

## SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES NPRM

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CC Docket No. 02-6, FCC 02-8

### Training in Telephone Access Issues

The education of people with disabilities on various telephone access options must be required. Schools and libraries coming under this NPRM must provide training and information to their staff, students and patrons about all FCC required disability telephone services and equipment available in their state.

People with hearing, speech and other disabilities are among the poorest and most isolated in our population and are often deprived of information about telecommunications access which could improve their daily lives.

To help remedy that situation, the staff, students, and patrons of the libraries and schools affected by this NPRM should receive training to teach them to use these telephone services and equipment available to people with disabilities. Schools and libraries must also include presentations on STS/TRS in their outreach to staff and students.

### Other Accessible Technologies

This NPRM also specifically asks if applicants for universal service discounts should be required to certify that they comply with the ADA. HHS Secretary Thompson wrote in his December 2001 letter to President Bush "Delivering on the Promise: Preliminary Report" that the "The New Freedom Initiative promises to level the playing field by ensuring that Americans with disabilities have affordable access to the best technologies of today and that even better technologies are available in the future."

Secretary Thompson promised to work with federal agencies to "coordinate and implement a plan that improves the availability, affordability, and accessibility of technology in the school, home, and workplace for youth and adults with significant disabilities."

Requiring that recipients of universal service discounts (i.e. taxpayer dollars) provide accessible technology in school and public libraries is in accordance with Secretary Thompson's promise to the President, and complies with the spirit of the ADA law. Not only will it enhance the education of students with disabilities, it will widen opportunities for employees with disabilities who work in schools and libraries. Enforcement could be verified by requiring certification from the school superintendents, municipal library officials, and/or architects that accessible technologies were indeed provided with the funding.

Public notification in local media of their compliance should also be required, thereby making local people with disabilities aware of the new technological accessibility in their area and, consequently, also setting up a public watchdog system of compliance. To continue to award technology funding without requiring that services purchased with the funds be accessible to people with disabilities is in direct conflict with the President's New Freedom Initiative, Secretary Thompson's stated goals, and the spirit of the ADA law.

### Conclusion

Libraries and schools are permanent fixtures in the community, and as such should take all reasonable pro-active steps to ensure that staff, students and patron receive information and training on these issues.

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