

ATEL Committee Meeting

Public Utilities Commission

February 12, 2009

9:30 AM

Attendees:

James Litvack, Pamela Kling, Kat Grygiel, Denise Corson, Laurie Duffy, Sean Gill, Nancy Shuster, Jim Lanni, Charles Brown, Steve Florio and Interpreter Carol Fay.

- 1. Minutes reviewed and accepted.**
- 2. Kat discussed the issues with State Funding. Kat discussed the State's plan to shift expenses from state revenue to the Global Medicaid Waiver. This process would use Medicaid funding to receive reimbursement for services for people in need. Thus, programs that are 100% state funded are being targeted for funding through the Waiver, as they do not have to match of state dollars to federal dollars. Within DHS, three programs are 100% state funded programs – ATEL is one of those programs. Kat stated that there still is a lot of unknown about the Global Medicaid Waiver, but we need to make adjustments in order to continue ATEL. Kat, James and Denise met last month to discuss how to adjust implementation of the program in order to sustain it. Kat stated that ATEL has already been cut for this fiscal year ending June 30, 2009. We do not know at this point what will be cut for next year, beginning July 1, 2009. Kat discussed that some expenses associated with contracting the program out could be**

eliminated by running ATEL out of ORS and thus focus on funding for equipment & coordination. ORS has proceeded to develop a Coordinator position and Denise could be hired as the consultant to fill this position. This plan will at least sustain the program until we find out what funding we will be given for the upcoming fiscal year. Right now there are still 2 sources, \$10,000 of the ATAP money that would be used to pay for some of Denise's salary and \$10,000 relay surcharge that is Legislatively air marked for ATEL.

3. Jim Lanni discussed the Relay surcharge that was amended 3 years ago: Title 39-section 39-1-42 which states that "the commission shall collect from the telecommunications service provider the amounts of the surcharge collected from their subscribers and remit to the department of human services an additional ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) annually commencing in fiscal year 2005 for the adaptive telephone equipment loan program and forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to the department of human services for the establishment of a new telephone access to the text of newspaper programs." Jim stated that the balance of the relay surcharge went to the state; therefore, we could try to petition to raise the 9 cent surcharge of landline phones or try to get a larger dollar amount legislatively air marked for ATEL. Kat was concerned that she didn't want to take from the text newspaper program, but Jim stated that it would come from the surplus. Jim strongly recommended the need for Legislators on our ATEL Committee. Denise stated that she has sent letters requested a representative from the House and Senate, but has never gotten a response back.

Laurie stated that she has a connection to Senator Gallo, and she supports Audiologists; Laurie stated she would contact her to see if she would be interested helping ATEL. Nancy suggested we write a letter to Patrick Lynch since he's probably running for Governor, that we need representation and ATEL would be a great cause to support since ATEL clients represent a large geriatric base.

4. Nancy stated that URI Speech and Hearing Clinic and geriatric programs might be able to help ATEL. Steve stated that the CDHH at Arizona and Washington have one stop services and that ATEL could be housed at the RICDHH. Kat stated that the reason ATEL is moving to ORS is save on administrative and overhead costs. ATEL services 3 different groups of disabilities: Hard of Hearing is largest with approximately 90% of customers, Deaf 5% and individuals with speech and muscular disabilities 5%.

5. The Committee discussed other ways to sustain ATEL. Maybe charging customers a fee. Jim also discussed that Steve had introduced a Bill that would put a relay surcharge cell phones, since there is a diminishment in the amount of landlines and ATEL could receive additional funding. Also, the ATEL Committee agreed that as a committee they are going to focus on getting Legislative support; although the representative might no attend we could still keep them in the loop thru minutes. The representative could help us get legislation approved that could possible Legislate a surcharge just for ATEL under the Universal Service Fund.

6. The ATEL Committee agreed that due to limited funding that the income qualifier will be effective again on July 1, 2009.

7. The date of next meeting: August 27, 2009 from 9AM-11AM.