**DA 22-541**

**Released: May 17, 2022**

**Commission ANNOUNCES ENTITIES CERTIFIED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE**

**NATIONAL DEAF-BLIND EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM**

**CG Docket No. 10-210**

 By this Public Notice, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB) of the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) certifies entities in 56 states and territories as administrators of the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP).[[1]](#footnote-3) These certifications shall become effective July 1, 2022.

*Background*. Under the NDBEDP, also known as “iCanConnect,” the Commission may provide up to $10 million annually from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Services Fund (TRS Fund) to support local programs that distribute equipment to eligible low-income individuals who are deaf-blind, so that these individuals can access telecommunications service, Internet access service, and advanced communications services.[[2]](#footnote-4) In accordance with the *NDBEDP Permanent Program Order*, CGB must certify one entity for each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as the sole entity for that jurisdiction authorized to receive reimbursement for NDBEDP activities from the TRS Fund.[[3]](#footnote-5)

On February 26, 2021, CGB announced that it would accept applications until June 30, 2021, from entities interested in receiving Commission certification to participate in the NDBEDP.[[4]](#footnote-6) In that Public Notice, CGB identified the eight qualifications for NDBEDP certification: expertise in the field of deaf-blindness, the ability to communicate effectively with people who are deaf-blind, sufficient staffing and facilities, experience with equipment distribution, experience training consumers on how to use the distributed equipment, familiarity with covered services, and administrative and financial management experience.[[5]](#footnote-7) The eighth qualification, which applies only to currently certified applicants seeking renewal of their certifications, requires demonstrated ability to provide equipment and related services in compliance with the Commission’s rules.[[6]](#footnote-8) In addition, applicants for certification must disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest.[[7]](#footnote-9)

CGB received a single application for 55 of the 56 jurisdictions that are the subject of this Public Notice, and these applicants, except for the District of Columbia, are currently certified to serve these jurisdictions. Following careful review of these applications, CGB is satisfied that each of these applicants meets the criteria to receive certification under the NDBEDP. As evidenced in their applications, these 55 entities have demonstrated extensive experience in providing accessible services in a manner that shows cultural awareness of the deaf-blind community and its communication needs; considerable expertise in the communications technology used by individuals who are deaf-blind; the administrative and financial management capability to manage state programs under the NDBEDP; sufficient staffing to manage these state programs; and, where applicable, a strong familiarity with the Commission’s rules governing this program.[[8]](#footnote-10) Furthermore, as the NDBEDP-certified programs for these jurisdictions, these entities have committed to work in partnership with local agencies to meet the needs of the deaf-blind population throughout these jurisdictions. Thus, these 55 entities are certified to participate in the NDBEDP, effective July 1, 2022, for a period of five years, with one exception.[[9]](#footnote-11) The currently certified entity for Alaska (ATLA) has not satisfied the requirement to submit its requisite program audit reports to the NDBEDP Administrator, and thus is granted certification, conditioned on the prerequisite that the audit requirement is satisfied.[[10]](#footnote-12)

For the state of Florida, CGB received two applications, one from Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults (HKNC) and the other from the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST). CGB has selected HKNC as the certified entity to operate the NDBEDP in Florida for the next five years, effective July 1, 2022. Although CGB has determined that both applicants meet the Commission’s qualifications for certification, HKNC’s demonstrated expertise in the field of deaf-blindness, including cultural awareness and etiquette; its extensive history of distributing specialized equipment to individuals who are deaf-blind; its expertise in training deaf-blind consumers on the use of such equipment; and its provision of services targeted specifically to deaf-blind individuals for more than 50 years, make HKNC more qualified to provide NDBEDP services in the state of Florida.

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|   | **State** | **NDBEDP Certified Programs** |
|  | Alabama | Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind |
|   | Alaska | Assistive Technology of Alaska[[11]](#footnote-13) |
|  | Arizona | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Arkansas | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | California | Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired |
|  | Colorado | Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind |
|  | Connecticut | Connecticut Tech Act Project |
|  | Delaware | University of Delaware – Center for Disabilities Studies |
|  | Florida | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | Georgia | Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing |
|  | Hawaii | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | Idaho | University of Idaho – Center on Disabilities and Human Development |
|  | Illinois | Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center |
|  | Indiana | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Iowa | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | Kansas | Assistive Technology for Kansans |
|  | Kentucky | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | Louisiana | Affiliated Blind of Louisiana Training Center |
|  | Maine | Disability Rights Maine |
|  | Maryland | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Massachusetts | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Michigan | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Minnesota | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Mississippi | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Missouri | Missouri Assistive Technology |
|  | Montana | Perkins School for the Blind  |
|  | Nebraska | Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership |
|  | Nevada | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | New Hampshire | Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Inc. |
|  | New Jersey | New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired  |
|  | New Mexico | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | New York | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | North Carolina | North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing |
|  | North Dakota | North Dakota Assistive Technology |
|  | Ohio | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Oklahoma | Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services |
|  | Oregon | Access Technologies, Inc.  |
|  | Pennsylvania | Institute on Disabilities – Temple University |
|  | Rhode Island | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | South Carolina | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | South Dakota | South Dakota Department of Human Services |
|  | Tennessee | Tennessee Public Utility Commission |
|  | Texas | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Utah | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Vermont | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Virginia | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Washington | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | West Virginia | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | Wisconsin | Wisconsin Department of Health Services |
|  | Wyoming | Wyoming Institute for Disabilities – University of Wyoming |
|  | **Other Jurisdictions** | **NDBEDP Certified Programs** |
|  | American Samoa | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | District of Columbia | TCS Access |
|  | Guam | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | Northern Mariana Islands | Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults |
|  | Puerto Rico | Perkins School for the Blind |
|  | U.S. Virgin Islands | Perkins School for the Blind |

Each entity selected will have full responsibility for distributing equipment and providing related services, including outreach, assessments, installation, and training, in their state(s), either directly or through collaboration, partnership, or contract with other individuals or entities in-state or out-of-state, including other NDBEDP certified programs.[[12]](#footnote-14) All certified programs must further comply with all of the Commission’s NDBEDP rules pertaining to their participation in this program, including requirements designed to ensure the continuation of NDBEDP operations in their jurisdictions if they relinquish or do not renew their certifications or otherwise exit the program.[[13]](#footnote-15)

**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).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Jackie Ellington, Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, 202-418-1153, e-mail Jackie.Ellington@fcc.gov.

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1. One of these entities, Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA), is granted certification pending its fulfillment of the NDBEDP’s audit requirement, as noted *infra.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
2. Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA), Pub. L. No. 111-260, 124 Stat. 2751; Pub. L. 111-265, 124 Stat. 2795 (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. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
3. *See 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, 9184, para. 9 (2016) (*NDBEDP Permanent Program Order*). *See also* 47 CFR § 64.6207. Collectively, the entities selected to participate in the NDBEDP are referred to herein as “certified programs” or “state programs.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
4. *FCC Announces Applications for National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program Certification Due June 30, 2021,* CG Docket No. 10-210, Public Notice, DA 21-241 (CGB Feb. 26, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
5. 47 CFR § 64.6207(c)(1)-(7). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
6. 47 CFR § 64.6207(c)(8). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
7. 47 CFR § 64.6207(d)(1); *see also NDBEDP Permanent Program Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 9190, paras. 23-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
8. 47 CFR § 64.6207(c)(8). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
9. 47 CFR § 64.6207(e). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
10. ATLA’s certification is granted subject to the condition that the audit reports required under section 64.6211(a)(7) of the rules are received by December 31, 2022 and subsequently approved by the NDBEDP Administrator. Upon satisfaction of this condition, ATLA’s certification will be converted to a full five year certification, which will expire on June 30, 2027. Failure to submit the required audit reports by the due date may affect the qualification of ATLA to continue as the NDBEDP certified entity for Alaska pursuant to section 64.6207(c) of the rules, and may lead to suspension or revocation of certification under section 64.6207(h) of the rules. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
11. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
12. 47 CFR § 64.6207. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
13. 47 CFR §§ 64.6201-64.6219; *see also NDBEDP Permanent Program Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 9197, paras. 44-45, 9278-87, Appendix D (setting out the NDBEDP permanent program rules). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)