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Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: CPUC Moves To Expand Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program: CPUC Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS RELEASE**

Media Contact: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

**CPUC MOVES TO EXPAND DEAF AND DISABLED
TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM**

SAN FRANCISCO, March 21, 2013 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today acted to expand its Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP) to enable persons with speech disabilities to qualify for speech generating devices provided under the program.

The DDTP provides assistive telecommunications equipment and services to individuals who are certified as having a hearing, speech, mobility, vision, or cognitive disability. As called for in Assembly Bill 136 (Beall, Statutes 2011, Chapter 404, effective January 1, 2012), the CPUC today opened a proceeding that will allow it to modify the DDTP program to institute rules and procedures that will govern the provision of speech generating devices to qualified individuals. The provision of speech generating devices will enable persons with speech disabilities to use telecommunications services, including 9-1-1 emergency calls.

The durable medical nature of these often custom devices, combined with the price, requires the CPUC to develop a unique set of rules, guidelines, and procedures for speech generating device distribution within the current DDTP framework.

The CPUC is considering a phased deployment of the speech generating devices, which would allow the CPUC to institute interim rules and procedures by the January 1, 2014, deadline imposed by the legislation, and final procedures at a later date that would benefit from the assessment of participant experience with the interim rules and procedures.

The goal of the first phase of speech generating device deployment is to develop an interim structure that will allow the CPUC to work directly with speech language pathologists. This phase will target providing speech generating devices to potential applicants who meet the following criteria:

- Have already been assessed for a speech generating device by a speech language pathologist-Certificate of Clinical Competence, licensed physician, or qualified state or federal agency;
- Already have a speech generating device prescription from a speech language pathologist-Certificate of Clinical Competence, licensed physician, or qualified state or federal agency; and,
- Only need gap or partial funding (i.e., have already secured funding sources and are seeking funding for the remaining balance).

In the second phase of the proceeding, the CPUC may consider: 1) expanding speech generating device distribution to those who have not yet been assessed for a speech generating device and/or do not qualify for funding from any other funding source; and 2) amending the scope of this proceeding to address concerns raised that were not otherwise considered in phase one.

Those interested in participating in this proceeding who are unfamiliar with the CPUC's procedures should contact the CPUC's Public Advisor's Office at (415) 703-2074 or (866) 849-8390 or TTY (866) 836-7825 or public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov.

The proposal voted on today is available at <http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M060/K491/60491796.PDF>.

For more information on the CPUC, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov.

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California Public Utilities Commission

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