Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

October 2015

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# Overview

In October, the FCC released a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2015/db1030/FCC-15-144A1.pdf) (NPRM) to update Hearing Aid Compatibility Rules for wireline, wireless and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telecommunications equipment. Among other things, the proposed amendments address concerns and request stakeholder input on developing an industry standard for wireline handsets and their volume controls, and extending volume control standards to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) equipment and wireless handsets. According to some, enabling volume control on wireless handset would improve call quality for not only users of hearing aids and cochlear implants, but also for people who are heard of hearing that do not use in ear or bone conduction hearing assistance technology. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also released a document to address the needs and preferences of people with disabilities. The FTA’s [Circular FTA C 4710.1: ADA Guidance](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Final_FTA_ADA_Circular_C_4710.1.pdf), explains several aspects relating to the ADA and accessible public transportation and associated services. The guidance includes stipulations for the provision of accessible information on public transit to be made readily available to people with disabilities through written or electronic media. These formats may include large print, Braille, audiotape, and electronic files for text to speech technology. Additionally, alternatives to audio communications should also be provided to individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

The month of October also brought a round of grant award announcements to further research being done on disability access. The University of New Hampshire received a grant to continue improving knowledge about and access to disability employment data. With October being National Disability Employment Awareness Month, this award was especially timely. At a Justice Department event United States Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch stated, “…our society is made fundamentally more just – and more equal – when we strive to broaden the circle of opportunity to include everyone with the will and the determination to work toward success.”

Finally, please share our 2015 Survey of User Needs (SUN) for Wireless Technologies. The SUN is our survey of wireless technology use and usability by people with all types of disabilities.

* **To** [**share**](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/newsroom/wireless-rerc-launches-new-survey-user-needs) **the SUN,** use the share buttons at this link: <http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/newsroom/wireless-rerc-launches-new-survey-user-needs>.

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# Regulatory Activities

**Proposed Amendment to the FCC Hearing Aid Compatibility Regulations**

October 30, 2015 – The FCC released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) In the Matter of Access to Telecommunications Equipment and Services by Person with Disabilities [**CG Docket No. 1232**]; Petition for Rulemaking Filed by the Telecommunications Industry Association Regarding Hearing Aid Compatibility Volume Control [**CG Docket No. 13.46**]; Amendment of the Commission’s Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets [**WT Docket No. 07-250**]; Comments Sought on 2010 Review of Hearing Aid Compatible Regulations [**WT Docket No. 10-254**]. The proposed amendments, among other things, address concerns developing an industry standard for wireline handsets and their volume controls, and extending volume control standards to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) equipment and wireless handsets. Currently, only wireline telephones are required to allow for consumer adjusted volume control. The goal of this amendment is to improve the ability of people with hearing loss to use legacy and advanced communications equipment to make and receive calls. With a uniform design more effective technology can be developed and users will have an easier time operating the devices. According to the NPRM, the Telecommunications Industry Association contends, “…the new standard will provide a more consistent experience of amplified gain level, enabling consumers with hearing loss to better assess and compare the merits of various models of terminal equipment.”

#### Additional Information

[NPRM on HAC](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2015/db1030/FCC-15-144A1.pdf)

<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2015/db1030/FCC-15-144A1.pdf>

**Attorney General Speaks at Disability Employment Awareness Observance Program**

October 22, 2015 - The United States Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch spoke on equal employment for all Americans at the Justice Department Employment Awareness Observance Program. She spoke of victories on requiring states to end unnecessary institutionalization and segregation of people with disabilities. This and other victories have been instrumental in making a more inclusive workplace for people with disabilities and lowering their rate of unemployment. Remarks also addressed the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace. Attorney General Lynch stated, “This department is made more effective when we create a professional environment that empowers individuals from diverse backgrounds – including persons with disabilities – to effectively support our mission.  And our society is made fundamentally more just – and more equal – when we strive to broaden the circle of opportunity to include everyone with the will and the determination to work toward success.”

#### Additional Information

[Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch Delivers Remarks at Justice Department Disability Employment Awareness Observance Program](http://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-loretta-e-lynch-delivers-remarks-justice-department-disability)

<http://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-loretta-e-lynch-delivers-remarks-justice-department-disability>

**ADA Guidance on Accessible Public Transportation**

October 5, 2015 – The Federal Transit Administration’s guide on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was released and explains several aspects relating to the ADA and accessible public transportation and associated services. There are several sections on accessibility and vehicle operation and requirements for accessible vehicles that oblige transit agencies to provide things like ramps, lighting, mobility aid areas, signage, elevators, communications equipment, and disability specific platforms. All information on public transit travel must be made readily available to people with disabilities through written or electronic media in accessible formats. These formats may include large print, Braille, audiotape, and electronic files for text to speech technology. Their availability must be made evident through transit agency websites, as well. Alternatives to audio communications should also be provided to individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. One solution is the national “711” relay service that offers a more accessible way for individuals with disabilities to communicate with transit officials. These policies and several more concerning accessibility are described in the guide found at the link below.

#### Additional Information

[Circular FTA C 4710.1: ADA Guidance](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Final_FTA_ADA_Circular_C_4710.1.pdf)

[<http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Final_FTA_ADA_Circular_C_4710.1.pdf>]

# Publications

**G3ICT Advocates for Public Procurement of Accessible Technology**

October 22, 2015 - The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ict) is a digital inclusion and human rights advocacy group that began as an initiative from the United Nations in 2006. They recently announced at the International Association of Accessibility Professionals conference that they are beginning a global mission to encourage the governments of the world to adopt accessible technology policies. Vice President for Strategy and Development at G3ict, James Thurston said, “Governments around the world are among the biggest customers for technology companies, so these procurement policies force companies to focus more on accessibility and on users with disabilities when they are designing their products.” Accompanying this announcement was a white paper supporting the idea of having government policies that require the procurement of accessible technologies. The United States’ Section 508 is proffered as an example.

#### Additional Information

[New G3ict white paper, released on the occasion of the inaugural IAAP Access 2015 Conference in Henderson, Nevada, calls for global action on key policy strategy.](http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_90)

<http://g3ict.org/press/press_releases/press_release/p/id_90>

# Other Items of Interest

**Burton Blatt Institute Awarded $2.5M to Study Supported Decision**

October 19, 2015 - The grant, from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), will fund a five year project to understand and increase supported decision making’s positive impact on communities. The Burton Blatt Institute will work with the University of Kansas and the Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities to add evidence based research to support decision making to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities. Burton Blatt Institute Chairman and University Professor Peter Blanck said, “This exciting project will provide new knowledge about the ways that individual decision making positively impacts life outcomes.” The project team will evaluate if the provision of training individuals on supported decision making approaches will lead to an improvement in their quality of life.

#### Additional Information

[Burton Blatt Institute Receives $2.5 Million From National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research for Increasing Supported Decision Making in Community Living](http://www.newswise.com/articles/burton-blatt-institute-receives-2-5-million-from-national-institute-on-disability-independent-living-and-rehabilitation-research-for-increasing-supported-decision-making-in-community-living)

<http://www.newswise.com/articles/burton-blatt-institute-receives-2-5-million-from-national-institute-on-disability-independent-living-and-rehabilitation-research-for-increasing-supported-decision-making-in-community-living>

**University of New Hampshire Awarded to Improve Disability Employment Data**

October 16, 2015 - The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire received a grant for $4.375 million to continue improving knowledge about and access to disability employment data and improve future collection practices. Andrew Houtenville, Research Director at the Institute on Disability stated, “The work we do for this grant will not only provide us with a better picture of employment for people with disabilities.” This information will be used to determine the effects of programs that aid unemployed or underemployed people with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[$4.375m Federal Grant Awarded to UNH to Improve National Disability Employment Data](http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/?u=767afbe8bd6db50de03889b40&id=a15eaae39e&e=5591b5babc)

<http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/?u=767afbe8bd6db50de03889b40&id=a15eaae39e&e=5591b5babc>

**New Research Kit from Apple to Study Autism, Melanoma, and Epilepsy**

October 15, 2015 - ResearchKit™, a mobile, open source framework, is now available for the iPhone to help doctors and researchers gather accurate data on participants in Autism, Melanoma, or Epilepsy studies. The kit allows users to review their consent process, submit survey responses, complete active tasks, and choose how their data is shared with researchers. The research kit is also being developed with open source innovation from researchers. Data points like weight, blood pressure, glucose levels, motor impairment, fitness, speech and memory are all being recorded and delivered to researchers via this research kit in conjunction with other technologies.

#### Additional Information

[Apple Announces New Research Kit Studies for Autism, Epilepsy & Melanoma](http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2015/10/15Apple-Announces-New-ResearchKit-Studies-for-Autism-Epilepsy-Melanoma.html)

<http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2015/10/15Apple-Announces-New-ResearchKit-Studies-for-Autism-Epilepsy-Melanoma.html>

**Lt. Colonel Daniel M. Gade Appointed to the National Council on Disability**

October 13, 2015 - Lt. Colonel Gade will be aiding the National Council on Disability (NCD) in improving existing and recommending new disability policies to Congress, the President, and other federal agencies. As a person living with a disability himself, due to a right leg amputation he received as a result of a combat injury, Lt. Colonel Gade brings valuable perspective and passion to the NCD. Lt. Colonel Gade is a deputy director for the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic, an assistant professor at the United States Military Academy, and formerly an associate director of the Domestic Policy Council in the White House. The NCD Chair Clyde Terry had this to say about the appointment, "The Council welcomes Lt. Colonel Gade on-board. We’re pleased to be adding his expertise and experience to our collective quest to ensure full participation of Americans with disabilities in the civic, social and economic fabric of American life.”

#### Additional Information

[Lt. Colonel Daniel M. Gade, Ph.D. Appointed to the National Council on Disability by Speaker of the House of Representatives](http://ncd.gov/newsroom/2015/lt-colonel-daniel-m-gade-phd-appointed-national-council-disability-speaker-house)

[<http://ncd.gov/newsroom/2015/lt-colonel-daniel-m-gade-phd-appointed-national-council-disability-speaker-house>]

**$20 Million Grant Awarded to Increase Access to Communication Technologies**

October 9, 2015 - The Disability Innovation Fund governed by the U.S. Department of Education awarded the University of Wisconsin $20 million to fund their Automated Personalization Computing Project (APCP). The University of Wisconsin is using the grant to improve broadband infrastructure, so the devices of people with disabilities adjust to the most optimal format for the user’s disability. This addresses the long standing problem of barriers to information experienced by people with disabilities. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, “When students have access to powerful mobile devices and digital resources that are continually updated, they realize that learning doesn’t stop with the last bell of the school day.”

#### Additional Information

[U.S. Department of Education Awards $20 Million to Increase Access to Information and Communication Technologies for Individuals with Disabilities](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-awards-20-million-increase-access-information-and-communication-technologies-individuals-disabilities)

[<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-awards-20-million-increase-access-information-and-communication-technologies-individuals-disabilities>]

**Assistive Communication Technology Challenge for People with ALS**

October 8, 2015 - Prize4Life and The ALS Association have announced, ALS Assistive Technology Challenge, a design challenge to improve communications technology for people with ALS. Groups will present projects and compete for a $50,000 award for the development of prototypes. These projects will then compete in a second phase for $400,000 for the most promising technology decided upon by people with ALS. The major motivation for the challenge is promoting the continued ability to communicate. Communication has been identified as one of the top priorities for maintaining quality of life. Lucie Bruijn, Ph.D., M.B.A., Chief Scientist for The ALS Association stated: “This innovative challenge grant program will provide funds for the research and development of novel approaches to solving one of the most pressing needs of people with ALS—the ability to maintain their ability to communicate as the disease progresses.”

#### Additional Information

[$500,000 Investment to Launch the Assistive Technology Challenge to Improve Communication for People with ALS](http://www.alsa.org/news/media/press-releases/assistive-technology-challenge.html)

[<http://www.alsa.org/news/media/press-releases/assistive-technology-challenge.html>]

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# Wireless RERC Updates

**Paul M.A. Baker Panelist at the Mobility Live! 2015**

Wireless RERC researcher, Dr. Paul M.A. Baker, was a panelist on "The Future of Wearables: An Executive Panel Discussion" panel Wednesday, October 28th at the Mobility Live! 2015. He discussed barriers and opportunities presented by the cross-policy domains in which wearable technologies must navigate, especially with regard to health technologies and accessibility for people with disabilities. He noted that wearables were an especially interesting case in that they stood at the intersections of accessible devices as both output devices as well as sensors, and the ability to make environments more inclusive via use of wearables.

#### Additional Information

[Mobility Live! 2015](http://mobilitylive.org/)

<http://mobilitylive.org/>

**Wireless RERC at CSUN 2016**

Wireless RERC researchers will be featured at the 2016 International Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference (CSUN) in San Diego, March 21-26, 2016.  The papers/presentations include:

* FutureS of Disabilities: The migration to a digital world
* Mixed Sentience Learning Communities: Design Considerations & Opportunities
* Optimizing Accessibility of Wireless Emergency Alerts: 2015 Survey Findings
* Wireless technology use by people with disabilities-2015: A national survey

[Come meet us in San Diego!](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2016/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1)

**Share the Survey of User Needs (SUN)**

The Wireless RERC's 2015 Survey of User Needs (SUN) for Wireless Technologies is still open and we invite you to share the survey with your networks. It‘s available in both English and Spanish. The SUN is our cornerstone survey of wireless technology use and usability by people with all types of disabilities. First launched in 2002, the SUN is the only national source of comprehensive information and insight into the wireless technology needs of people with disabilities.

Please consider sharing the Survey of User Needs to ensure we capture any new data to reflect the changing nature of accessibility and wireless technology adoption by people with disabilities.

* **To** [**share**](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/newsroom/wireless-rerc-launches-new-survey-user-needs) **the SUN,** use the share buttons at this link: <http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/newsroom/wireless-rerc-launches-new-survey-user-needs>.
* **To** [**take**](HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/SUN-2015) **the SUN online**, please go to this address: **[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SUN-2015](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Almm6pKWRoe4bLrBoBiBLLSsAEX4U6Z9qvArYmzspO1grSzgoAhX7BEjNmBVOCewzKFzJfj1-RttDJram8b2fvw1bnqvLDtZvj7KALFFf4fAwhXIJCn_oW_Jw0p73Ft9YEr2Jd1PqNQF8K07NtRx3_H0hovw0lr_P63TCpx7xiYkc5gy-AzsPsoDKpxWrCacdRRQWo8-0SxOq7CtW1YpqjGwBXQI-HAbvXsMdZ3S5rK1yzbp3YnXlxdYt71QLk7jU91Yv0rc_lpzTnxsUsS8Ao0P3mkebAasjrQaEbwDOZTtaHqAxMBG8pSGuE_P9vP64y_YJgFrWnnCKPszovWXV1YrGpPme12l693v5YNN8GQ=&c=J5gXrtB50_k7qMoPCVvEVj0_vOXpZ-bkPplhgXDkvn808R9deFl8hQ==&ch=i1yuPCr7Hno8MtABcPJo1pX6VGDxbTWC4_jeO7pHoNgbv7ZBhkC6TA==" \t "_blank)**

Individuals with disabilities may also participate on the phone, or we can send a paper copy with a postage paid return envelope.

To complete the survey over the phone or to request a paper copy, contact John Morris at:**[john\_morris@shepherd.org](mailto:john_morris@shepherd.org" \t "_blank)**or 404-367-1348

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[2015 Survey of User Needs (SUN) for Wireless Technologies](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Almm6pKWRoe4bLrBoBiBLLSsAEX4U6Z9qvArYmzspO1grSzgoAhX7BEjNmBVOCewzKFzJfj1-RttDJram8b2fvw1bnqvLDtZvj7KALFFf4fAwhXIJCn_oW_Jw0p73Ft9YEr2Jd1PqNQF8K07NtRx3_H0hovw0lr_P63TCpx7xiYkc5gy-AzsPsoDKpxWrCacdRRQWo8-0SxOq7CtW1YpqjGwBXQI-HAbvXsMdZ3S5rK1yzbp3YnXlxdYt71QLk7jU91Yv0rc_lpzTnxsUsS8Ao0P3mkebAasjrQaEbwDOZTtaHqAxMBG8pSGuE_P9vP64y_YJgFrWnnCKPszovWXV1YrGpPme12l693v5YNN8GQ=&c=J5gXrtB50_k7qMoPCVvEVj0_vOXpZ-bkPplhgXDkvn808R9deFl8hQ==&ch=i1yuPCr7Hno8MtABcPJo1pX6VGDxbTWC4_jeO7pHoNgbv7ZBhkC6TA==)

[**[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SUN-2015](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Almm6pKWRoe4bLrBoBiBLLSsAEX4U6Z9qvArYmzspO1grSzgoAhX7BEjNmBVOCewzKFzJfj1-RttDJram8b2fvw1bnqvLDtZvj7KALFFf4fAwhXIJCn_oW_Jw0p73Ft9YEr2Jd1PqNQF8K07NtRx3_H0hovw0lr_P63TCpx7xiYkc5gy-AzsPsoDKpxWrCacdRRQWo8-0SxOq7CtW1YpqjGwBXQI-HAbvXsMdZ3S5rK1yzbp3YnXlxdYt71QLk7jU91Yv0rc_lpzTnxsUsS8Ao0P3mkebAasjrQaEbwDOZTtaHqAxMBG8pSGuE_P9vP64y_YJgFrWnnCKPszovWXV1YrGpPme12l693v5YNN8GQ=&c=J5gXrtB50_k7qMoPCVvEVj0_vOXpZ-bkPplhgXDkvn808R9deFl8hQ==&ch=i1yuPCr7Hno8MtABcPJo1pX6VGDxbTWC4_jeO7pHoNgbv7ZBhkC6TA==" \t "_blank) ]**

[Encuesta sobre las Necesidades del Usuario respecto a las Tecnologías Inalámbricas](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SUN-Esp_2015)

[<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SUN-Esp_2015>]

**RERC lanza la Encuesta sobre las Necesidades del Usuario respecto a las Tecnologías Inalámbricas-2015**

El Centro de Investigación sobre la Ingeniería de la Rehabilitación con Tecnologías Inalámbricas (Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies, Wireless RERC) ha lanzado la Encuesta sobre las Necesidades del Usuario respecto a las Tecnologías Inalámbricas-2015 (Survey of User Needs for Wireless Technologies 2015, SUN-2015).

El fin de esta encuesta es descubrir cómo la gente con discapacidades usa tecnología inalámbrica para consumidores. Se enfoca principalmente en los teléfonos celulares, sin embargo, también incluye preguntas sobre otros tipos de dispositivos como las tabletas, por ejemplo el iPad de Apple y el Kindle Fire de Amazon, Surface de Microsoft, y otros dispositivos similares.

Los datos que se recopilen ayudarán a los diseñadores e ingenieros a elaborar nuevos dispositivos y servicios inalámbricos que satisfagan las necesidades de las personas con discapacidades. Desde el año 2001 más de 6000 personas han completado esta encuesta.

Invitamos a todas las personas con cualquier tipo de discapacidad o limitación física, cognitiva, o sensorial completar el questionario. Se puede completarlo en el Web: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SUN-Esp_2015>. Si prefiere completar el questionario en papel o por telefono, por favor comuníquese con John Morris: 404-367-1348; [john\_morris@shepherd.org](mailto:john_morris@shepherd.org)

Sus respuestas son importantes para nosotros, incluso si usted no usa la tecnología inalámbrica. El questionario se puede completar con la ayuda de un asistente o una enfermera si no puede completarlo directamente usted mismo.

No venderemos ni utilizaremos su información personal de otra manera que no sea para realizar la investigación sobre el tema de esta encuesta. Sus datos personales permanecerán en estricta confidencialidad.

# Upcoming Events

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**40th Anniversary and Announcement of the 2015 TASH Conference**

The TASH conference will be held December 2nd -4th in Portland, Oregon. The TASH organization works to promote inclusive education, community living, employment, diversity, and human rights for those with disabilities. The theme of this year’s conference is “Celebrating 40 Years of Progressive Leadership” to highlight TASH’s enormous impact on the quality of life of people living with disabilities. Registration is open now follow the link below for more information.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Conference Website](https://tash.org/conferences-events/2015-tash-conference/)

<https://tash.org/conferences-events/2015-tash-conference/>

**31st Annual Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference**

The 31st Annual Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference, also known as CSUN 2015 will convene in San Diego, CA from March 21 to March 26, 2016. CSUN conferences are well attended by professionals, advocates and academics that work at the intersection of technology and access by people with disabilities.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Conference Website](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2016/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1)

[<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2016/sessions/index.php/public/website_pages/view/1>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** October 2015

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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 Dalton Nechanicky [Dalton@cacp.gatech.edu] or Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu].

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