

APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE
DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
June 23, 2015

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

TO THE

FCC DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 15, 2015

WHEREAS, objective and scientifically gathered data and information about consumer preferences, barriers and informational or educational needs for telecommunications and advanced communications products and services (“consumer needs and preferences”) should drive efforts to meet the needs of consumers with diverse abilities;

WHEREAS, Congress recognized the value of data about consumer preferences in the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (“CVAA”) by requiring that the FCC’s Emergency Access Advisory Committee (“EAAC”) conduct a survey of consumer needs and preferences to inform the EAAC’s recommendations;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the CVAA, the FCC must report to Congress every two years on the level of compliance with accessibility requirements for telecommunications and advanced communications, accessibility barriers with respect to new communications technologies, the effect of enforcement and recordkeeping requirements on the development and deployment of new communications technologies, and on the number, nature, and outcome of telecommunications and advanced communications accessibility complaints received by the FCC;

WHEREAS, the FCC’s Disability Advisory Committee believes that data about the preferences, barriers and information or educational needs of people with disabilities for telecommunications and advanced communications products and services can foster informed decisions by:

- industry in developing innovatively accessible products and services;
- consumer organizations in advocating for and informing their constituencies; and
- the FCC in regulating telecommunications and advanced communications products and services, and supporting consumer information;

WHEREAS, the scope of research needed to identify the preferences and barriers faced by people with disabilities should be gathered through objective and scientific research methodologies with guidance from interested stakeholders, including consumer representatives, academia, industry and policymakers;

WHEREAS, research methodologies about the consumer needs and preferences of people with disabilities should consider various factors that might contribute to the accessibility of telecommunications and advanced communications products and services, including, but not limited to, technological awareness, age, income, and education;

WHEREAS, the FCC’s Disability Advisory Committee believes the privacy of people with disabilities should be protected in gathering any data about consumer preferences or other data;

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RECOMMENDED, that the Commission should require its Bureaus and Offices and encourage academia, industry, federal/state/local agencies that fund and/or provide accessible equipment, consumer representative organizations and other entities to publicly share non-proprietary, privacy-protected data and reports about the consumer needs and preferences of people with disabilities gathered using recognized research methodologies and recommend best practices for educating and informing people with disabilities about accessible telecommunications and advanced communications products and services;

RECOMMENDED, once such data and reports have been gathered, that the Commission should seek input from interested stakeholders to identify the scope of research needed to reduce gaps in existing and available research about the telecommunications and advanced communications product and service preferences, barriers, and information or educational needs of people with disabilities; and

RECOMMENDED, that the Commission should update the Disability Advisory Committee on these efforts within one year.