

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

January 2017



# Overview

In January, the U.S. Access Board published revised guidelines and standards pertaining to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 255 of the Communications Act of 1934. They cover Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines for buses and vans, medical diagnostic equipment (MDE), and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines (ICT-Refresh). ICT-Refresh standards are effective March 20, 2017, and January 18, 2018, is the compliance deadline. The Federal Communications Commission FCC) also set the effective date (February 22, 2017) for the Final Rule concerning the transition from legacy text telephone communications (TTY) to Real-Time Text (RTT). In other efforts to push the needle forward on communications access, the FCC announced the second term of the Disability Advisory Committee and published the list of 2017-2019 committee members, of which is our very own Dr. Helena Mitchell, Wireless RERC Principal Investigator. They will continue the mission “…to make recommendations to the Commission on its full range of disability access issues and to suggest ways to facilitate the participation of consumers with disabilities in proceedings before the Commission.” Speaking of which, Wireless RERC researcher, Salimah LaForce, will be [presenting on how to identify and develop policy assessments or appropriate policy responses to federal rulemakings](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2017/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/263) at the 2017 CSUN Assistive Technologies Conference. The presentation, among other things, discusses using empirical evidence to support policy recommendations. To that end, Wireless RERC researcher, Dr. John Morris, will also [present an analysis of the Survey of User Needs](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2017/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/6), concentrating on the impact of demographic variables and disability type on smartphone use by adults with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities.

Finally, in case you missed the announcement last month, changes were made to the Wireless RERC’s newsletters, the *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* (TDPH) and *Re: Wireless.* The TDPH will continue as a monthly release with content curated for a policy, industry, and research audience, while *Re: Wireless* published bimonthly with a focus on Wireless RERC news for consumers. As we re-sort our mailing lists to represent these new focuses, you may receive both newsletters, or you may be receiving the TDPH for the first time. We welcome you as a reader and hope you enjoy the newsletter! Should you wish to unsubscribe from the TDPH, send an email to salimah@cacp.gatech.edu. If you are not currently a *Re: Wireless* reader and you would like to receive consumer-focused updates, you can sign-up using the following link: <http://bit.ly/2j1SBS1> or text WIRELESSRERC to 22828.

This issue also includes news about the FCC’s plan to promote digital inclusion, self-driving cars, a Makeathon to prototype accessibility solutions, and more.

**Click the headings below to link directly to a particular section.**

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# Regulatory Activities

**Final Rule Effective Date: Transition From TTY to Real-Time Text Technology**

January 23, 2017 - The Final Rule concerning the transition from legacy text telephone communications (TTY) to Real-Time Text (RTT) will become effective February 22, 2017.  The Final Rule covers in detail various topics related to the transition including wireless service support for RTT, interoperability, backward compatibility with TTY technology, implementation timeline for RTT manufacturers, and support for 9-1-1 communications. The FCC also published their notice for public comment [**CG Docket No. 16-145 and GN Docket No. 15-178; FCC 16-169**] on further actions the Commission could undertake to continue the transition from TTY technology to reliable and interoperable means of providing RTT communication over Internet Protocol (IP) enabled networks for services to address the needs of people with disabilities. The Notice also outlines information such as RTT features and requirements for TRS providers. Comments are due by February 22, 2017, and Reply Comments on or before March 24, 2017.

#### Additional Information:

[Final Rule](https://WWW.GPO.GOV/FDSYS/PKG/FR-2017-01-23/HTML/2017-01377.HTM)

[<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-01-23/html/2017-01377.htm>]

[Proposed Rule](https://WWW.GPO.GOV/FDSYS/PKG/FR-2017-01-23/HTML/2017-01382.HTM)

[<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-01-23/html/2017-01382.htm>]

 c**FCC Publishes Plan to Promote Digital Inclusion**

January 11, 2017 – The FCC’s Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau released *Strategies and Recommendations for Promoting Digital Inclusion*. The document is essentially an implementation plan to advance broadband availability and adoption by underserved populations, including people with disabilities. Affordability as a barrier is well documented, and the modernization of the Lifeline Program is one effort to minimize the financial burden placed on consumers. However, the Commission is particularly interested in addressing non-price barriers such as digital literacy and perceived relevance of broadband. The plan provides examples of successful initiatives including:

* San Francisco’s Community Technology Network that provides digital literacy training to people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income residents;
* Digitability, an organization that works with children with cognitive disabilities, teaching them online and other digital skills to increase their independence; and
* AT&T’s Digital You portal that hosts digital literacy resources targeted at underserved populations.

The recommendations/strategies cover education and outreach, partnerships and policy; and address elements that impact people with disabilities such as access to devices, website and web application accessibility, and quality technical support, to name a few.

####  Additional Information:

[Strategies and Recommendations for Promoting Digital Inclusion](https://www.fcc.gov/document/strategies-and-recommendations-promoting-digital-inclusion%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[<https://www.fcc.gov/document/strategies-and-recommendations-promoting-digital-inclusion>]

**Access Board Briefing on Section 508 and Section 255 Refresh**

January 10, 2017 - The United States Access Board, an independent federal agency that creates accessibility guidelines and standards for the U. S. federal government, held a briefing outlining recently released guidelines.  The briefing covered three areas pertaining to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 255 of the Communications Act of 1934:

* ADA guidelines for buses and vans.
* Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines (ICT-Refresh).
* Standards for medical diagnostic equipment (MDE).

Key highlights from the briefing include the harmonization of Section 508 and Section 255 with WCAG 2.0.and other international accessibility standards, and utilization of a functional approach for devices (combining function and technical concepts).  For example, instead of specifically listing types of technology like telephones, the function is referred as two-way communication devices. Using more technology agnostic, function-focused references allows the standards to apply to current *and* not yet developed technologies. Additionally, new ICT guidelines state that certain mobile phone applications, and phone registering processes on a telecommunication web sites must be accessible.  Regarding public transportation, ADA regulations require automated announcements outside of buses when 100 or more buses are in operation during peak times. This requirement will assure travelers, specifically those with vision disabilities, of a bus arrival and number.  Lastly, medical diagnostic equipment standards, such as brain and body imaging machines and mammography equipment, suggest that equipment have slip resistant surfaces, visual, audio, and/or tactile indicators for patient and clinician communications (e.g. patient needs assistance), and adjustable transfer heights.

Subsequent to the briefing, the ICT-Refresh standards were published in the Federal Register, announcing March 20, 2017, as the effective date and January 18, 2018, as the compliance deadline.  Following is a snapshot of the long anticipated ICT refresh:

* Addresses access for people with cognitive, language, and learning disabilities.
* Focus guidelines on functionality to keep up with changing technology as opposed to specific product type.
* Incorporating Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 by reference and applying Level A and Level AA Success Criteria and Conformance Requirements to websites, media, blog posts, social media sites, and to non-web electronic documents.
* Clarifies that software and operating systems must interoperate with assistive technology (such as screen magnification software and refreshable braille displays
* Support services, including help desks and automated technical support, must accommodate the communication needs of customers with disabilities and include information on access and compatibility features.
* **“Safe Harbor” for Legacy ICT – Grandfathers in certain ICT that is covered by current Section 508 rules.**

Section 508 only applies to federal agencies. However, Section 255 is implemented and enforced by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and applies to government and industry. Stay tuned for the FCC’s rulemaking announcement.  For a more in-depth summary of the briefing, new standards, and how this affects the lives of people with disabilities visit the links provided below.

#### Additional Information:

[Access Board Overview](https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-ict-refresh/overview-of-the-final-rule)

[<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-ict-refresh/overview-of-the-final-rule>]

[Federal Register: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Standards and Guidelines](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/18/2017-00395/information-and-communication-technology-ict-standards-and-guidelines)

[<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/18/2017-00395/information-and-communication-technology-ict-standards-and-guidelines>]

[Guidelines and Standards](https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards)

[<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards>]

 [The U.S. Access Board](http://www.access-board.gov)

[www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov)

# Wireless RERC Updates

**Wireless RERC Retains Seat on Disability Advisory Committee**

January 5, 2017 – Last month we reported on the FCC’s Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) meeting, closing out their initial 2014-2016 term. That meeting highlighted the DAC accomplishments and remaining accessibility issues that need addressing. Accordingc to the DAC Charter, “The mission of the DAC is to make recommendations to the Commission on its full range of disability access issues and to suggest ways to facilitate the participation of consumers with disabilities in proceedings before the Commission. This Committee is intended to provide an effective means for stakeholders with interests in this area to exchange ideas and develop recommendations for accessibility solutions, which will, in turn, enhance the Commission’s policymaking on disability access issues.” Work to achieve the mission will continue. In January, the FCC announced the appointment of Committee members for the DAC’s second two-year term (2017-2019). We are pleased that the Wireless RERC’s principal investigator, Helena Mitchell, were among the appointees. Many other industry and consumer stakeholders join in this effort including:

* Maggie Nygren, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities;
* Mark Richert, American Foundation for the Blind;
* Linda Vanderloop, AT&T;
* Christina Vogler, Gallaudet Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center;
* Scott Kelly, LG Electronics;
* Isidore Niyongabo, National Black Deaf Advocates;
* Zachary Bastian, The Arc;
* Timothy Powderly, Apple, Inc.; and
* Many more esteemed members.

The first meeting of the new term is scheduled for Tuesday, March 21, 2017. Watch it live at [www.fcc.gov/live](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Csalimah%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5C1HFK0XIC%5Cwww.fcc.gov%5Clive).

#### Additional Information:

[Public Notice](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-17-19A1.pdf)

[<https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-17-19A1.pdf>]

**Meet Wireless RERC Researchers at CSUN 2017**

Wireless RERC researchers, Salimah LaForce and John Morris, will present at the 2017 CSUN Assistive Technologies Conference in San Diego, February 27- March 4, 2017.  The papers/presentations include:

* [Smartphone Use and Activities by People with Disabilities: 2015-2016 Survey](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2017/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/6)

Thursday, March 2, 2017 - 4:20 PM PST

Analysis of the impact of demographic variables and disability type on smartphone use by adults with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities based on 2015-2016 national survey.

* [[Wireless RERC Policy Retrospective: Strategies to Effect Policy Change](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2017/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/263)](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2017/sessions/index.php/public/presentations/view/263)

Thursday, March 2, 2017 - 9:00 AM PST

Through the lens of Wireless RERC policy activities, this presentation outlines how to identify and develop policy assessments or appropriate policy responses to federal rulemakings.

**Envisioning Inclusive Futures Special section editorial Available Online**

The Wireless RERC’s *Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit* special section editorialhas been published online in the [Futures](http://www.journals.elsevier.com/futures/recent-articles) journal. The Summit focused on 1) socioeconomic and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy to mobile, digital technologies; and 2) the consequential futures for people with disabilities. [*Inclusive connected futures: an editorial introduction to the special section on “Envisioning Inclusive Futures”*](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716303627) introduces and summarizes select papers from the Summit and discusses:

* Key focal themes,
* Challenges and barriers to inclusivity,
* Perceptions and assumptions,
* Philosophical/ethical issues,
* Economic/policy,
* Technological factors, and
* Futures driven policy and technology design.

#### Additional Information:

[***Editorial introduction to special section on “Envisioning Inclusive Futures”***](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716303627)

[<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328716303627>]

# Publications/Reports

**Self-Driving Cars and Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities**

January 17, 2017 - The Ruderman Family Foundation and Securing America’s Future Energy (SAFE) commissioned a white paper entitled [*The Ruderman White Paper on Self-Driving Car Technologies: The Impact on People with Disabilities*](http://secureenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Self-Driving-Cars-The-Impact-on-People-with-Disabilities_FINAL.pdf).  Their findings estimate that autonomous vehicles could present two million employment opportunities to people with disabilities. Currently, transportation remains a key barrier for people with disabilities, and this new technology seeks to reduce this barrier. SAFE is an action-oriented, nonpartisan organization that works to reduce America’s dependence on oil.  Robbie Diamond, SAFE’s President and CEO stated, “In addition to the tremendous energy security benefits, …technology will improve quality of life and…access for millions of Americans with disabilities, from veterans to the elderly to people born with health challenges, which is why SAFE looks forward to continuing its work to ensure that AVs are deployed as soon and as safely as possible. My own daughter has mobility challenges, and I can personally understand how self-driving will change her life for the better.” Jay Ruderman, President of the Ruderman Family Foundation, adds, “Self-driving vehicles have the potential to significantly improve…general inclusion of people with disabilities…This is why, as developers move to create fully autonomous vehicles, it is imperative that the disability community be fully included and consulted in every step of developing and mainstreaming this new technology.” Self-driving automobiles could not only save on transportation expenses but also expand avenues for upward mobility for individuals with disabilities.

#### Additional Information:

[Press Release](http://secureenergy.org/press/disabilities/)

[<http://secureenergy.org/press/disabilities/>]

[The Ruderman White Paper on Self-Driving Car Technologies: The Impact on People with Disabilities](http://secureenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Self-Driving-Cars-The-Impact-on-People-with-Disabilities_FINAL.pdf)

[<http://secureenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Self-Driving-Cars-The-Impact-on-People-with-Disabilities_FINAL.pdf>]

# Other Items of Interest

**Makeathon Event: Hackers and People with Disabilities Participate**

January 25, 2017 - Ready, set, build!  At the Access Makeathon in Vancouver, British Columbia, creative minds came together for 48 hours from January 27th to 29th, 2017 to build open source assistive technologies. This initiative, presented by the Neil Squire Society, hopes to bring technologists and people with disabilities together to create working prototypes that can walk out the door after the event. The overarching goals are to address the need of the person with the disability, incorporate their input, and create access. Several collaborative partners join the Neil Squire Society in this effort, including Rick Hansen Foundation, SFU's School of Interactive Arts and Technology, TechSoup's NetSquared, TOM Global, UBC Women in Engineering, UBC Young Women in Engineering and Science, Centre for Digital Media, Vancouver Hack Space, Vancouver Foundation, and Google.org.

#### Additional Information:

[Press Release](http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/hackers-people-with-disabilities-participate-48-hour-access-makeathon-event-vancouver-2191120.htm)

[<http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/hackers-people-with-disabilities-participate-48-hour-access-makeathon-event-vancouver-2191120.htm>]

**ASL Phone Tree for People Who are Deaf**

January 25, 2017 - Sorenson Communications, LLC, a provider of Video Relay Service (VRS) communication for people who are deaf, introduced Sorenson Bridge. According to Sorenson, this is the first videophone tree designed specifically for users of American Sign Language (ASL).  Now, callers utilizing ASL can view and select from a phone tree menu shown in ASL.  Previously, a person who is deaf had to navigate audio phone trees through a sign language interpreter.  This process can be time-consuming and present challenges for the caller.  The new service affords more independence when placing a phone call.  The Indiana School for the Deaf (ISD) was one of the testing locations for Sorenson Bridge, utilizing customized menus to teach students how to navigate a phone tree.  Community partners are also benefiting from the technology. Stephanie Mathis, executive director of the Sego Lily Center for the Abused Deaf, commented, “Sorenson Bridge is key to providing immediate services for victims and survivors in crisis and dangerous situations. The phone tree feature empowers Deaf victims to choose whom to contact and which information they need to obtain safety…Sego Lily looks forward to continued partnership with Sorenson Communications in working together to keep our Deaf Community safe!"

#### Additional Information:

[Press Release](http://www.sorenson.com/press/press_releases#2017_1_25)

[<http://www.sorenson.com/press/press_releases#2017_1_25>]

# Upcoming Events

**webinar: Engaging Emergency Management Leadership to be Champions of Disability Integration and Inclusive Planning**

On February 9, 2017, at 2.30pm ET the Pacific ADA Center-ADA National Network/FEMA Webinar Series will convene the *FEMA Promising Practice: Engaging Emergency Management Leadership to be Champions of Disability Integration and Inclusive Planning*. Join Dawn Brantley, Sheltering Coordinator and Acting Director of External Affairs for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, to learn about whole community emergency management and how to advance disability inclusion and integration.  Dawn will share what Virginia is doing to ensure equal access to their emergency programs and planning. Registration is free.

#### Additional Information:

[Registration](http://www.adapresentations.org/registration.php)

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[http://www.adapresentations.org/registration.php]](http://www.adapresentations.org/registration.php%5D)

**32nd Annual 32nd CSUN Assistive Technology Conference**

The 32nd Annual CSUN Assistive Technologies Conference, also known as CSUN 2017, will convene in San Diego, CA from February 27 to March 4, 2017. 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/2017/sessions/)

[<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/2017/sessions/>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** January 2017



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 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 Synge Tyson [synge@cacp.gatech.edu], or Salimah LaForce [salimah@cacp.gatech.edu].

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