

**§1419-A. Specialized customer communications equipment for persons with disabilities**

**1. Money for specialized customer telecommunications equipment.**

[PL 2003, c. 553, Pt. A, §3 (RP).]

**2. Communications Equipment Fund.** There is established the Communications Equipment Fund to be used by the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. The fund is nonlapsing. The fund receives money transferred by the Public Utilities Commission from the universal service fund pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104. The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened may accept gifts or grants, including, but not limited to, federal grants, for the purposes of this section. Funds transferred from the universal service fund pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104 and all gifts and grants and authorized appropriations must be deposited in the Communications Equipment Fund and disbursed in accordance with this section. The Communications Equipment Fund may be used for purchase, lease, distribution, upgrading, installation, maintenance and repair of specialized customer communications equipment for deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened or speech-impaired persons and persons with disabilities, for training in the use of such equipment and for administrative costs associated with these uses of the fund. The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened may draw on the Communications Equipment Fund in accordance with the communications equipment plan required under subsection 3. [PL 2019, c. 343, Pt. UUU, §2 (AMD).]

**3. Communications equipment plan.** The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened shall develop a plan to make specialized customer communications equipment available to deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened or speech-impaired persons and persons with disabilities and to distribute money from the Communications Equipment Fund. The plan must be developed by the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened annually, not later than January 1st, in accordance with the rule-making procedures in Title 5, chapter 375. The plan must provide for the expenditure of money from the Communications Equipment Fund for the benefit of deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened or speech-impaired persons and persons with disabilities for the purchase, lease, distribution, upgrading, installation, maintenance and repair of specialized customer communications equipment capable of serving their needs and may provide for expenditures for training in the use of such equipment. Persons who are profoundly deaf or speech-impaired or who have a disability so that they are unable to use the telephone for expressive or receptive communications, as verified by a written report from an otologist, an audiologist or a physician, are eligible for assistance from the Communications Equipment Fund. The plan must ensure that persons with disabilities have access to appropriate specialized customer communications equipment to meet their individual needs. The plan must include specific criteria that govern the priorities assigned to various persons who need this equipment. The criteria must take into account household income, degree of impairment, need for emergency communications, living arrangements and other factors determined relevant by the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened. In developing the criteria, the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened shall consult with the commission and advisory councils representing the interests of persons with disabilities.

[PL 2009, c. 174, §21 (AMD).]

**4. Specialized customer communications equipment needs in public school system.** The Department of Education, in consultation with the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf and advocacy groups for deaf, hard-of-hearing and late-deafened persons and for the information technology interests of consumers, shall conduct an annual survey of all public schools in the State for the purpose of assessing the need for specialized customer communications equipment in the school system and report its findings to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters. The report must include: the number of deaf, hard-of-hearing and late-deafened students and their needs for specialized customer

communications equipment; the availability of specialized customer communications equipment; the number of requests for specialized customer communications equipment; and the status of training for teachers and other school personnel in the use of specialized customer communications equipment.  
[PL 2009, c. 174, §21 (AMD).]

**5. Assessment on telecommunications carriers.**

[PL 2003, c. 553, Pt. A, §3 (RP).]

**6. Emergency alert telecommunications service.**

[PL 2019, c. 343, Pt. UUU, §3 (RP).]

**SECTION HISTORY**

PL 1995, c. 560, §F13 (NEW). PL 1997, c. 751, §A4 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 227, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 553, §A3 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 279, §16 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 336, §§1,2 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 224, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 174, §21 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 343, Pt. UUU, §§2, 3 (AMD).

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