



PUBLIC NOTICE

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FCC ANNOUNCES ENTITY CERTIFIED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM FOR ILLINOIS

CG Docket No. 10-210

By this Public Notice, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) selects the Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center (Anixter Center), for certification to administer the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), also called “iCanConnect,” for the state of Illinois.

On June 10, 2019, CGB released a Public Notice inviting applications from entities interested in being certified to distribute equipment under the NDBEDP to eligible individuals in the state of Illinois.¹ In response to the Public Notice, CGB received two applications: one from the Anixter Center through its Chicago Hearing Society (CHS) division (Anixter Center/CHS), and one from the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP).² While both applicants demonstrate that they are qualified to administer the NDBEDP in Illinois, CGB has determined that the Anixter Center/CHS best meets the certification criteria contained in the Commission’s rules.³

The Anixter Center/CHS application materials indicate that, since 1916, CHS has worked with individuals in the state who are deaf-blind.⁴ CHS serves as an equipment distribution site and

¹ *FCC Invites Applications for Certification to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program for Kentucky and Illinois*, Public Notice, DA 19-543 (CGB June 10, 2019) (*Kentucky and Illinois Application Public Notice*) (summarizing the qualifications for obtaining certification to participate in the NDBEDP), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-19-543A1.pdf>. In 2017, CGB certified The Chicago Lighthouse Serving the Blind, Visually Impaired, Disabled and Veteran Communities (The Chicago Lighthouse) to distribute equipment under the NDBEDP for Illinois for a period of five years, from July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2022. See *Commission Announces Entities Certified to Participate in the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program for Nine Additional States*, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 5041 (CGB 2017) (including Illinois). The Chicago Lighthouse relinquished its certification effective June 30, 2019. Letter from Janet Szlyk, PhD, President and CEO, The Chicago Lighthouse, to Jacqueline Ellington, NDBEDP Administrator, Disability Rights Office, CGB, FCC (April 24, 2019).

² Application of Anixter Center/CHS (July 10, 2019); Application of IATP (July 8, 2019).

³ The Commission’s rules specify the following certification criteria: (1) “[e]xpertise in the field of deaf-blindness, including familiarity with the culture and etiquette of individuals who are deaf-blind”; (2) “[t]he ability to communicate effectively with individuals who are deaf-blind,” including by using assistive technologies; (3) administrative and financial management experience; (4) staffing that is “sufficient to administer the program, including the ability to distribute equipment and provide related services to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind throughout the state”; (5) “[e]xperience with the distribution of specialized customer premises equipment, especially to individuals who are deaf-blind”; (6) experience in training consumers how to set up and use equipment to access covered services; and (7) familiarity with covered services. 47 CFR § 64.6207(c)(1)-(7).

⁴ Application of Anixter Center/CHS at 1, 2, 6. CHS merged with the Anixter Center in 1997. *Id.* at 2.

demonstration center for the Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation.⁵ The Anixter Center's Vice President of Communication Access, who is also the Director of its CHS division, has expertise in the area of deaf-blindness and is a trained support service provider.⁶ CHS also has staff in place with considerable expertise in the communications technology used by individuals who are deaf-blind and has extensive personal and professional experience in serving the deaf-blind community.⁷ In addition, the Anixter Center provided evidence of its administrative and financial management experience and proficiency based on its management of a significant budget and longstanding fiscal operations.⁸ Finally, the Anixter Center/CHS application evidences strong backing from the community with four letters of support, including letters from the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities of the City of Chicago, and the Chicago Lighthouse, the exiting certified entity.⁹

IATP states that it has been promoting access to and funding for assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities in Illinois since 1989.¹⁰ IATP contracts with the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitative Services, to provide assistive technology assessments, and to purchase, deliver, set up, and train individuals with disabilities to use equipment purchased under the contracts.¹¹ When working with individuals who are deaf-blind, IATP hires tactile interpreters or uses the assistive technology that the individual is comfortable with to communicate.¹² IATP states that, if selected as the certified entity for Illinois, it will bring on staff that is familiar with the NDBEDP.¹³ IATP demonstrated its financial and administrative experience by its management of its Assistive Technology Act funding and other federal and state grant funding, and through its current service as the Fiscal Administrator for the National Association of Tech Act Programs.¹⁴ IATP provided one letter of support for its certification.¹⁵

Based on the information provided, we conclude that Anixter Center/CHS is more experienced, better prepared, and ready with the resources needed to serve NDBEDP applicants. In particular, CHS has more extensive experience in providing accessible services to the deaf-blind community, and several of its employees, individually and collectively, have a wealth of expertise and experience working with people who are deaf-blind and addressing their communication needs. Accordingly, CGB finds that the Anixter Center is better suited to administer the NDBEDP in Illinois at this time and certifies the Anixter Center to become the authorized entity to distribute equipment and provide related services under the NDBEDP in Illinois, effective August 22, 2019, through June 30, 2022.¹⁶

⁵ *Id.* at 2.

⁶ *Id.* at 3.

⁷ *Id.* at 4-6.

⁸ *Id.* at 3-4.

⁹ *Id.* at 8-12. Applicants may include letters of recommendation from members of the deaf-blind community in their state, experts, or others with direct knowledge of the applicants' capabilities and qualifications. *See Kentucky and Illinois Application Public Notice* at n.14.

¹⁰ Application of IATP at 2.

¹¹ *Id.* at 3.

¹² *Id.* at 4.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* at 2-3.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 8.

¹⁶ *See* 47 CFR § 64.6207(e) (providing that, when a certified program is replaced prior to the expiration of its certification period, the successor entity's certification will expire on the date that the replaced entity's certification would have expired).

The Anixter Center, through its CHS division, will have full responsibility for distributing equipment and providing related services in Illinois, including outreach, assessments, installation, and training, either directly or through collaboration, partnership, or contract with other individuals or entities in-state or out-of-state, including other NDBEDP certified programs.¹⁷ The Anixter Center must comply with the Commission's NDBEDP rules pertaining to its participation in this program,¹⁸ including transitional requirements to ensure the continuation of NDBEDP operations in Illinois if its certification is relinquished, terminated, or not renewed.¹⁹

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, Disability Rights Office, CGB, at 202-418-1153 or Jackie.Ellington@fcc.gov; or Rosaline Crawford, Disability Rights Office, CGB, at 202-418-2075 or Rosaline.Crawford@fcc.gov.

¹⁷ See 47 CFR § 64.6207.

¹⁸ 47 CFR §§ 64.6201-64.6219; *Implementation of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, Section 105, Relay Services for Deaf-Blind Individuals*, Report and Order, 31 FCC Rcd 9178 (2016) (*NDBEDP Permanent Program Order*).

¹⁹ *NDBEDP Permanent Program Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 9197, paras. 44-45; see also 47 CFR § 64.6207(j)(1)-(2).