

FACT SHEET
SB 09-144
Sen. Kester/Rep. Gagliardi
House Committee on Health and Human Services
March 23, 2009

TITLE: Concerning programs for the deaf and hard of hearing

PURPOSE: SB 09-144 addresses "technical clean-up" issues within the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH); it also adds duties that are directly related to the existing statutory mandates of the Commission.

This legislation seeks to:

- Update the statutory language of the CCDHH Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) to reflect changes in technology and allow for provision of newly available telecommunications equipment to better serve qualified applicants.
- Clarify the definition of the state court system to ensure that it is clear that the CCDHH Legal Auxiliary Services' obligations' are limited to courts within the state Judicial Branch.
- Authorize the CCDHH Legal Auxiliary Services to better meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing citizens and more efficiently serve the state court system through coordinated scheduling of auxiliary services (interpreting and real-time captioning).
- Meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing citizens who are attempting to access government services by creating a "system navigator/technical assistance" specialist under the CCDHH.
- Create a modest community focused mini-grant program, to be managed by the CCDHH, which will provide small grants to meet the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community through a competitive grant process.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

Substantial and on-going societal and communication barriers exist for 418,000 Colorado deaf and hard of hearing individuals who are seeking both basic and complex services. These problems exist at all level of government as well as in the private sector. The grant program and system navigator/technical assistance specialist will address barriers and facilitate a better understanding of the access and accommodation needs if deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

The CCDHH's primary funding source is the Disabled Telephone Users Fund (DTUF). This cash fund is generated through a modest assessment on telephone landlines. The Public Utilities Commission manages this fund, subject to authority granted by the General Assembly.