



TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS – JULY 2021

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OVERVIEW

July marked the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As large gatherings are still approached with great trepidation, many advocates and members of the disability community celebrated virtually. President Biden, a co-sponsor of landmark legislation, released a Proclamation affirming the rights and protections of people with disabilities. Including equitable access to opportunities to increase economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and social inclusion. The National Council on Disability stated in a press release, "As a community, we are far better off today because of those civil rights protections than we were 31 years ago. We do, however, have a considerable amount of work to do to fully realize that promise."

In regulatory news, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released statements about two new programs related to digital equity. The Emergency Connectivity Fund Program provides schools and libraries with grant funding to ensure students and economically vulnerable populations remain connected with digital devices. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program has provided over four million households with discount vouchers to make internet connectivity affordable. Also, in an effort to address affordable communications, in a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking [**CG Docket No. 12-375**], the FCC is requesting public input on the functionally equivalent access and affordability of telecommunications for incarcerated persons with disabilities.

In Wireless RERC news, we submitted comments related to two matters: NTIA Draft Internet Use Survey and a Review of the CVAA. Both are summarized on pages 7-9 in the newsletter. We are also collecting data on several surveys. The wireless RERC's first responder network project wants your input. We want to understand the experiences of people with disabilities when they interact with first responders ([Take the Survey](#)). We are also interested in first responders' interactions with people with disabilities ([Take the First Responder Survey](#)). Finally, Wireless RERC researcher, LaForce, wants to understand which communities are being served by the Atlanta BeltLine and how the BeltLine can be used as a pedestrian evacuation route preceding or in the wake of a disaster event ([Take the Atlanta BeltLine Survey](#)).

This issue also includes news about the nationwide test of WEA, adapted toys, AAC, eye-tracking tech, accessibility awareness, accessiBe, disability representation, and more.

EXECUTIVE ACTIVITIES

A PROCLAMATION ON ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

July 26, 2021 – On the 31st Anniversary of the ADA, President Biden, a co-sponsor of landmark legislation, released a Proclamation affirming the rights and protections of people with disabilities. Including equitable access to opportunities to increase economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and social inclusion. Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on families and individuals with disabilities, the Proclamation states, “The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the longstanding inequities and biases that exist for people with disabilities; persistent discrimination and the inability to access services continues to threaten the health and well-being of far too many Americans. The American Rescue Plan is providing funding to expand access to home- and community-based services under Medicaid, which will allow more people with disabilities to live safely and independently in their homes. My Build Back Better agenda would build on this by making significant investments in home- and community-based services for people with disabilities and older Americans. It will also spur the creation of quality jobs with good pay, good benefits, and the ability to organize and collectively bargain for caregivers.” President Biden also discussed promoting economic self-sufficiency through workplace inclusion. “I have proposed eliminating outdated provisions in the Fair Labor Standards Act that allow employers to pay workers with disabilities less than the minimum wage. My proposal includes funding this transition with \$2 billion to expand access to competitive, integrated employment opportunities for workers with disabilities.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[A Proclamation on Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 2021.](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/07/26/a-proclamation-on-anniversary-of-the-americans-with-disabilities-act-2021/)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/07/26/a-proclamation-on-anniversary-of-the-americans-with-disabilities-act-2021/>

REGULATORY ACTIVITIES

INCREASING BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

July 2021 – The FCC has initiated a new program entitled the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program. The Emergency Connectivity Fund Program covers 100% of all reasonable costs of laptops, tablets, Wi-Fi hotspots, modems, routers, and broadband connectivity purchases for off-campus use by students, school staff, and library patrons. Eligible schools and libraries can submit requests for funding to purchase the above noted eligible equipment and services. The application window opened on July 1st, 2021, and will remain open until July 30th, 2022. However, the initial application window

will close on August 13th at 11:59 EST. The FCC will host a webinar on August 3rd at 2:00 PM EST to review and answer FAQs by potential applicants. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Emergency Connectivity Fund](#)

<https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-connectivity-fund>

RE-ENVISIONING ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE INMATE CALLING SERVICES

July 28, 2021 – The Commission has engaged with an iterated process to revise and re-develop its Inmate Calling Services (ICS) rules through several rounds of comments. In May of 2021, after feedback from the public, the FCC published the Third Report and Order (R&O) report on ICS reminding ICS providers of their obligations to ensure access to TTY-based relay and speech-to-speech services and directing the FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau to coordinate with the Department of Justice to ensure that incarcerated people with disabilities have functionally equivalent access to telecommunications. In the latest Further Notice [**CG Docket No. 12-375**] on rates for interstate inmate calling services, the FCC seeks comment about the accessibility of inmate telecommunications. Some of the questions that the FCC raises include:

- Should additional forms of TRS be available (besides TTY-based TRS and speech-to-speech relay services)?
- Should TRS calls be free of charge for all parties?
- How can direct communication, either by video or text, be provided for inmates?
- What information should ICS providers be required to submit in their annual accessibility-related reports?

The comment due date for interested stakeholders and respondents is August 27th, 2021, and reply comment dates are due by September 27th, 2021. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[FCC Seeks Comment to Improve Accessibility of Inmate Calling Services](#)

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-21-60A1.pdf>

ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CONNECTIVITY AS THE PANDEMIC CONTINUES

July 28, 2021 – The FCC released updated information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. The Commission shared that this program has enrolled over 4 million households since its enactment. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program aims to provide economic relief subsidies to eligible households to ensure connectivity during the pandemic. This subsidy program offers a temporary \$50 to \$75 discount on Internet and wireless bills to these eligible households. To further

ensure equitable access to these funds, the FCC has also hosted over 320 virtual presentations for the public to increase awareness and educate consumers, stakeholders, and advocates about the program. The FCC also utilized more than 25,000 partners to help spread the word, including local Boys And Girls Clubs, local school districts, YMCAs, libraries, and grassroots organizers. Since the program's inception, over 1100 broadband providers have partnered with the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. The program is still in effect and continues to offer these discounts to eligible households. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[FCC Enrolls 4M+ Households in Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-enrolls-4m-households-emergency-broadband-benefit-program)

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-enrolls-4m-households-emergency-broadband-benefit-program>

FIRST TIME WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERT TEST TO COLLECT PERFORMANCE DATA

The FCC announced that it had entered a collaborative partnership with more than 11 federal and local agencies to assess the efficacy and delivery of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) during a planned nationwide test on August 11th, 2021. The FCC has traditionally required that the Emergency Alert System (EAS) providers provide information on how the national test performed on their television and radio systems. However, this is the first time that the FCC will collaborate with other partners to gather data related to the performance of the nationwide WEA test. The FCC and FEMA collaborated to jointly conduct this nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System and the Wireless Emergency Alerts beginning at 2:20 PM (ET) on Wednesday, August 11th, 2021. **It is worth noting that the WEA portion of the text message will only be received by consumer cell phones where the subscriber has opted in to receive test messages.** For a step-by-step on how to opt-in to receive WEA test alerts, go to [IPAWS Tip #26: How to Receive WEA Test Alerts on Android & iOS Phones](#).

This year, some of the following partners and stakeholders will participate in the FCC survey to ensure that the test message was delivered appropriately and help ascertain any issues. Some of the highlighted partners include the National Weather Service, Alabama Emergency Management Service, Philadelphia Office Of Emergency Management, the City of Los Angeles (CA)'s Emergency Management Department, New York City Emergency Management Department, and Ohio Emergency Management Agency. The FCC anticipates releasing the findings from both the EAS and WEA tests after a rigorous evaluation of the data. [Source: FCC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[FCC Announces Survey Partnerships for Wireless Emergency Alert Test](#)

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-announces-survey-partnerships-wireless-emergency-alert-test>
[FCC Announces Nationwide Emergency Alerting Test on August 11, 2021](https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-announces-nationwide-emergency-alerting-test-august-11-2021)

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-announces-nationwide-emergency-alerting-test-august-11-2021>

[IPAWS Tip #26: How to Receive WEA Test Alerts on Android & iOS Phones](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/bulletins/28b6703?fbclid=IwAR3wbiD9iUj1x84FprgJ_pgXzz6vryxQJQRS3f89IG8ZruloD_6ls_Jea3M)

https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/bulletins/28b6703?fbclid=IwAR3wbiD9iUj1x84FprgJ_pgXzz6vryxQJQRS3f89IG8ZruloD_6ls_Jea3M

NOMINATION AND APPLICATION WINDOW OPEN FOR EQUITY & DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

July 6, 2021 – The Commission seeks nominations from the public for qualified individuals to join the Communications Equity And Diversity Council (CEDC). This Council was previously named the Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment. Under the latest charter issued on June 29th, 2021, the FCC renamed the Council. The Council’s purpose is to provide the Commission with recommendations on advancing equity and equality in digital communication services and products for all people. The Council will also provide recommendations to the Commission on empowering people of color, specifically historically underserved individuals, including those who live and areas impacted by persistent poverty or inequity or those with a disability. The recommendations to the Commission will also focus on how to accelerate the deployment and expansion of high-speed Internet access or broadband to these communities. The Commission seeks applicants from various sectors of the communications industry, state and local regulators, and consumer and community organizations for this Council. Nominations for membership to the Council should be submitted to the FCC no later than 11:59 PM EDT on August 10th, 2021. Finally, the committee members will not be compensated for their service or related expenses, including travel expenses. Moreover, the FCC stipulates that individuals seeking membership on this committee may not be a registered federal lobbyists. As the Commission reviews applications, members will be selected to balance the expertise and viewpoints “necessary to effectively address the issues to be considered by the committee” [Source: FCC].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[FCC Seeks Nominations for Communications Equity and Diversity Council](https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-seeks-nominations-communications-equity-and-diversity-council)

<https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-seeks-nominations-communications-equity-and-diversity-council>

WIRELESS RERC NEWS

WIRELESS RERC'S FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK PROJECT WANTS YOUR INPUT

In the wake of an emergency, first responders need relevant, up-to-date information about the nature of the emergency and response efforts. The First Responders team works with FirstNet (<https://firstnet.gov>) to provide these resources uniformly throughout the country. FirstNet recognizes that first-responders need information about nearby individuals needing assistance and is expanding their system to accomplish this. FirstNet wants to include the needs of individuals with disabilities and first responders in this effort.

FirstNet is in the process of considering user-interface design and development, including understanding what the experiences of first responders are like when they interact with individuals who have disabilities (sensory or mobility impairments). This will eliminate the need for 'retrofitting' the system once it has been established. Please take time to take and share the following surveys if they apply to you. One is a survey of people with disabilities, and the other is a survey of first responders.

FirstNet – Survey of Individuals with Disabilities' Experiences with First Responders

We want to understand the experiences of people with disabilities when they interact with first responders (fire, police, or EMS) and what you would like first responders to know about you for any future interactions. We especially welcome your participation if you identify as an individual with hearing, vision, mobility, and dexterity disabilities.

To participate, you must be:

- Over the age of 18
- Fluent in English
- Not located in the European Union (EU).

This survey is expected to take 10-20 minutes to complete. If you are interested, please use this link to complete the survey. https://gatech.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1H8O9Qyhuc5KAck.

FirstNet – First Responder Survey

We are interested in first responders' interactions with people with disabilities and what first responders would want to know about these individuals for any future interactions. *If you are an active first responder (fire, police, or EMS), you are eligible even if you have never had any interactions with people with disabilities; we are still interested in your thoughts and opinions!*

To participate, you must be:

- Over the age of 18

- An active first responder (Fire, Police, or EMS)
- Fluent in English
- Not located in the European Union (EU).

This survey is expected to take 10-20 minutes to complete. If you are interested, please use this link https://gatech.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8rmpyto6uW1LVSS.

Note that there is no compensation for participation.

WIRELESS ON THE RECORD: NTIA SURVEY COMMENTS URGE NTIA TO ENSURE EQUITABLE PROCESSES IN SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

July 26, 2021 – The Wireless RERC submitted comments to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) regarding their request for input on the draft Internet Use Survey. A 67-question survey that they anticipate adding to the November 2021 edition of the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS). A focus of our comments was ensuring that interviewers conducting personal visits are properly equipped to communicate with people who have disabilities. Suggesting that the interviewers be prepared to offer accommodations. As it pertains to the accuracy of the NTIA’s estimated time, cost burden, and methodology for disseminating the survey, Wireless RERC comments indicated some concerns related to the distribution methodology. Specifically, the RERC asserted that NTIA and the Census Bureau provide an online option to complete the survey designed to work with screen reader technology for respondents who are blind or have low vision. As a counter to extensive in-person interviewing teams, the Wireless RERC proposed a “mail-in” and online option so that people with and without disabilities can engage with this survey without unnecessary exposure to others.

Regarding the quality and quantity of survey questions, the RERC shared that the survey tool should be designed to facilitate nuanced analyses along sociodemographic dimensions that include disability. To that end, the Wireless RERC also recommended that NTIA add questions that would facilitate increased understanding of the various types of technology people with disabilities use to access the Internet and its content—asserting that the resultant data could facilitate the development of broadband affordability and utilization strategies. The comments urged NTIA to ensure that survey questions be clear, concise, and provided in accessible formats and with appropriate disability access accommodations (e.g., ASL, captions). The comments concluded by noting how the suggested revisions will advance the quality content of the survey questions and aid researchers in producing improved filing recommendations. We underscored the importance of considering the accessibility and usability of internet services and the consequential inclusion of people with disabilities in the broader design of data collection that informs public policy. We contend that any national survey tool designed to gather data on the state of technology use in the USA should include questions regarding

disability and accessibility. Gathering such data will allow for identifying barriers to internet use and technology adoption by people with disabilities, assisting organizations, manufacturers, developers, and policymakers in devising the appropriate strategies to create a more accessible and usable broadband environment. [Source: Wireless RERC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Comments of the Wireless RERC](#)

[ntia internet use survey comments of the wireless rerc final.pdf](#)

WIRELESS ON THE RECORD: RERC'S CVAA COMMENTS ENCOURAGE INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY

July 6, 2021 – The Wireless RERC submitted reply comments in response to the FCC’s Public Notice Update on Commission’s Fulfillment Of The Twenty-First Century Communications And Video Accessibility [GN Docket No. 21-140]. We agreed with the American Council of the Blind (ACB) statement that "The Commission should review how people with multiple disabilities are served by accessible communications technology and services. This should be done with a very wide lens to encompass all forms of sensory, cognitive, and physical disability." We cited that our studies have found that accessibility features are not uniformly available in all phone models, and gaps in the accessibility experience persist, especially for people with co-occurring disabilities. The comments of the Alliance of Automotive Innovation provided us the opportunity to state “that accessibility innovations should be co-created with consumers with disabilities and that the automotive industry adheres to CVAA requirements to include people with disabilities in the design and development phases of advanced communications features incorporated into connected and automated vehicles. It is essential to proactively include stakeholders within the disability community in AV design and development to enhance the utility of this technology for people with disabilities.”

In response to CTIA’s comments, we addressed ensuring that consumers with disabilities are aware of device features. At a recent focus group comprised of individuals who are blind, a participant, while discussing his use of the iPhone, stated he wanted to connect it to Alexa, *"but I'm not sure if there is an Alexa app."* We asserted that attending to issues of independent setup and accessible documentation and communication of device features speaks to the "usability" requirements of the CVAA. "A product or service is "usable" if it provides individuals with disabilities with the full functionality and documentation for the product or service, including instructions, product or service information (including accessible feature information), customer support, and technical support."¹

¹47 CFR §§ 6.3(l), 7.3(l), 14.21(c); *see also* 47 CFR §§ 6.11, 7.11, 14.20(d), 14.60(b)(4).

Regarding technical support specifically, CTIA commented that "Recently, Apple announced new accessibility features, including AssistiveTouch to watchOS, which allows users with mobility limitations to control their device, and SignTime, which enables people who are deaf and hard of hearing to communicate with AppleCare and Apple Retail staff in sign language." Excellent! We hope that such accessible and inclusive business practices become the industry standard. [Source: Wireless RERC]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Wireless RERC on the Record: RERC's CVAA Comments Encourage Increased Accessibility](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/wireless_rerc_cvaa_reply_comments.pdf)

http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/wireless_rerc_cvaa_reply_comments.pdf

Survey on Your Use of the Atlanta BeltLine

Georgia Tech's Center for Advanced Communications Policy is interested in understanding which communities are being served by the Atlanta BeltLine. Your responses will be used to describe who is on the BeltLine, when, why, and frequency of visits.

The survey is open to Beltline visitors aged 18 or older.

Please take the survey online at <http://bit.ly/ATLBeltLine>

OR

Scan the QR Code to take the survey on your mobile.

This research is being funded by Georgia Tech's Executive Vice President of Research Small Bets Seed Grants. The goal of this research is to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."



OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

ANNOUNCING THE REVISED CAL OES ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS (AFN) LIBRARY

July 2021 - In response to the immense number of inquiries from across the state (and the nation) by community leaders, state agencies, advocacy organizations, emergency managers, private sector partners, and others seeking access and functional needs-related informational resources; the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) has revised its [AFN Library](#) – a central, online repository/clearinghouse of whole community-based best practices, lessons learned, guidance, white

papers, and more. The updated repository is free and accessible to our partners and to the public. The resources housed cover a wide array of AFN-specific topics and needs. So, whether you're looking for information on effective communication, sheltering, or integrated planning; the clearinghouse is a one-stop-shop to finding the best available resources out there!

The revised AFN Library has been audited, updated, re-categorized, and annotated to ensure it provides relevant, up-to-date materials, topics, and resource links, as well as offering a user-friendly accessible navigational system. The partners produce and consume a tremendous amount of information, let them know if there are specific tools, documents or resources you would like included in the clearinghouse. If so, please send them to OAFN@caloes.ca.gov.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Access and Functional Needs Library](#)

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/access-functional-needs/afn-library>

UNITED KINGDOM PUSHES TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY

July 29, 2021 – The United Kingdom (UK) released its National Disability Strategy. This 121-page document covers practical steps to cultivate inclusion, including how to remove barriers to encourage full participation in public and civil life, housing, leisure, shopping, and public services. The second section of the document explores how to better incorporate people with disabilities into policymaking and government service delivery and how to track progress towards meeting the stated aims. The third section of the document acknowledges that there must be a cross-governmental effort to transform the everyday lives of people with disabilities. This section breaks down the responsibilities and tasks of the various departments, including the department for digital, cultural, media and sport, Department of Transport, Department for Work and Pensions, Ministry of Justice, and more. The document also includes a forward from the Prime Minister. He discusses the importance of having a cohesive strategy to ensure that people with disabilities are included in society. [Source: UK Government]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[National Disability Strategy](#)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006098/National-Disability-Strategy_web-accessible-pdf.pdf

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM MODIFIES TOYS FOR KIDS WITH DISABILITIES

July 28, 2021 – The University of South Carolina (USC) created the USC’s Assistive Technology Program, which rewires toys to make them easier to enjoy for children with disabilities. These adaptive toys are available free of charge for families to borrow. The program manager explained that toys often have hidden on/off buttons or switches that are not easily accessible for children with physical disabilities. The adaptive toys developed under USC’s program have a special modification that makes them accessible for all children. The technologists working on this project have rewired the toys to add switches or a large button on the toy's exterior that allows the child to operate it efficiently. Children with disabilities can borrow these adaptive toys free of charge through this program. In addition to the borrowing aspect of the USC program, USC also modifies toys for families with disabilities. Currently, the program accepts new toys from the public to add switches and other tools to make the toys more accessible [Source: Julia Kauffman via WLTX].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[USC program adapts toys for kids with disabilities](#)

<https://www.wltx.com/article/news/community/usc-adapts-toys-for-kids-with-disabilities/101-0efb3f9d-2160-49ec-8f36-6a8642a32795>

STATE FUNDS TO EXPAND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

July 26, 2021 – Catawba College’s Corriher Linn Black Library recently received a \$25,000 grant from the State Library of North Carolina for technical library services. The project aims to ensure that students attending Catawba College have equitable access to emerging technologies. Catawba College will also offer VR/AR technology access for students to engage in problem-based learning projects. Thus far, the State Library of North Carolina has awarded approximately \$1.6 million to support 45 local library initiatives. These initiatives focus on providing high-need communities with digital inclusion, expanding digital network access, purchasing Internet-accessible devices, and providing related technical support. [Source: David Whisenant via WBTV]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Catawba College library awarded a \\$25,000 grant](#)

<https://www.wbvtv.com/2021/07/26/catawba-college-library-awarded-25000-grant/>

FUNDING TO CREATE ASSISTIVE TECH FOR VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

July 25, 2021 –In Milwaukee, Independence First, an organization dedicated to providing resources to people with disabilities, hosted a community arts event at the Lakeshore State Park. This

celebration commemorated the 31st anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). Each booth at the event was designed so that people of all abilities could participate in the activities. The program manager at Independent First also shared that assistive technology was included throughout the event to ensure that people, regardless of ability, can engage in the festivities and celebrate the 31st anniversary of the ADA. [Source: CBS 58 Newsroom]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Milwaukee celebrates 31st anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act at Lake Shore State Park Sunday](#)

<https://www.cbs58.com/news/milwaukee-celebrates-31st-anniversary-of-americans-with-disabilities-act-at-lake-shore-state-park-sunday>

AUSTRALIAN ABC SEEKS NARRATIVE STORIES FROM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

July 25, 2021 –The Australian branch of ABC news, the television network provider, is honoring International Day of People With Disabilities by commissioning a series of stories related to people with disabilities. Australian ABC is offering adults with disabilities who live in Australia the opportunity to pitch nonfiction, original story ideas about either: one's lived experiences, issues affecting their community, a stereotype one seeks to dispel about the disability community, or a celebration of life as a person with a disability. ABC is currently accepting several forms of content, including video, audio, and written article format. Australian ABC shared that they will compensate for the selected pieces. If anyone with a disability is interested in providing content to ABC, they must fill out the form by midnight on Monday, August 9th sharing their idea, how it would be produced, and any previous content-making experience. If the pitched idea is accepted, the person will be invited to work with an ABC producer between September and November 2021 to produce the story. If there are any reasons that one cannot fill out the form to submit ideas, then ABC encourages interested parties to email abcinclusive@abc.net.au with their proposed idea. [Source: ABC AU]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[The ABC is looking for storytellers with disability to pitch ideas for IDPwD 2021](#)

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-26/disability-content-ideas-callout-for-idpwd-2021/100288174>

NONPROFIT ADAPTS BIKES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS

July 23, 2021 — The non-profit, Exceptional Opportunities modifies children's toys with adaptive equipment and assistive technology to provide children with disabilities who come from

underprivileged backgrounds access to functional toys. The concept of modifying tricycles to help keep children with disabilities active initially began when the founder purchased adaptive tricycles from Rifton Tricycles. These tricycles have components that are customized to the needs of the user. Exceptional Opportunities has received a grant from the Youth Grantmakers program through the Inland Empire Community Foundation to launch its adaptive tricycle program to bring adapted tricycles to a local park at a scheduled time to give children with disabilities an opportunity to utilize them. Exceptional Opportunities argues that these children with disabilities can better socialize with peers by granting them access to these tricycles, enjoying traditional kid activities, strengthening their lower extremities, improving balance skills, and gaining visual and spatial perception through steering. [Source: Rebecca O'Connor via The Press Enterprise]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Exceptional Opportunities helps children with special needs in Riverside County](https://www.pe.com/2021/07/23/exceptional-opportunities-helps-children-with-special-needs-in-riverside-county/)

<https://www.pe.com/2021/07/23/exceptional-opportunities-helps-children-with-special-needs-in-riverside-county/>

LATEST EYE-TRACKING DEVICE CLAIMS SUPERIOR FUNCTIONING

July 19, 2021 – Two tech companies, Smartbox Assistive Technology and Smart Eye, collaborated to develop Lumin-i. This advanced eye-tracking product integrates with an augmentative and alternative communications (AAC) device. Lumin-I is the product of these two companies using what they consider the best of their respective technologies. Smart Eyes included their eye-tracking algorithm, which takes approximately 25 milliseconds to identify and respond to the user's gaze and translate the gaze into verbal communications. A unique aspect of Lumin-i is that it only requires a gaze recovery time of 17 milliseconds and can capture 60 frames per second. Lumin-i also has a large track box that measures a wider range of motion, specifically head motion, and ultimately grants users a reportedly more robust capability for communication and independence. Lumin-i was launched globally on July 19th and is available online at the Smartbox website. [Source: BusinessWire]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Leading AAC Provider Smartbox Launches Lumin-i: a New Eye Tracking Solution Developed in Collaboration With Smart Eye](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210719005478/en/Leading-AAC-Provider-Smartbox-Launches-Lumin-i-a-New-Eye-Tracking-Solution-Developed-in-Collaboration-With-Smart-Eye)

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210719005478/en/Leading-AAC-Provider-Smartbox-Launches-Lumin-i-a-New-Eye-Tracking-Solution-Developed-in-Collaboration-With-Smart-Eye>

MARYLAND RELEASED LATEST STATE DISABILITY PLAN

July 14, 2021 – Maryland Governor Hogan partners with the Maryland Department of Disabilities to develop and release the Maryland State Disability Plan, providing a road map for ensuring equity and inclusion. The state disability plan also includes guidance on coordination plans for state services and policies to ensure that they comply with state and federal civil rights laws. Finally, the plan aims to offer a detailed framework for improving and monitoring these services, measured annually by the Maryland Department of Disabilities. This State Disability Plan is developed quadrennially by the interagency disabilities board in Maryland, consisting of cabinet secretaries of key state agencies headed by the secretary of disabilities. The most recent plan has five guiding aims: self-direction, financial well-being, maximizing resources, accessible communication, health, and Wellness. [Source: The Office of Governor Larry Hogan]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Governor Hogan Announces Release of State Disabilities Plan](https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/07/14/governor-hogan-announces-release-of-state-disabilities-plan/)

<https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/07/14/governor-hogan-announces-release-of-state-disabilities-plan/>

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION PUSHES FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

July 12, 2021 – California State University (CSU) is in the first phase of its latest initiative to provide university students with technology devices. According to CSU Chandler Castro, this initiative aims to “assure that students have immediate access to innovative new mobile tools that they need to support their learning.” Some wireless technology devices available to students include 64 gigabyte iPad Air, Apple pen, and Apple smart keyboard folio. The program's first phase will happen at several CSU campuses, including Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Fresno, Los Angeles, Northridge, and San Marcos. CSU and Apple collaborate on this project to ensure that students have an equitable opportunity to access education through technology [Julia Clover via MacRumors].

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[California State University Offering iPad Air, Apple Pencil, and Keyboard to 35,000 Incoming Students](https://www.macrumors.com/2021/07/12/california-state-university-ipad-air-for-students/)

<https://www.macrumors.com/2021/07/12/california-state-university-ipad-air-for-students/>

FIRST NATIONAL AD ON WEB ACCESSIBILITY BRINGS AWARENESS

July 12, 2021 – accessiBe recently announced launching a national TV campaign focused on web accessibility. This initiative is the first time that web accessibility will be addressed on national prime time slots. The 60-second ad will broadcast nationwide on prime-time channels for eight weeks

beginning on July 12th, 2021. The ad, written and produced by a team with members from the disability community, includes actors with disabilities. The purpose of this ad is to highlight how people with disabilities are not restricted by their disability but rather limited by inaccessible environments, including the web. accessiBe named this campaign The Unstoppable, which hopes to bring greater awareness and open-mindedness to business owners to acknowledge the importance of web accessibility and take action. [Source: PRNewsWire]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[accessiBe Launches National Television Campaign Focused On Web Accessibility](https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/accessibe-launches-national-television-campaign-focused-on-web-accessibility-301331096.html)

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/accessibe-launches-national-television-campaign-focused-on-web-accessibility-301331096.html>

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEEKLY WEBINARS HOSTED BY COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) hosts weekly webinars to educate and inform accessibility stakeholders. The webinars are held every other Thursday morning from 9:30 am – 12:30 pm, with time incorporated for questions after each session. The upcoming webinar topics include assistive technology, college, and post-secondary education and benefits planning. The next sessions are as follows:

- August 19th – Putting All the Pieces Together for North Carolina Employment First

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[NCCDD - 2021 Employment and Transition Webinars](https://nccdd.org/news-media/action-alerts/1139-nccdd-hosts-employment-and-transition-webinars.html)

<https://nccdd.org/news-media/action-alerts/1139-nccdd-hosts-employment-and-transition-webinars.html>

TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS, JULY 2021

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The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) is a monthly newsletter that reports national public policy events and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities, researchers, policymakers, industry, and advocacy professionals. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs, user experiences, and expectations of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our website 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 Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu] or Dara Bright [dara.bright@cacp.gatech.edu]. If you wish to update your email address, send an email to salimah@cacp.gatech.edu.

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