



PUBLIC NOTICE

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COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ENTITIES SELECTED FOR CERTIFICATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM FOR VERMONT AND NEBRASKA

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission’s (Commission) Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) has selected the Perkins School for the Blind (Perkins) for certification to participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) for the state of Vermont. In addition, CGB has selected the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (NATP) to participate in the NDBEDP for the state of Nebraska. Certification for both Perkins and NATP will become effective July 1, 2014.

Background. The NDBEDP is a program mandated by Section 105 of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) that provides funding of up to \$10 million annually for the distribution of communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind.¹ On April 4, 2011, the Commission adopted the *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, establishing the framework for a pilot program to fulfill this CVAA mandate.² In that *Order*, the Commission determined that it would certify one entity per state as eligible to receive support for the local distribution of equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind.³ Each certified entity has primary oversight and responsibility for compliance with program requirements for its state, but certified entities may fulfill their responsibilities either directly or through collaboration, partnership, or contract with other individuals or entities in-state or out-of-state, including other NDBEDP certified programs.⁴ Participation in the NDBEDP also entails the provision of related services, including local outreach, individual assessments and training, as well as equipment installation and maintenance, that may be needed to effectively provide a person who is deaf-blind with the equipment that he or she needs to access the communications services covered by the CVAA.⁵

¹ Pub. L. 111-260, 124 Stat. 2751 (2010); *see also* Pub. L. 111-265, 124 Stat. 2795 (2010) (technical corrections to the CVAA). Section 105 of the CVAA adds Section 719 to the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and is codified at 47 U.S.C. § 620. The CVAA allows the Commission to allocate these funds from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service Fund (TRS Fund).

² *See Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, Section 105, Relay Services for Deaf-Blind Individuals*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Report and Order, 26 FCC Rcd 5640 (2011) (*NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*). The NDBEDP pilot program will run for two years, with an option for the Commission to extend the program for another year. *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5649, ¶ 22.

³ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5646, ¶ 12.

⁴ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5647, ¶ 13.

⁵ *Id.*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5667-5676, ¶¶ 63-79. The NDBEDP pilot program will cover the reasonable costs of such related services. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 64.610(f)(2).

The Commission launched the NDBEDP on July 1, 2012.⁶ On July 2, 2012, the Commission announced that it had selected one entity for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to participate in the NDBEDP.⁷ CGB selected the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VCDHH) as the certified program to participate in the NDBEDP for Vermont and the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) as the certified program for the state of Nebraska.⁸

In March 2014, VCDHH notified the Commission that it would relinquish its certification to participate in the NDBEDP for Vermont, effective immediately.⁹ Also in March 2014, NCDHH informed the Commission that it was unable to continue participating in the NDBEDP and that it would relinquish its certification effective June 30, 2014.¹⁰ On April 21, 2014, CGB invited applications for certification to participate in the NDBEDP for the states of Vermont and Nebraska.¹¹ In response, the Commission received one application for the state of Vermont from Perkins and one application for the state of Nebraska from NATP. In accordance with the *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, CGB reviewed the applications for Perkins's and NATP's ability to meet the following qualifications, either directly or in coordination with other programs or entities:

- expertise in the field of deaf-blindness, including familiarity with the culture and etiquette of people who are deaf-blind, to ensure that equipment distribution and the provision of related services occurs in a manner that is relevant and useful to consumers who are deaf-blind;
- ability to communicate effectively with people who are deaf-blind (for training and other purposes), by among other things, using sign language, providing materials in Braille, ensuring that information made available online is accessible, and using other assistive technologies and methods to achieve effective communication;
- staffing and facilities sufficient to administer the program, including the ability to distribute equipment and provide related services to eligible individuals throughout the state, including those in remote areas;
- experience with the distribution of specialized customer premises equipment, especially to people who are deaf-blind;

⁶ *Commission Announces Launch of the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 7403 (CGB July 2, 2012).

⁷ *Commission Announces Entities Certified to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 7397 (CGB July 2, 2012).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Letter from William Gurney, President, Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to the Federal Communications Commission, Jacqueline Ellington, Attorney Advisor, Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (March 4, 2014).

¹⁰ Letter from John C. Wyvill, Executive Director, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to Jacqueline Ellington, Attorney Advisor, Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, FCC (March 31, 2014).

¹¹ *FCC Invites Applications for Certification to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program in the States of Vermont and Nebraska*, Public Notice, 29 FCC Rcd 3921 (CGB 2014).

- experience in training users on how to use the equipment and how to set up the equipment for its effective use; and
- familiarity with the telecommunications, Internet access, and advanced communications services that will be used with the distributed equipment.¹²

Vermont. CGB has determined that Perkins meets the Commission's qualifications for certification to operate the NDBEDP program in Vermont. Perkins, in partnership with the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults, has been operating NDBEDP programs in at least 12 other states since July 1, 2012,¹³ and in Nevada since July 1, 2013.¹⁴ In this and other aspects of its programs, Perkins has demonstrated extensive experience in providing accessible services in a manner that shows cultural awareness of the deaf-blind community and, as the NDBEDP certified program for Vermont, will work in partnership with local agencies to meet the needs of the deaf-blind population throughout Vermont. Certification for Perkins will continue for the duration of the NDBEDP pilot program,¹⁵ and be subject to Perkins's compliance with the Commission's program requirements.¹⁶

Nebraska. CGB has determined that NATP meets the Commission's qualifications for certification to operate the NDBEDP program in Nebraska. NATP has a long history of experience indirect service provision, including providing consumer assessments, making technology recommendations, and authorizing the purchase of assistive technology equipment for home or work modifications for individuals with various disabilities. As the NDBEDP certified program for the state of Nebraska, NATP will work with community partners and stakeholders that have experience and expertise addressing the needs of people who are deaf-blind, including the Nebraska Deaf-Blind Project, the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Perkins, to serve the needs of the deaf-blind community in Nebraska. Certification for NATP will continue for the duration of the NDBEDP pilot program¹⁷ and be subject to NATP's compliance with Commission's program requirements.¹⁸

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS: To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or call the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530 (voice), 202-418-0432 (TTY).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jackie Ellington, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, 202-418-1153, e-mail Jackie.Ellington@fcc.gov; or Rosaline Crawford, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, 202-418-2075, e-mail Rosaline.Crawford@fcc.gov.

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¹² See 47 C.F.R. § 64.610(b)(3).

¹³ *Commission Announces Entities Certified to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 27 FCC Rcd 7397 (CGB July 2, 2012).

¹⁴ *Commission Announces Entity Selected for Certification to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program for Nevada*, CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, 28 FCC Rcd 10223 (July 16, 2013).

¹⁵ The termination date for the NDBEDP pilot program is June 30, 2015.

¹⁶ *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5647, ¶ 14. See generally, 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.610(a)-(k).

¹⁷ As noted above, n. 15, *supra*, the pilot program will terminate on June 30, 2015.

¹⁸ *NDBEDP Pilot Program Order*, 26 FCC Rcd at 5647, ¶ 14. See generally, 47 C.F.R. §§ 64.610(a)-(k).