://www.paciellogroup.com/blog/2016/07/announcing-the-teach-access-tutorial/)

[<https://www.paciellogroup.com/blog/2016/07/announcing-the-teach-access-tutorial/>]

**Suggestions on Pokemon Go Enjoyment for People with Vision Loss**

July 18, 2016 – In a blog post, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) discussed the new and popular app, Pokemon GO, and ways to improve its accessibility. With a few minor tweaks to the game, AFB asserts that Pokemon Go could be made accessible to all Pokemon trainers. National technology associate, Aaron Preece, said online communities representing the interests of people that are blind and visually impaired have reached out to the creators of Pokemon Go to urge them to make the app more accessible. Currently, the app is incompatible with VoiceOver and TalkBack in iPhone and Android phones. To make the app accessible to users that are blind and visually impaired, Preece says that it would take coding in visual cues and text to make the app compatible to a phone’s voice output system. Other audio cues and haptic feedback for actions in the game are recommended to improve the games accessibility, as well.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Pokémon Go: Let’s Catch ’em All!](http://www.afb.org/blog/afb-blog/when-you-can%27t-catch-%27em-all-overcoming-social-isolation-as-an-individual-who-is-blind-or-visually-impaired/12)

 [http://www.afb.org/blog/afb-blog/pokemon-go-letandrsquos-catch-andrsquoem-all/12]

**Past Winner of Disability Equality Index, Sprint, Wins Again**

July 13, 2016 - The mobile phone company, Sprint, earned a score of 100% and the title of “Best Places to Work” for the second consecutive year in a row. According to the 2016 Disability Equality Index (DEI), a joint initiative between the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) and the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Sprint earned this title because of their continued commitment to being an inclusive and accessible company for employees and customers with disabilities. The DEI evaluates companies in four major categories: Culture & Leadership, Enterprise-wide Access, Employment Practices, and Community Engagement & Support Services. Sprint’s score showed their overall success in the areas of diversity and inclusion like the company’s resource group and the REAL DEAL program, which stands for Resourceful, Empowering, Awareness, Limitless (REAL) for Disabled Employees Accessing Life (DEAL). The REAL DEAL program recognizes and celebrates the contributions of people with disabilities.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Sprint Earns Top Score on the 2016 Disability Equality Index® Two Years Running](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20160713006370/en/Sprint-Earns-Top-Score-2016-Disability-Equality)

[<http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20160713006370/en/Sprint-Earns-Top-Score-2016-Disability-Equality>]

**Bookshare Partnership Will Help Georgia Residents with Disabilities**

July 1, 2016 – Due to a partnership between Benetech and the Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS) over 425,000 accessible ebooks will be available for free to patrons with blindness, low vision, dyslexia, and other print disabilities. GLASS is a network of talking book centers that provides library services for people who are blind and others who could benefit from the use of books and magazines in digital audio formats or in Braille. Starting on July 1st, GLASS patrons will have access to Bookshare’s online library that includes bestsellers, literature, non-fiction, picture books, educational texts, career guides, and more.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Partnership Brings Free Bookshare Accounts for GLASS Patrons](http://georgialibraries.org/glass/bookshare)

[<http://georgialibraries.org/glass/bookshare/>]

# Upcoming Events

**Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities**

The Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities will convene via webinar on August 29th from 1:00 to 2:00 PM ET. The meeting is open to the public but advanced registration is required by August 19, 2016.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Learn about the Committee meeting](http://links.govdelivery.com:80/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbXNpZD0mYXVpZD0mbWFpbGluZ2lkPTIwMTYwODEyLjYyNTY2MTMxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTC0yMDE2MDgxMi42MjU2NjEzMSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE2Nzg3MDkzJmVtYWlsaWQ9c2FsaW1haEBjYWNwLmdhdGVjaC5lZHUmdXNlcmlkPXNhbGltYWhAY2FjcC5nYXRlY2guZWR1JnRhcmdldGlkPSZmbD0mbXZpZD0mZXh0cmE9JiYm&&&100&&&https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-08-04/pdf/2016-18615.pdf)

[<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-08-04/pdf/2016-18615.pdf>]

**2016 US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) Annual Conference & Expo**

The 2016 USBLN 19th Annual Conference and Expo will convene from September 19th to 22nd in Orlando, Florida. “*Disability Inclusion: The Future Redefined*” is this year’s conference title and theme. The conference focuses on sharing and developing strategies for including people with disabilities in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace. The event provides educational sessions, networking opportunities, interactive programming, and high-profile speakers.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Conference Website](http://conference.usbln.org/)

[<http://conference.usbln.org/>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** July 2016



The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) reports on national public policy events and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities, researchers, policymakers, industry, and advocacy professionals. The TDPH 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>].

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 Jamaya Powell [jamaya@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu].

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