

TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 12.4

April 2012



Overview

This month, the TDPH highlights recent legislative actions concerning emergency communications. The **Next Generation 9-1-1 Advancement Act of 2012 [P.L. 112-96]** was recently signed into law in order to establish a 9-1-1 Implementation Coordination Office responsible for the coordination of 9-1-1 services as well as the facilitation of grant programs for state, local and tribal entities providing these services. In addition, The House Homeland Security Committee recently passed **The Integrated Public Alert and Public Warning System Modernization Act of 2011 [H.R. 3563]** to establish common alerting protocols and operating procedures for warning systems. The Act stresses the accessibility of alerts by calling for the alert content to adapt to users' needs, especially for people with disabilities, and for the dissemination of alerts to be subject to a users' geographic location and personal preferences.

Regarding regulation, the FCC issued a **Third Report and Order (R&O)** "In the Matter of Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets" [**WT Docket No. 07-250**] revising the Commission's rules on hearing aid compatibility (HAC) technical standards to include the 2011 ANSI standards for HAC. Enforcing HAC compliance, the FCC issued a **Notice of Apparent Liability For Forfeiture** proposing a penalty of \$819,000 against T-Mobile for violating the FCC's rules for HAC mobile handsets [**47 CFR §20.19 (c)(2)(d)(2)**]. In addition, the FCC issued an **Order on Reconsideration** "In the Matter of Amendment of the Review of the Emergency Alert System" [**EB Docket No. 04-296**] revising the rules to allow the use of text-to-speech (TTS) by Emergency Alert System (EAS) participants. Lastly, The FCC's Video Programming Accessibility Advisory Committee (VPAAC) issued a Report concerning Video Description and the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. The report makes recommendations concerning the delivery and use of video description by program distributors, and the FCC is seeking comment on the report.

A Letter to the Editor

Following the March issue of the TDPH, the Wireless RERC a letter in response to the story on the New Legislation for Prescription Drug Labeling. Following are excerpts from his correspondence.

Dear Editor,

I and the now resigned senator Steven A. Baddour of Methuen, Massachusetts, who was the state senator at the state house in Boston, Massachusetts, have been working on legislation to mandate that health insurance companies cover the costs of devices that read aloud to blind people information contained on a medication bottle for about 10 years. The bill for the most part was put into study order, but during the 2007 legislative cycle, it was reported out favorably by the Joint Committee on Financial Services and then moved onto the Joint Committee on Health Financing. It is currently now s01855. I am calling on Massachusetts residents who are blind, even those who use PCA's, visiting nurses or family members to help them with their medications to call the Massachusetts State House at 617-722-2000 and ask members of the legislature to get the bill moved out of committees and onto the floor so that Massachusetts can take the lead in what Edward Markey is trying to do. Making prescription bottles accessible in audible format, through cost analysis has already been proven to be cost effective and would save health insurance companies monies from unnecessary emergency room visits and the uses of visiting nurses or PCA's to do this when the technology is available for the blind and deaf/blind is there for them to handle medicine on an independent manner. Without this, this could be argued to violate the Americans with Disabilities Act, HIPPA, and the Olmstead decision of the United States Supreme Court of 1999, which requires that disabled people to be allowed to live in the least restrictive environment possible.

There are other uses for PCA's for the Blind, such as transportation, where there is no car developed yet that a blind person can drive. They also need to include a benefit for medical transportation in Medicare so that a blind person can go to a doctor no matter whether or not, they take Medicaid or up in Massachusetts, MassHealth. Blind need to go to doctors they are most comfortable with and not just those that take Medicaid. So in honor of Senator Steven A. Baddour of Massachusetts, please put this article into your newsletter so that the blind can stop relying on others for medicine regiment help and get the transportation that they so desperately. Accessible medicine bottles make more sense than visiting nurses coming out to set medicine regiments up. Transportation makes more sense so that blind can be able to go to doctors and other places, such as employment and other places in the community on a level of independence in the same manner as those who do not have visual handicaps and or hearing handicaps.

Sincerely Yours,

Brian J. Coppola

Brian J. Coppola

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Legislative Activities

President Signs NG911 Legislation

02.22.12 – The President has signed into law **The Next Generation 9-1-1 Advancement Act of 2012**, which was passed as part of **The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 [P.L. 112-96]**. The Act amends Section 158 of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act (47 U.S.C. 942) in order to establish a 9-1-1 Implementation Coordination Office responsible for the coordination of 9-1-1 services, including Enhanced 9-1-1 (E9-1-1), Next Generation (NG9-1-1), and Internet Protocol (IP) related emergency services; in addition to the facilitation of grant programs for state, local and tribal entities providing these services. P.L. 112-96 requires that yearly reports be submitted to Congress concerning the efforts taken by the 9-1-1 Implementation Coordination Office to “improve coordination and communication with respect to the implementation of 9-1-1 services, E9-1-1 services, and Next Generation 9-1-1 services.” One year following implementation, the Office of 9-1-1 Implementation Coordination and the Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are required to submit a report analyzing multiple factors of NG9-1-1 including cost requirements, potential allocation of funds, the state of service readiness for implementation of NG9-1-1, the needs for people with disabilities, and standards needed for the incorporation of Voiceover IP and Real-Time Text within NG9-1-1. [Source: GovTrack.us]

Additional Information:

[The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 \[P.L. 112-96\]](#)

[\[http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr3630/text\]](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr3630/text)

House Committee Passes Public Warning Legislation

02.28.12 – The House Homeland Security Committee has passed new legislation, **The Integrated Public Alert and Public Warning System Modernization Act of 2011 [H.R. 3563]**, which was introduced by U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) in December 2011. The Act regards the “[modernization] and [implementation] of the national integrated public alert and warning system (IPAWS)” and amends Title V of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 by adding Section 526, which establishes common alerting protocols and operating procedures for warning systems in addition to regular nationwide tests of the system. The Act stresses the accessibility of alerts by calling for the alert content to adapt to users’ needs, especially for people with disabilities, and for the dissemination of alerts to be subject to users’ geographic location and personal preferences. Lastly, the Act calls for

coordination between federal, state and local governments with the goal of “providing alerts that are accessible to the largest portion of the affected population feasible.” Representative Bilirakis stated, “The public alert and warning systems have not been modernized in decades and we must ensure that alerts and warnings work reliably, effectively, and efficiently so that we can make information available to the largest number of people possible, while also protecting and ensuring individual privacy.” [Source: U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis]

Additional Information:

H.R 3563 the Integrated Public Alert and Public Warning System Modernization Act of 2011
[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3563ih/pdf/BILLS-112hr3563ih.pdf>]

New Legislation for Rural Broadband Deployment

03.29.12 – U.S. Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), introduced new legislation, **The Broadband Connections for Rural Opportunities Program Act of 2012 [S.2271]**, regarding grants to subsidize rural broadband deployment. The Act would amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 by implementing the grant program to provide funds to private stakeholders, non-profits, government entities, and higher education institutions for facilitating broadband deployment in rural or underserved areas. The proposed legislation would also allow the Department of Agriculture to award each grant, up to fifty percent of project costs. The Act would amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 by adding Section 604, which allocates funds to create a national clearinghouse containing easily accessible information concerning “options, opportunities, resources, successful public-private partnerships, comprehensive funding sources, and technology tutorials for rural broadband.” Lastly, the Act calls for a report to be made to Congress concerning the effectiveness of current federal broadband assistance programs and broadband access policies for rural and underserved areas, best practices of broadband adoption by state and local governments, and the coordination of federal efforts for rural broadband deployment. [Source: U.S. Government Printing Office]

Additional Information:

The Broadband Connections for Rural Opportunities Program Act of 2012 [S.2271]
[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112s2275is/xml/BILLS-112s2275is.xml>]

House of Representatives Passes Research and Development Legislation

04.27.12 – The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the **Advancing America’s Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Act of 2012 [H.R. 3834]**, legislation that will amend the **High-Performance Computing Act of 1991 [P.L. 102-194]** as amended. The proposed legislation revises current federal funding policies for research and development within network and information technology. Primarily, the proposed legislation encourages interdisciplinary research and development activities and especially encourages collaboration among researchers in higher education, federal entities, and industry. In addition, all funded agencies would be required to

develop 5-year strategic plans describing near and long term objectives as well as how proposed activities would create new technology that is beneficial to society, encourages interdisciplinary research, enhances network and information technology education, and increases the number of “women and under-represented minorities [who] pursue postsecondary degrees in networking and information technology.” [Source: U.S. Government Printing Office]

Additional Information:

[Advancing America's Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Act of 2012 \[H.R. 3834\]](#)

[\[http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3834eh/pdf/BILLS-112hr3834eh.pdf\]](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3834eh/pdf/BILLS-112hr3834eh.pdf)

Regulatory Activities

FCC Rules for Hearing Aid Compatibility with Wireless Phones

04.09.12 – The FCC issued a **Third Report and Order (R&O)** “In the Matter of Amendment of the Commission’s Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets” **[WT Docket No. 07-250]** revising the Commission’s rules on hearing aid compatibility (HAC) technical standards. The **R&O** adds the new 2011 American National Standards Institute (ANSI) technical standards to the existing 2007 ANSI standards to evaluate HAC with wireless devices, helping to ensure that consumers have access to wireless communication services without having to experience interference from radio frequencies or other technical sources. Included in the new 2011 ANSI technical standards are expanded operating frequency ranges for wireless devices covered from the 2007 standard, which included 800 MHz – 950 MHz and 1.6 GHz, to the new 2011 standard, which includes 2.5 GHz to 2.5 GHz to 698 MHz – 6GHz, and direct methods of measuring radio frequency interference from wireless devices. In addition to the new standards, the **R&O** adopts a 12 month transition period in which multi-band and multi-mode handsets can be certified as HAC compliant by the 2007 ANSI standards, after which these handsets must meet 2011 ANSI standards. Finally, the rules adopt a 24-27 month transition period for manufacturers and service providers to “apply the Commission’s existing deployment benchmarks to handset operations over the additional frequencies covered by 2011 ANSI standards.” The new rules reflect technological advances made since the previous adoption of the 2007 ANSI standards, such as new 4G phones which utilize the 700 MHz band, and allow for a greater number of HAC compliant wireless handsets. [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[Third Report and Order](#)

[\[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0409/DA-12-550A1.pdf\]](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0409/DA-12-550A1.pdf)

FCC Seeks Input on VPAAC Report on Video Description: Guidelines & Recommendations

04.09.12 – The FCC’s Video Programming Accessibility Advisory Committee (VPAAC) issued a Report concerning Video Description and the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility

Act of 2010. The report describes the chain of distribution of video descriptions including the production of video descriptions by and distribution to consumers highlighting that the rights to create video description must first be obtained before a script describing the visual elements of a television program can be created. The video descriptions for digital television will then be implemented as a secondary audio stream. The report also makes recommendations concerning the delivery of video description. Recommendations include ensuring information is provided to consumers as to which programs will contain descriptions, instituting more user-friendly mechanisms to allow for multiple audio service channels and that secondary channels not be programmed with silence, establishing a point of contact for customers' concerns regarding video description, and creating best practices concerning the description quality. The FCC is currently seeking comment on two aspects of the report. First, the FCC is seeking comment on portions of the report that address the accessibility of user interfaces and video programming guides and menus including features such as audio output for on-screen menus and means to easily activate closed captioning or video description for menu navigation. In addition, the FCC is seeking comment on ways in which video programming apparatuses can be utilized to provide accessible video descriptions for emergency information. Comments are due June 8, 2012. [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[VPAAC Report](#)

[<http://vpaac.wikispaces.com/file/view/120409+VPAAC+Video+Description+REPORT+AS+SUBMITTED+4-9-012.pdf/318855494/120409%20VPAAC%20Video%20Description%20REPORT%20AS%20SUBMITTED%204-9-2012.pdf>]

[FCC Notice: User Interfaces and Video Programming Guides and Menus](#)

[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/index.do?document=313720]

[FCC Notice: Video Description and Access to Emergency Information](#)

[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/index.do?document=313721]

Small Entity Compliance Guide for Closed Captioning

04.11.12 – In compliance with Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Fairness Act of 1996, the FCC has issued a Small Entity Compliance Guide “intended to help small entities comply with new rules adopted” in the **Report and Order** concerning the implementation of Closed Captioning on Internet Protocol-Delivered Video Programming as related to the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) [**MB Docket No. 11-154**]. The guide outlines the requirements of video programming owners, distributors and providers and also highlights how small entities are affected by the **R&O** especially in terms of exemptions. Currently, the FCC allows small entity video programming distributors (VPD) and owners (VPO) to petition for a full or partial exemption from the requirements of Section 202(b) of the CVAA, which requires VPD and VPOs to implement Internet Protocol (IP) closed captioning, if the requirements are economically

burdensome. In addition, small entities can petition for an exemption from Section 203, which delineates which devices must include capabilities for IP-delivered closed captioning, "if compliance is not achievable or technically feasible." The guide states that the "exemption process will allow the Commission to address the impact of the rules on individual entities, including smaller entities, and to modify the application of the rules to accommodate individual circumstances." [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[Small Entity Compliance Guide](#)

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0411/DA-12-560A1.pdf]

New Census Questions Proposed

04.11.12 – The Department of Commerce has issued a comment request concerning The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) proposal to add 12 questions to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 Current Population Survey. The questions proposed by NTIA concern the use of broadband and high speed Internet and computer ownership. According to the comment request, government agencies such as the FCC and NTIA are working to develop policies that align with President Obama's "national goal of universal, affordable broadband access for all Americans." Furthermore, these departments cite a need of comprehensive data in order to effectively implement policies regarding broadband by considering the current progress of broadband deployment and adoption. Comments concerning this request are due June 4, 2012. [Source: Department of Commerce]

Additional Information:

[Department of Commerce Comment Request](#)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-04-04/pdf/2012-8103.pdf>]

FCC Chief of Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to Step Down

04.16.12 – The FCC's Chief of Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Rear Admiral USNR (Retired) James Barnett, will leave his position at the end of April to serve as Senior Vice President at Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. During his time with the FCC, Barnett played a role in many important public safety initiatives such as the establishment of the public safety broadband network; instituting the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System, conducted on November 9, 2011; and the adoption of new rules in relation to location accuracy of 9-1-1 calls and Next Generation 9-1-1. According to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, "Thanks to his efforts, our country's communications networks are stronger and more resilient, and Americans are and will be safer in significant ways." [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[FCC News Release](#)

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0417/DOC-313614A1.pdf]

FCC Issues Notice of Apparent Liability of Forfeiture to T-Mobile

04.18.12 – The FCC issued a **Notice of Apparent Liability For Forfeiture** proposing a forfeiture of \$819,000 against T-Mobile for violating the FCC’s rules for hearing aid compatible (HAC) mobile handsets [**47 CFR §20.19 (c)(2)(d)(2)**]. In 2003, the FCC adopted rules to establish standards to enable interoperability between hearing aids and digital mobile phones. In 2008, the FCC employed a timeline by which service providers and manufacturers must provide consumers with a certain number of hearing aid compatible devices according to the provider’s size and number of subscribers. According to the FCC, a review of T-Mobile’s 2009 HAC status report by both the Enforcement Bureau and FCC Office of Engineering and Technology Equipment Authorization System, revealed that T-Mobile had failed to comply with Sections 20.19(c)(2) and 20.19(d)(2) of the rules by providing an inadequate amount of HAC devices. Following a letter of inquiry concerning these violations, T-Mobile also disclosed possible violations during 2010, causing the FCC to expand their investigation. The investigation revealed that although during 2009 T-Mobile was required to provide between 4 to 9 M3-rated devices and 3 to 5 T3-rated devices the provider fell short by 1 to 3 M3-rated devices and up to 4 T3-rated devices each month. For 2010, T-Mobile was required to provide either 9 or 10 M3-rated devices and 5 to 7 T3-rated devices, but fell short by as many as 4 M3-rated devices and 3 T3-rated devices. According to the Notice, T-Mobile relied on manufacturers’ HAC rating information, which is permissible by the FCC’s rules; however, the FCC notes that this reliance was not acceptable since many of the manufacturers’ specifications were incomplete. Thus, in accordance with the Section 503(b)(1)(B) of the Communications Act of 1934 (as amended), the FCC determined that T-Mobile was liable for a forfeiture for willfully and repeatedly failing to provide hearing aid compatible devices. [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture](#)

[http://www.thedcoffice.com/late_releases_files/04-13-2012/FCC%2012-39.pdf]

[47 CFR §20.19](#)

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2009-title47-vol2/pdf/CFR-2009-title47-vol2-sec20-19.pdf>]

FCC Reconsiders Text-to-Speech for EAS

04.19.12 – The FCC issued an **Order on Reconsideration** “In the Matter of Amendment of the Review of the Emergency Alert System” [**EB Docket No. 04-296**] reconsidering the Commission’s rules on the use of text-to-speech (TTS) by Emergency Alert System (EAS) participants. On January 10, 2012, the FCC released a *Fifth Report and Order* which required EAS participants to convert and process CAP messages into a format outlined in the EAS-CAP Industry Group’s (ECIG) Implementation

Guide. However, at the time, the rules barred the use of TTS technology when the CAP message does not include an audio file, noting that “accuracy and reliability of TTS had not been established in the record.” Following a “Petition for Reconsideration,” filed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which stated that a lack of TTS could lead to possible disruptions of National Weather Service alerts or a lack of information for subscribers, and similar filings from stakeholders, the FCC has revised section 11.56(a)(2) of the rules and will allow EAS participants to adhere to the TTS specifications included in the ECIG Implementation guide on a voluntary basis. This reconsideration will become effective immediately upon publication in the Federal Registrar. [Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[Order on Reconsideration](#)

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2012/db0419/FCC-12-41A1.pdf]

Publications and Reports

New Unemployment Rates

04.06.2012 – The Bureau of Labor Statistics has released new statistics highlighting the employment status for people with disabilities. The statistics show that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 15.2% for March of 2012 and has varied only slightly from March of 2011 when the rate was 15.6%. The report also shows that the current unemployment rate for people with disabilities is almost double the rate for people without disabilities (8.1%). Men ages 16 to 64 with disabilities have an unemployment rate of 17.5% compared to 8.8% for men without disabilities, while women ages 16 to 64 with disabilities had an unemployment rate of 16.1% compared to 7.5% for women without disabilities. [Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics]

Additional Information:

[Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

[<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm>]

Digital Differences

04.13.12 – “Digital Differences,” a report examining the demographics of those who have and those who lack Internet access, was released by the Pew Research Center. The report highlights that 78% of Americans ages 18 and older use the Internet and 65% of adults have home broadband access. Those who do not use the Internet or have home broadband access are more likely to be over the age of 65, earn less than \$30,000 a year, and have less than a high school education. Those who were found not to be Internet users also stated that their lack of access was either due to a disinterest in the Internet, a lack of a computer, or the high cost of the Internet. The report also highlights that having a disability plays a role in Internet use, with 54% of adults with disabilities using the Internet compared to 81% of adults without a disability and 41% of adults with disabilities having home broadband access compared to 69% of adults without disabilities. In terms of mobile devices, the

report stated that 63% of adults use mobile devices to go online wirelessly. In addition, the report states that Smartphone ownership is now more prevalent than basic mobile phones with 46% of adults owning a Smartphone compared to 41% of adults who owned a basic cellphone. [Source: Pew Research Center]

Additional Information:

[Digital Differences](#)

[http://pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2012/PIP_Digital_differences_041312.pdf]

Other Items of Interest

New Technology Program for Regional United Cerebral Palsy

04.01.12 – The United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago has introduced their new technology program, Infinitec. Infinitec, which stands for “infinite potential through technology,” acts to “advance independence and promote inclusive opportunities for children and adults through technology.” The program offers four different service types including training and education, information services, access to technical assistance staff, and equipment services. Infinitec also provides resources such as online classrooms, webinars, and information about access, education, and assistive technology for people with disabilities. In addition, Infinitec features the InfiniTEXT program, which provides user-contributed instructional materials specifically for K-12 students with print disabilities.

[Source: United Cerebral Palsy]

Additional Information:

[UCP Affiliate Mission Moments](#)

[<http://www.ucp.org/affiliates/affiliate-mission-moments>]

[Infinitec](#)

[<http://www.myinfinitec.org/home>]

Consumers Needed for the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center

The Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC) is seeking consumers to serve on the National Advisory Committee and participate in consumer product testing. The MSKTC is funded by the National Institutes on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). The Center supports NIDRR’s Model Systems program in the development of user-friendly resources and products that reflect new knowledge about diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and long-term quality of life for individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and burn injury (BURN).

Specifically, the center is in search of:

1. Individuals with personal experience with SCI, TBI, and BURN (has SCI, TBI, and/or BURN or a close family member with one of the these three injuries);
2. Policymakers and advocates with a large constituency of individuals with SCI, TBI, and/or BURN; and

3. People with experience serving individuals from diverse populations (e.g., minority backgrounds, rural populations) with SCI, TBI, and/or BURN.

For more information please email the Center at <mailto:msktc@air.org> [Source: Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center]

Additional Information:

Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center

[<http://www.msktc.org/>]

New NIDRR Proposed Priorities

04.10.12 - The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) has issued a notice of proposed priority for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project (DRRP) on employment of individuals with disabilities as well as proposed priorities specifically for Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centers (RERC) within the DRRP Program. The notice seeks to propose a priority for a DRRP that would "contribute to the outcomes of increased employment rates, hours of paid work, earnings and other compensation for individuals with disabilities as well as improved job and career satisfaction and other work-related outcomes for individuals with disabilities." Suggested research activities include the impact of government policies and general workplace policies on employment for individuals with disabilities, the use of technology to "support improved employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities," policies to improve the employment situation of transition-aged youth with disabilities, and research of current vocational rehabilitation practices. In addition, NIDRR has proposed two priorities for RERCs including recreational technologies and exercise physiology benefitting individuals with disabilities and rehabilitation robotics. For the rehabilitation robotics priority, NIDRR highlights that although there have been many advances in this field, such as manipulator arms, cognitive aids, and therapy robots, many of these devices are expensive or are not conducive to widespread distribution. NIDRR has accordingly prioritized an RERC that evaluates not only the efficacy and safety of rehabilitation robotics but also engages in the development of "innovative technologies and techniques to improve the current state of the science and usability of rehabilitation robotics for individuals with disabilities." Specifically, NIDRR has prioritized research and development for both assistance and therapy robots, citing a need to "improve the usability and utility of assistance robots" and to "expand the use of therapy robots beyond large rehabilitation centers." The proposed priorities may be used for the current as well as later fiscal years. Comments on the DRRP notice are due May 29, 2012 while comments on the RERC notice are due May 10, 2012. [Source: NIDRR]

Additional Information:

NIDRR Announcement on Robotics and Recreational Technologies

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-04-10/html/2012-8614.htm>]

NIDRR Announcement on Employment

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-04-26/html/2012-10010.htm>]

NIDRR Proposed Long Range Plan

04.18.12 - The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) issued a Notice requesting comment on their Proposed Long-Range Plan for Fiscal Years 2013 – 2017. Objectives within the plan include:

- ensuring that research, development and other activities are balanced between areas of focus including employment, community living, and health, and address the needs of people with various disabilities and social circumstances;
- supporting both qualitative and quantitative research with an effort to “generate evidence-based practices;”
- improving the capabilities of NIDRR research centers to ensure that research can be directly utilized as information for people with disabilities and stakeholders;
- supporting projects that have potential benefit for multiple groups of people with disabilities, such as research into disability demographics, assistive technology, and information and communication technology;
- improving program administration by “[streamlining] processes for establishing and publishing priorities for grant competitions,” implementing a schedule for publishing priorities and conducting peer reviews, and creating a consistent peer review process.

Comments on the plan are due June 18, 2012. [Source: NIDRR]

Additional Information:

NIDRR Announcement

[<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-04-18/html/2012-9365.htm>]

Department of Health and Human Services Creates Administration for Community Living

04.16.12 – The Department of Health and Human Services announced the creation of the Administration for Community Living. The new administration will bring together the Administration on Aging, the Office on Disability, and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities allowing for “a single agency that supports both cross-cutting initiatives and efforts focused on the unique needs of individual groups.” Accordingly, the reorganization will allow for coordination of programs that may be intended to serve multiple groups, such as the Lifespan Respite Care program which serves both older Americans and people with disabilities, while still allowing for “initiatives designed to meet the unique needs of seniors or people with disabilities will retain their distinct programs.” Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, stated “the Obama Administration and

the Department of Health and Human Services have long been committed to promoting community living and finding new mechanisms to ensure that the resources people with disabilities and seniors need to live in the community are accessible. The establishment of the Administration for Community Living reinforces this commitment, bringing together key organizations and offices across the Department dedicated to improving the lives of those with functional needs into one coordinated, focused, and stronger entity.” [Source: Department of Health and Human Services]

Additional Information:

[DHHS News Release](#)

[<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2012pres/04/20120416a.html>]

[Administration for Community Living](#)

[<http://www.hhs.gov/acl/>]

Wireless RERC Updates

Wireless RERC Comments on Strategic Plan for Section 508

04.16.12 – The Wireless RERC submitted comments with the Office of Public Engagement concerning the strategic plan for implementation and management of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 508 establishes standards in relation to various accessibility aspects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) including functional performance, technical requirements, hardware and audio output functionality, real time simultaneous conversation via audio, text, and video, and product support and services. Comments by the Wireless RERC addressed various aspects of the plan and emphasized education of Section 508 compliance for employees. Recommendations included educating agency procurement officers on how to assess the accessibility of equipment and software; incorporating Section 508 compliance within IT departments, offering professional development classes for installation and maintenance of assistive technology, as well as offering quarterly webinars on Section 508 compliance, and recruiting Alternative Media Specialists to ensure the accessibility of electronic information. In order to increase transparency of government actions, the Wireless RERC recommended that all agencies place a link on their webpages informing users of the 508 complaint process as well as requiring the Department of Justice to make their Biennial Report on Federal Agency Section 508 compliance publically available.

Additional Information:

[Wireless RERC Section 508 Comments](#)

Industrial Design Student Projects to Address Universal Design in the Wireless World

04.20.12 – Last month, Jim Mueller kicked off the 2012 “Getting Wireless: Exploring Universal Design in Wireless Technologies,” where industrial design student teams at GA Tech and Virginia Tech completed their final designs for the Wireless RERC’s 2012 “Getting Wireless” universal design competition. On April 20, four teams selected from each school presented their final designs at the

Industrial Designers Society of America regional conference, "Design Dialogue: Grow, Expand, Advance" in Atlanta, Georgia.

Upcoming Events

International CTIA Wireless Conference and Accessibility Summit

CTIA, The Wireless Association will host its annual conference from May 8 – 10, 2012 at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. The conference annually hosts over 40,000 attendees, 1,000 exhibitors and many prominent speakers. The Wireless RERC will host an Accessibility Summit entitled, "*Ready, Set, Go!*: Near and Long-term Strategies to implement New Federal Accessibility Requirements," at the 2012 International CTIA Wireless Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 9, 2012. The Summit will include two-part moderated discussion with representatives from the FCC, wireless industry, consumer advocacy, and academia on what the wireless industry needs to do now and in the future to be compliant with the 21st Century Video and Accessibility Act (CVAA) and take advantage of new market opportunities.

Additional Information:

[2012 International CTIA Wireless](#)

[<http://www.ctiawireless.com/>]

U.S. Access Board Public Hearing

The U.S. Access Board will hold a public hearing on May 8, 2012 at the Atlanta Hilton in Atlanta, Georgia. During the hearing, the public will be able to comment on recently proposed medical diagnostic equipment accessibility standards as well as accessible design within fields such as communication, information technology and transportation. Stakeholders who wish to testify at the hearing are asked to contact Kathy Johnson at <mailto:johnson@access-board.gov>.

Additional Information:

[U.S. Access Board Meeting](#)

[<http://www.access-board.gov/news/atlanta.htm>]

The End of the Phone System Workshop

The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania will be hosting an Experts' Workshop entitled "The End of the Phone System" from May 16 – 18, 2012 held at the Wharton School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The event will focus on presentations that address the potential obsolescence of the legacy phone system due to the technological migration to wireless and Internet protocol communications.

Additional Information:

[The End of the Phone System](#)

[<http://www.cci.utk.edu/conference/end-phone-system>]

CMAS Town Hall Meeting

The Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate will host the Commercial Mobile Alert Service (CMAS) Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation (RDT&E) Town Hall meeting at the 6th Annual National Homeland Security Conference at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio on May 22, 2012. The Town Hall meeting will discuss potential best practices for CMAS, the integration of CMAS into legacy warning systems, and ensuring consistency of CMAS deployment and use. Any questions concerning the event may be sent to mailto:CMAS_Forum@sra.com

Additional Information:

[National Homeland Security Conference](#)

[<http://www.cvent.com/events/national-homeland-security-conference/event-summary-82bbf3ab8a774b568583f7bc7fbc2d07.aspx>]

[CMAS RDT&E Town Hall Registration Form](#)

NENA Conference

The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) will be hosting their annual conference at the Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, California from June 9 – 14, 2012. 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:

[NENA2012](#)

[<http://www.nena.org/?page=NENA2012>]

The Wireless Innovation Forum Conference

The Wireless Innovation Forum will be hosting a conference on Communications Technologies and Software Defined Radio (SDR-WInnComm) in Washington, DC from January 8-13, 2013. The conference will discuss "advancement of reconfigurable radio technologies from research through deployment." The Wireless Innovation Forum is currently accepting abstracts relating to research and development of SDR-WInComm, covering topics such as "next generation radio technologies, advanced wireless networks and infrastructure, software communications architecture, and standards for reconfigurable radio and supporting components." Abstracts are due April 30, 2012 and can be submitted to the following website: [<https://www.edas.info/newPaper.php?c=1215943-1634>].

Additional Information:

The Wireless Innovation Forum Conference

[<http://conference.wirelessinnovation.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=102427&orgId=s1>]

The Wireless Innovation Forum Conference: Abstract Submission

[http://conference.wirelessinnovation.org/mc/page/RandD_Call_For_Submissions]

TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 12.4

April 2012

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 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, Braeden Benson [braeden@cacp.gatech.edu], Salimah LaForce [salimah.laforce@cacp.gatech.edu], or James White, Ph.D., [james@cacp.gatech.edu].

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