

## **ATEL Committee Meeting**

### **Public Utilities Commission**

**December 6, 2012**

**9:00 AM**

#### **Attendees:**

**Denise Corson, James Litvack,, Pam Kling, Ellen Lenox Smith , Jim Lanni, Charles Brown, Harry Mancoll, Laurie Duffy, Jeanne Panarace, and CART Reporter.**

**1. Minutes were reviewed and accepted. Committee suggested sending out minutes a few days before meeting rather than the week after meeting, so they can review before meeting.**

**2. Revised application: suggestion to add a line for printed name, and if not applicant, relationship to applicant, also typo correction.**

**3. TEDPA membership: Denise stated that ATEL is now a member of TEDPA. The mission of TEDPA is to convene for the purpose of information exchange and to assist one another with the administration of specialized telecommunication equipment distribution programs for persons with disabilities. TEDPA conducts national surveys, and maintains data concerning states which have telecommunications equipment distribution programs. Data is maintained concerning, numbers served, disability populations served, equipment distributed, and distribution methodologies. This information is maintained largely for the use of TEDPA members, but a generalized version of the information may be released to the**

general public. Information released to the public may omit budgetary information, and shall omit any information which equipment vendors, manufacturers, or State governmental entities designate as proprietary.

4. TEDPA product review example: Denise printed a copy of the TEDPA State Membership Board conversations on the Clarity XLC 3.4. The messaging board allows stated to post question about concerns, new products, program direction, policy and many other topics that are pertinent to equipment distribution programs, and get feedback from other members that are experiencing the same issues. Other current messaging board conversations are outreach activities, income qualifiers, and wireless programs.

5. TIA-4953-2012- Amplified Telephone Measurement Procedures and Performance Requirements: The telephone Industry Association (TIA) developed a new standard (TIA-4953) for measuring telephone volume control, tone control, and ringer level control, to meet the needs of Mild, Moderate, and Severe hearing loss which involves a common starting point and use of a "Head and Torso Stimulator" (HATS); this device has an "artificial ear" which makes it useful for measuring what an actual person would heard using a telephone. Until recently, amplified telephone manufacturers provided a decibel rating on each phone it produced, but there were no standards in place to allow end users to know what they truly were receiving. One manufactures may say a phone is 40db, but another manufacturer may say the same phone is 50db. Unfortunately, manufactures are currently under no obligation to comply with this

measurement. However, State programs are using this information to .

6. AT&T's announcement last month about its plans to upgrade its network and replace its rural copper lines with wireless; considered the single most important development in telecom since passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Notes from Shutting Down the Phone System Gets Real: Implications of AT&T Upgrading to An All IP Network.

„« Rural Area: "Ninety-nine percent of existing customer locations." That loss of 1%, while small in absolute terms, potentially means many thousands of people losing access to basic phone service.

„« Price: Traditional phone service has minimum standards of quality enforceable at the local level and in most states a requirement to offer basic voice service at a regulated price. This combination of a requirement to serve everyone in the service territory, at a minimum standard and to offer a basic, affordable voice option is generally thought of as „Carrier of Last Resort“ (CoLR) regulations. If AT&T transition to IP-based networks and eliminates its CoLR obligations associated with its traditional telephone service

„« Hard of hearing and the visually impaired: Basic copper voice service has built-in capabilities for the deaf, and home equipment designed for the visually impaired.

„« Reliability: Copper is built to 99.999% reliability, the „five 9s“ of a public utility. Wireless and IP-based networks do not come anywhere close to that. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, New Yorkers without power for IP-based services or cell service went combing

their neighborhoods for payphones which continued to operate because they connect through independently powered copper networks.

„« ATEL Program definitely needs to continue to pursue wireless phones.

## **7. Open Discussion:**

„« Committee wanted to know what the income requirement for lifeline. Jim Lanni forwarded this information- The Lifeline program provides for a reduction in the basic monthly rate for local exchange telephone service. Residential telephone users who participate in the following programs are eligible for Lifeline.

### **1. Family Independence Program (FIP)**

#### **2. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

#### **3. Rhode Island Medical Assistance Program (MPA)**

#### **4. General Public Assistance (GPA)**

#### **5. Food Stamps (FDST)**

### **6. Rhode Island Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Elderly (RIPAE)**

### **7. Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

„« Denise stated that she now gives out a RI Special Needs Emergency Registry Form to all new clients, so that in the event they call 911 RIEMA and Dept. of Health can share information with local and state emergency responders, to help meet their needs in the event of an emergency. Also, she distributed refrigerator forms with such information as: medications, doctors, emergency contacts; Ketc to all the committee members. Ellen stated that she is

on the registry because the police came and checked on her during the hurricane; although she wasn't home another lady with a disability was at her home. Ellen also commented that she is having some problems pushing the buttons on her ATEL phone; Denise stated there is a new speakerphone coming out soon and she will be the first to have it. Jim Lanni stated that currently 73% of all 911 phone calls are from cell phones, and they all have GPS that can get you within 50 feet of the person in distress; however, not so good for apartments.

8. The time and date of next year's quarterly meetings are scheduled at 9AM- 11AM at the PUC: March 14th, June 13th, September 12th, and December 12th.