

**Nickalus Holmes**

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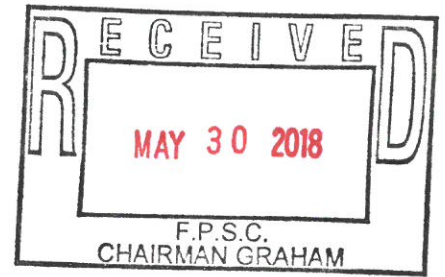
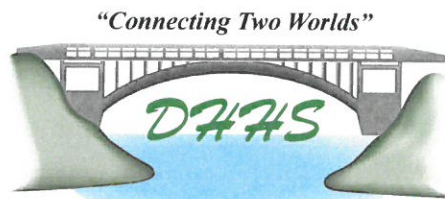
**From:** Betty Leland  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 31, 2018 1:40 PM  
**To:** Commissioner Correspondence  
**Subject:** Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. Budget  
**Attachments:** Letter from Richard Kottler, TASA Member.pdf; Letter to Richard Kottler.pdf

Good afternoon:

Please place the attached letters in docket correspondence consumers and their representatives in #20180099-TP.

Thanks.

*Betty Leland, Executive Assistant to  
Chairman Art Graham  
Florida Public Service Commission  
[bleland@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:bleland@psc.state.fl.us)  
(850) 413-6024*



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May 24, 2018

Florida Public Service Commission  
Commissioner Art Graham, Chairperson  
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Dear Commissioner Graham,

I currently serve as a member of the TASA Advisory Committee representing the Deaf Service Center Association of Florida and have previously served in this capacity on and off for the last two decades. I have a few concerns after the last TASA Advisory Meeting on April 18. Frankly, I do not feel confident that the PSC staff assigned to the committee is passing on the concerns of the members. Please don't get me wrong, I do not think this is intentional or malicious. I think the problem is that the members of the committee, as opposed to PSC staff, have daily interaction with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community. And as such, we are on the frontlines so to speak, and simply have a better understanding of the issues.

My first concern is the financial restrictions being placed on Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI) The budget presented primarily continues business as usual with the equipment distribution program and the relay. However, the cost of doing business with the relay provider has increased. FTRI has proposed to cover this deficit with funds from their reserve. My first question is why isn't the surcharge simply increased one cent? Staff's response was that there would be a surplus and the discussion was ended. The reserves that FTRI has built up over the years has come from exactly that and has been intended to be a resource for if and when the Federal Government switches the financial responsibility of Video Relay Interpreting to the states. My major concern is that FTRI will be told to reduce their equipment distribution budget as opposed to using the reserves. The current equipment distribution budget is "bare bones" as is and from my point of view, woefully inadequate in the area of outreach and advertising. I can't see FTRI cutting anything and continuing to provide the service the legislation intended.



Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services of the Treasure Coast, Inc.

1016 NE Jensen Beach Blvd. • Jensen Beach, FL 34957

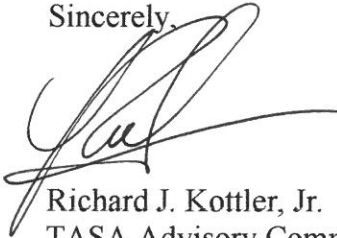
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May 24, 2018  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Commissioner Art Graham, Chairperson  
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My second concern is client dissatisfaction reporting by Sprint with respect to CapTel. This is a problem characteristic of this service provider. Years ago when the primary form of electronic communication for the deaf was TTYs in conjunction with the traditional relay service, Sprint only reported "unresolved issues". Even issues that were not fixed but simply acknowledged were considered resolved. Now with the CapTel, we're receiving reports of 95+% customer satisfaction. The problem is that there is no neutral source for which people can register a complaint. I have clients who constantly complain about the service and I myself have used it and found it to be unsatisfactory. How does one register a complaint if their only means of communication is the CapTel system? It is somewhat of a fox guarding the hen house situation.

Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Kottler, Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard J. Kottler, Jr.  
TASA Advisory Committee Member,  
Executive Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Treasure Coast, Inc.

CC: Margaret Brown, DSCA President  
Tom McCabe, FTRI Board President



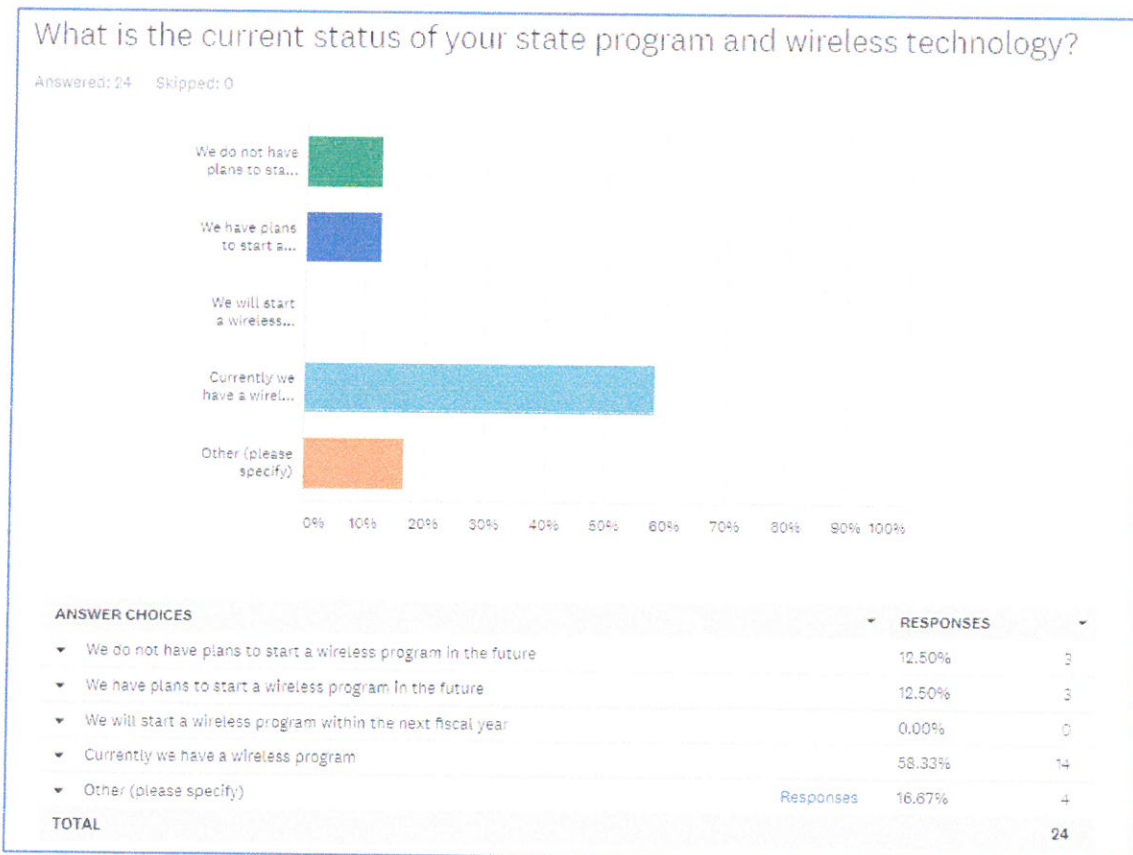
## TEDPA Wireless State Program Survey 2018

Survey Closed on March 27, 2018

The survey was sent out via BaseCamp to all TEDPA members. Twenty-four people responded, representing the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. While there were twenty-four respondents, they may not have answered every question and some questions allowed respondents to pick multiple answers.

### Number of State EDPs with Wireless Program

In response to the question about which state programs currently have wireless technology as part of their state programs, more than half (58.33%) of respondents reported that they currently have a wireless program with an additional 16.67% stating that they plan to start a wireless program in the future. One respondent is currently waiting legislation passage while another respondent said they offer a tablet program, WIFI only.



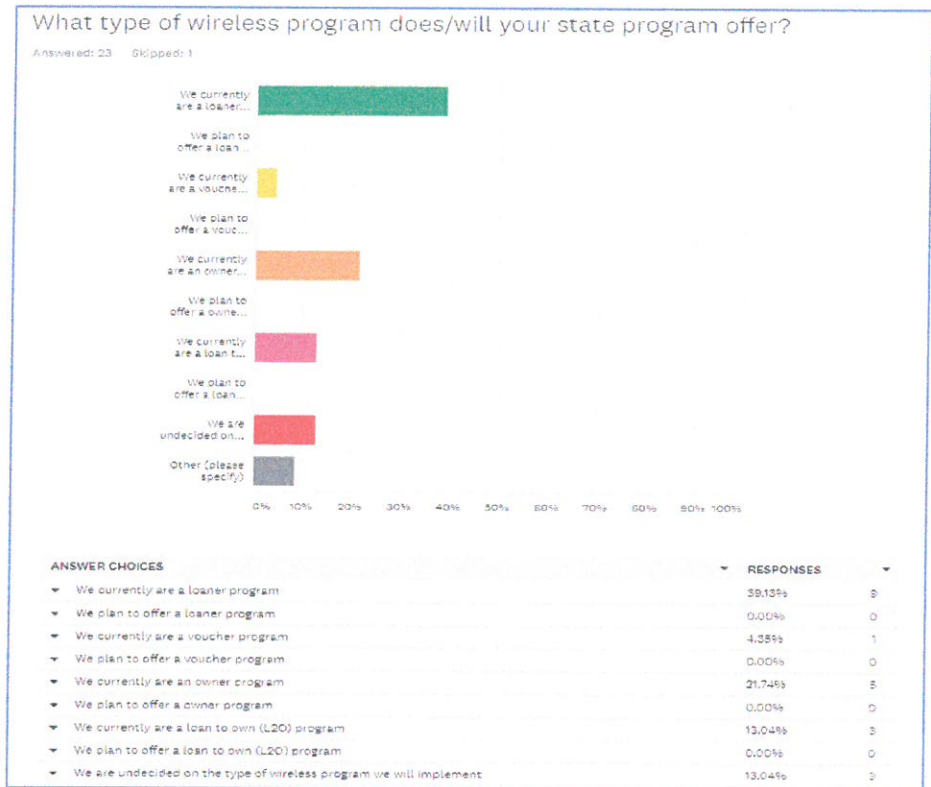
Of those 14 respondents that stated they currently have a wireless program, 9 of them indicated that they began the wireless program within the last three years (2016, 2017, 2018).

### Types of Wireless Program

The responses as far as what type of wireless program the state EDPs currently offer or plan to offer in the future is mixed.

Three (3) of the larger response groups are

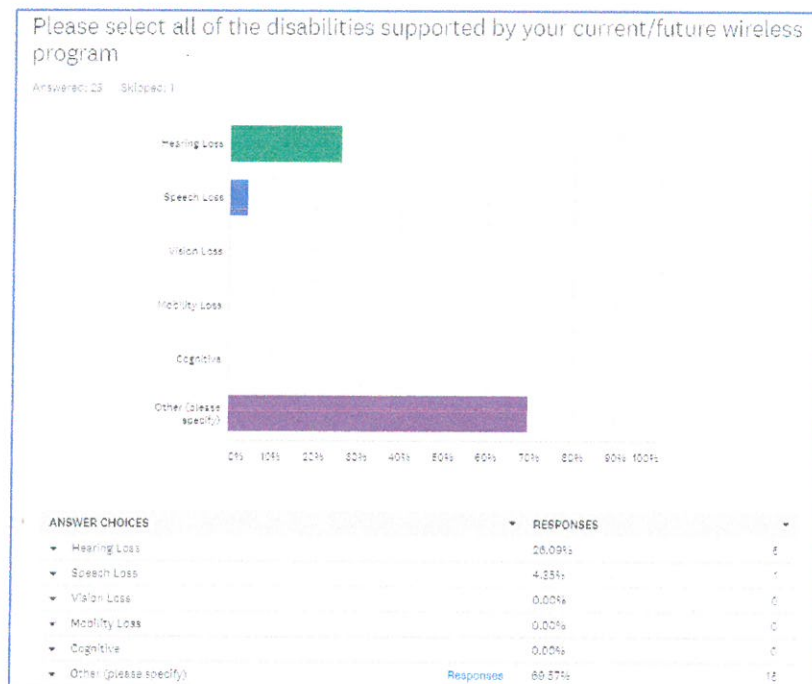
- loaner program (9)
- owner program (5)
- three (3) EDPs are what is known as a loan-to-own (L2O) program



### Type of Eligibility Groups Supported

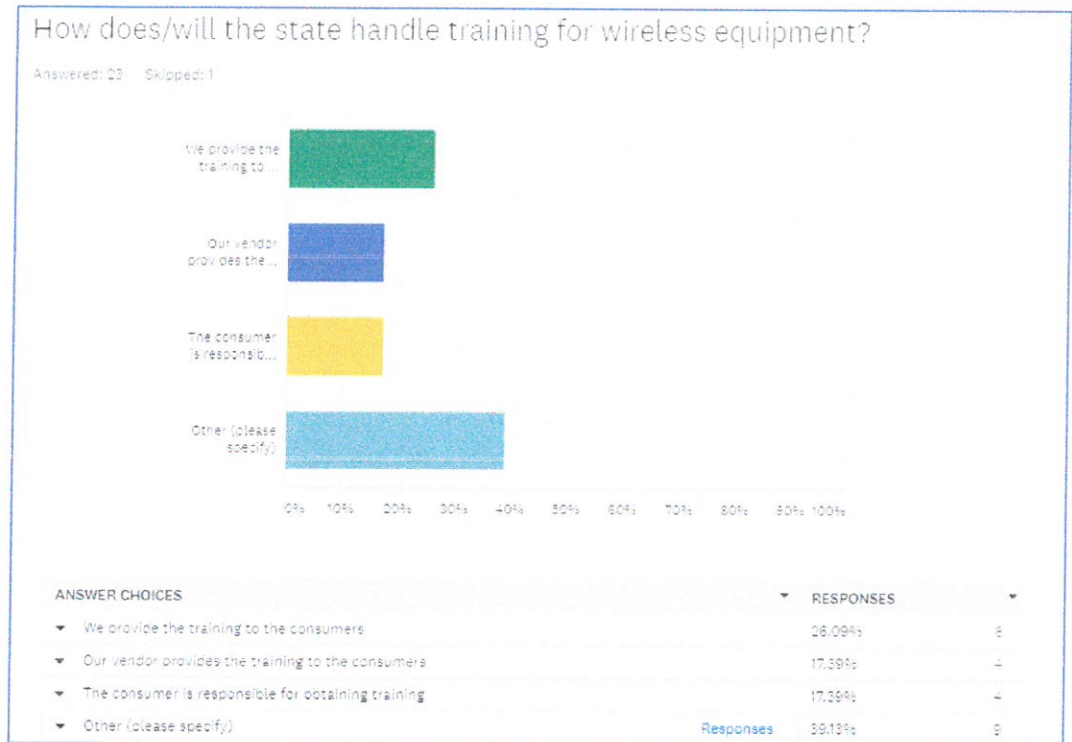
In addition to hearing loss, many of the state agencies provide services to consumers with additional disabilities. The following groups to select from were Hearing Loss, Speech Loss, Vision Loss, Mobility Loss, Cognitive and Other. All the states that responded indicated that their wireless program does or will serve people with hearing loss and speech loss.

This survey question did not allow for multiple selections and therefore states that selected *Other* (69.57%) indicated they served "All of the above".



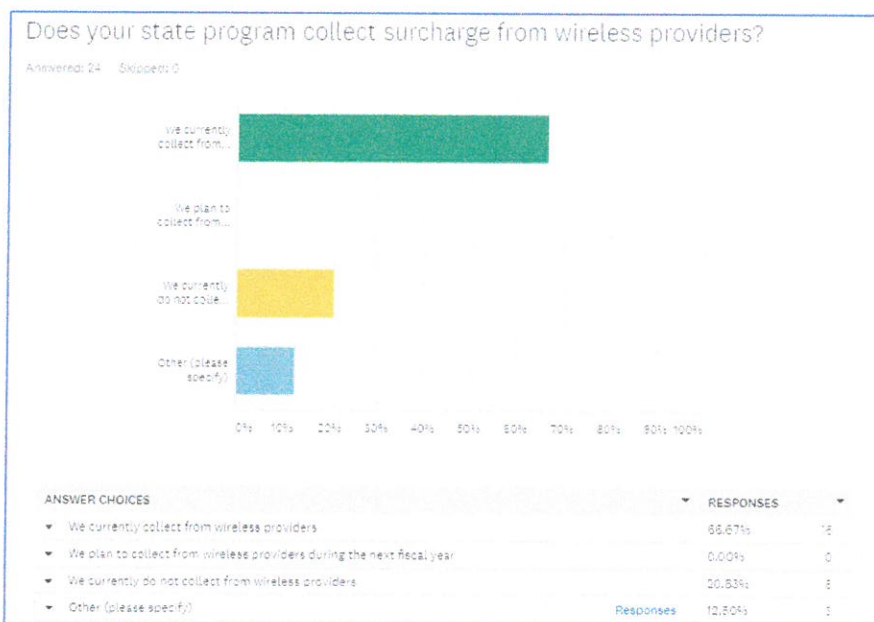
### Training for Wireless Equipment

Just over a quarter (26.09%) of respondents indicated that they do or will provide the training to consumers directly as opposed to having vendors provide the training or the consumers directly responsible for obtaining training themselves. Of those who answered *Other* (39.13%) they indicated that they were undecided, had not yet determined how they would handle the training on wireless equipment, or N/A. Two states indicated that the vendor provides support to the consumers using different communication methods. Support was not defined.



### Wireless Provider Surcharge Collection

Almost three quarters of the state agencies that responded (66.67%) report that their state collects funds from wireless companies with one additional state that notated in *Other* they collect from wireless but not prepaid wireless.



One respondent indicated in *Other* that they do not collect from surcharge and that their budget is funded by the Governor's budget.

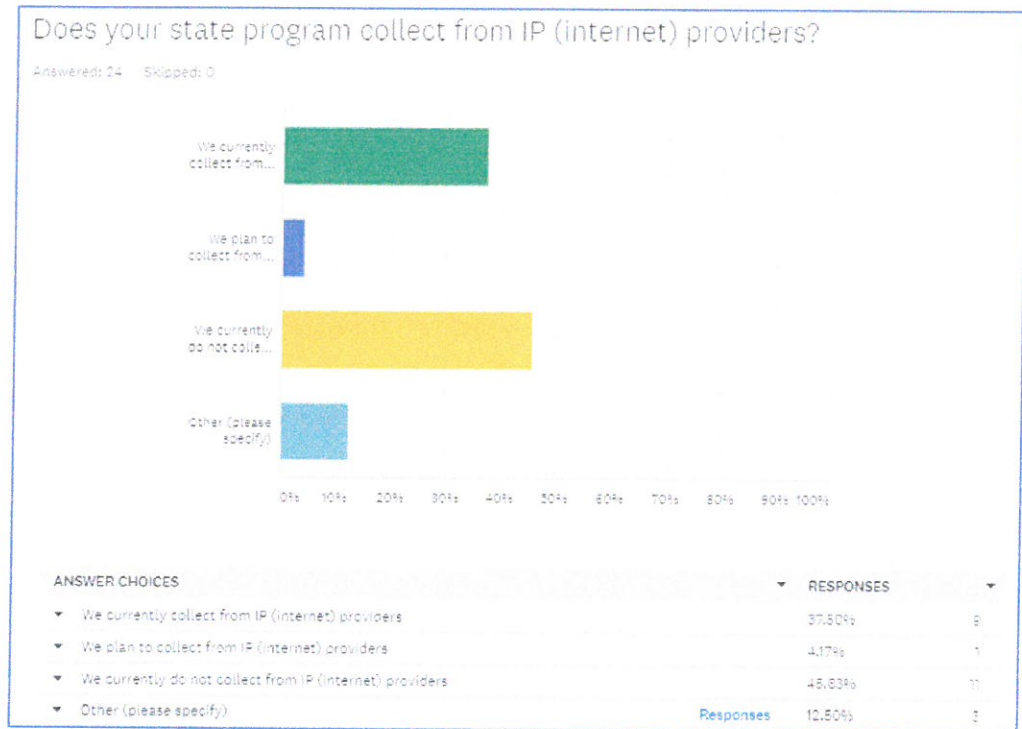
Five (5) respondents indicated that they do not collect from wireless providers with one respondent notating N/A.

### IP (Internet) Providers Surcharge Collection

Almost half of the state agencies that responded report that their state collects funds from IP providers with two additional states which notated in *Other* they collect from IP providers pushing the total from 9 to 11 (45.83%).

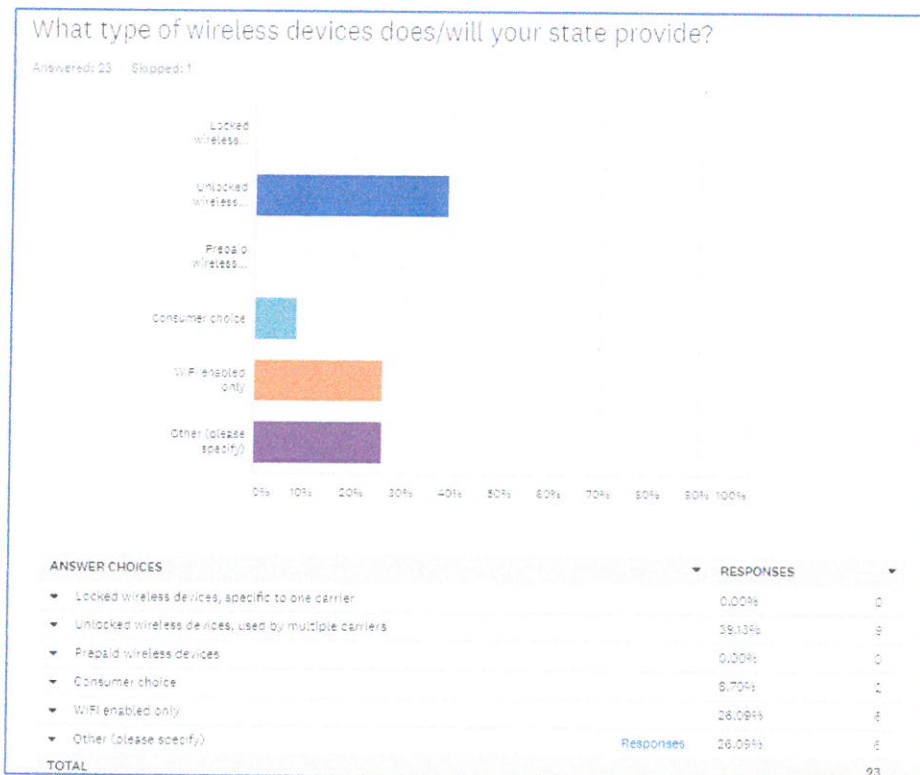
One respondent indicated in *Other* that they do not collect from IP, pushing that total from 11 to 12.

One (1) respondent has plans to collect from IP providers in the future.



### Type of Wireless Devices

Of the states who responded to what type of wireless device their state currently does or will provide, none (0) said that the devices are specifically locked to a specific carrier nor do they offer prepaid devices. A large percentage, 43.48% (9 + 1 in *Other*) said that they provide unlocked devices that can be used by multiple carriers. Of those who selected *Other* in response to this question, two were N/A with three (3) undecided on the type of device but most likely to be unlocked.



### ***Specific Wireless Devices Offered***

Most respondents indicated that they currently offer or would be offering some form of Smartphone, whether it be Apple, Android or Jitterbug products. Tablets appears to be the most prominent device offered due to ease of use and larger keyboard availability. Two (2) states are undecided of devices to offer while two (2) respondents selected N/A.

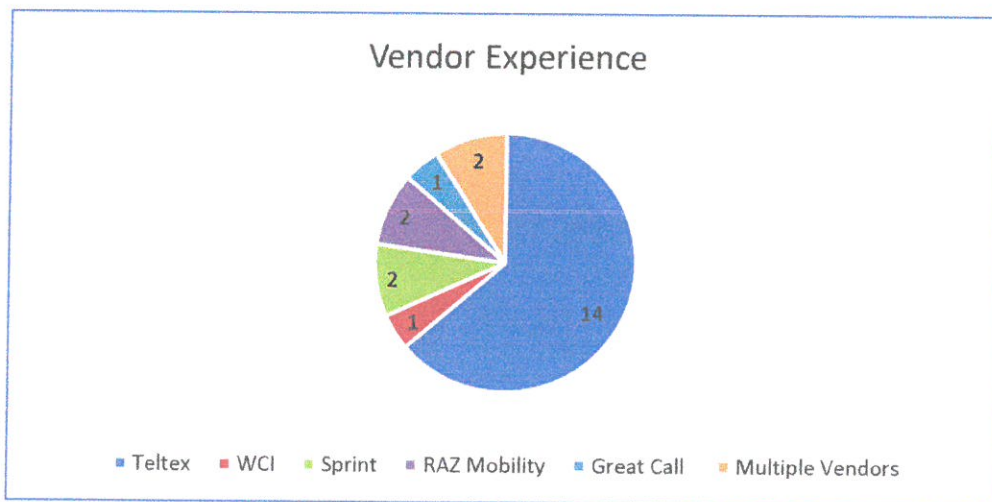


### ***Return Plan for Wireless Devices***

A quarter of the responses to the question “*What current/future plan is in place for returned wireless devices?*” stated they are undecided regarding a plan for returned devices. The majority respondents stated the return devices will be refurbished and redistributed. Three programs do not accept returns of device. Four indicated the question was not applicable (N/A) to them.

### ***Vendor Experience***

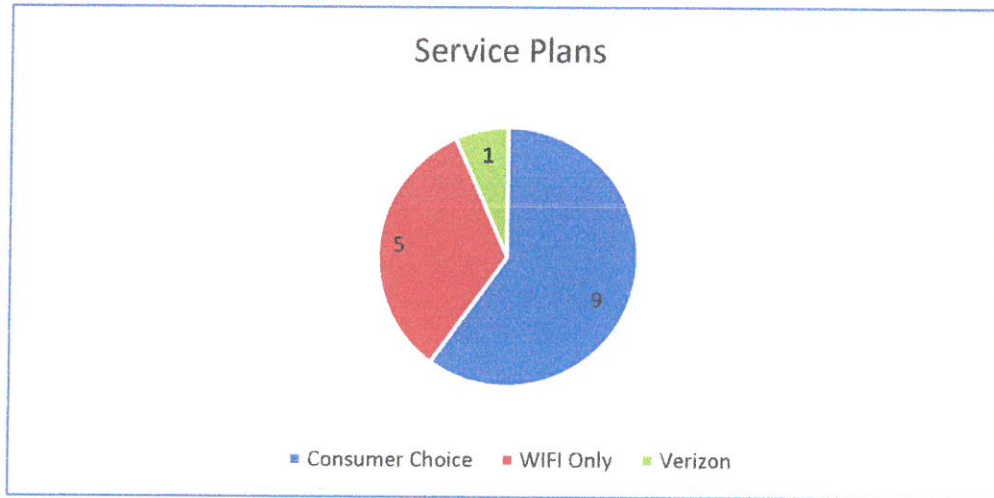
The vendor that most respondents reporting working with is Teltex (<https://teltex.com/iaccessibility-powered-by-teltex/>). See chart below for the breakdown of different vendors.





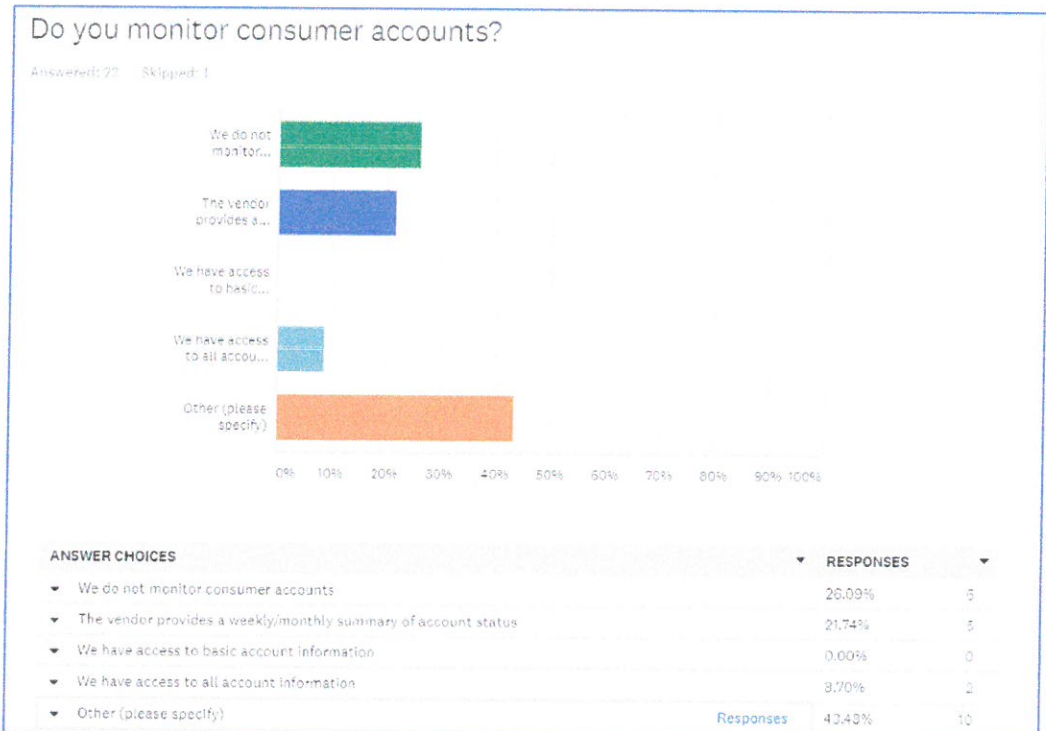
### Service Plans

Largely the state programs reported that consumers are responsible for their own service plans and can choose their own provider. Five (5) respondents indicated devices offered are WIFI enabled only. One respondent indicated Verizon as the plan provider for a specific device.



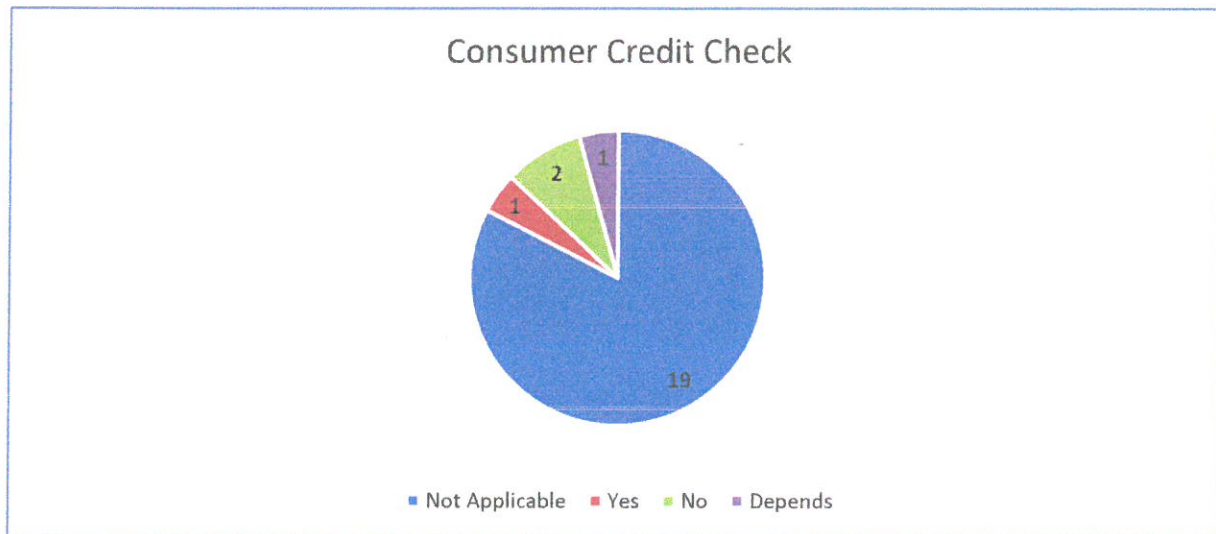
### Monitor Consumer Account

Responses varied on whether programs monitor consumer accounts. Of those who monitor consumer accounts, they indicated that they have access to the information as needed (2) and/or receive regular reports (5). Seven programs indicated they do not monitor consumer accounts at all. Five were N/A and two were undecided.



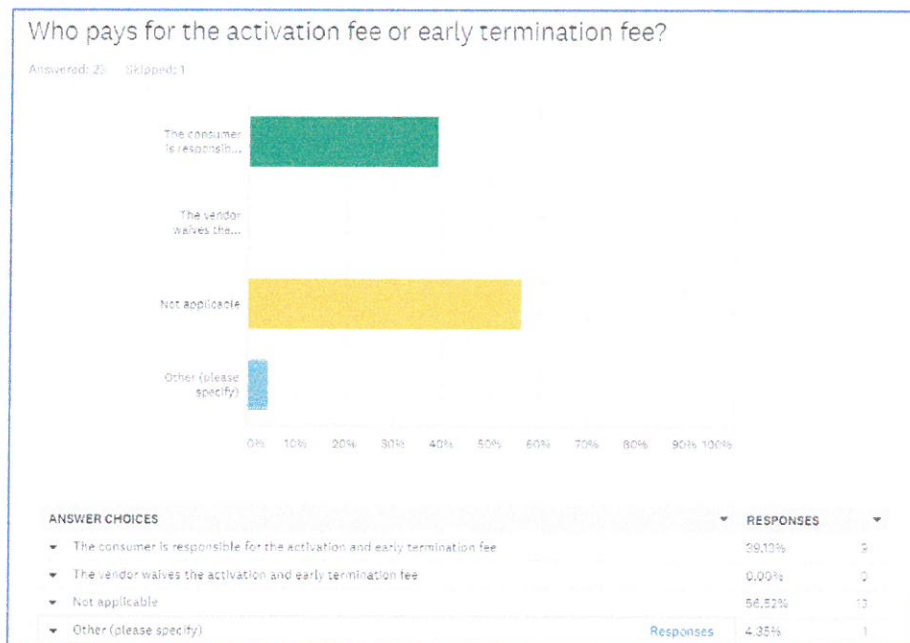
### Consumer Credit Check for Service

When it comes to requiring consumers to pass a vendor credit check for service, over 78% replied *Not Applicable*. Only one (1) vendor (Sprint) requires a credit check on its service. For one state program the vendor waives the credit check. One (1) respondent indicated that it depends on the vendor.



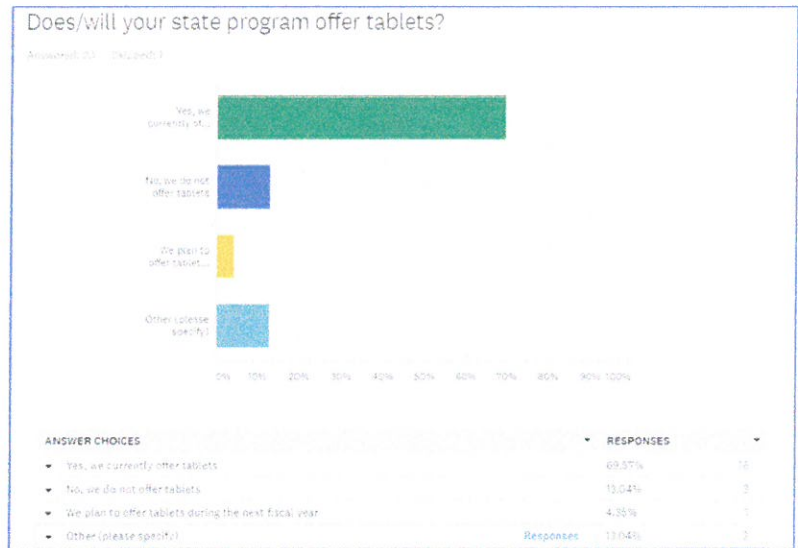
### Activation / Termination Fee

In no case was a program responsible for the activation and/or early termination fees. Nearly 40% of the respondents indicated that the consumer was responsible for both the activation and the early termination fee. Almost 60% indicated that the fees were *Not Applicable* to their program and of no concern.



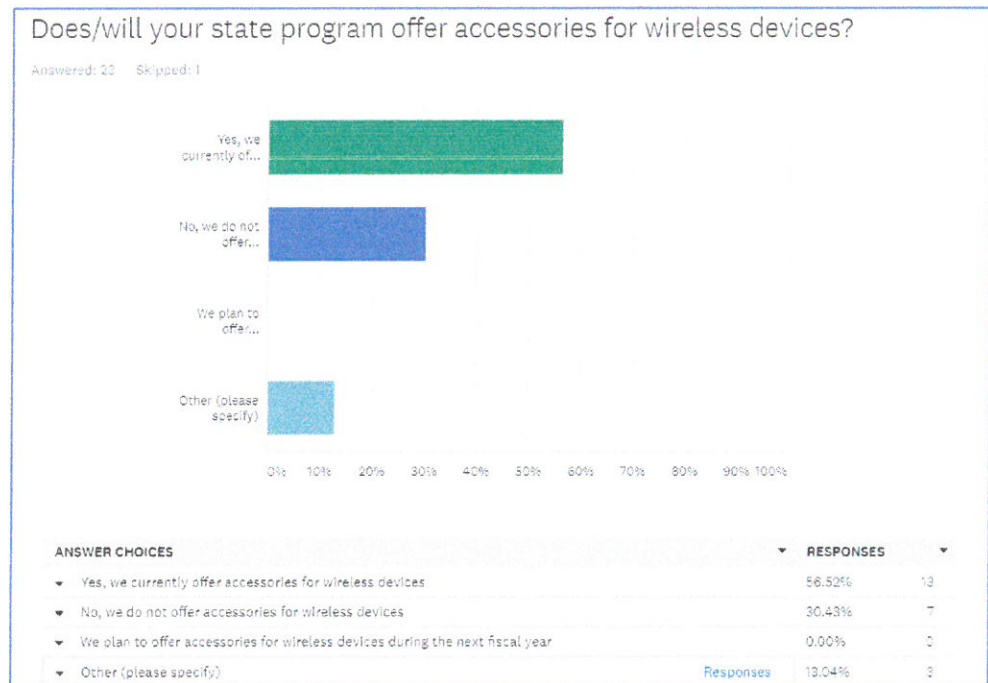
## Tablets

A new question specifically asked whether state programs offer tablets as a device in their program. A majority (69.57%) of the respondents stated they currently offer tablets. One program plans to offer tablets during the next fiscal year and two are undecided. Tablets are enabled using WIFI.



## Accessories for Wireless Devices

Another new question asked is whether states offer accessories for wireless devices. Fifty-six percent stated they currently offer accessories for wireless devices. Of the *Other* respondents, two programs are considering but undecided at time of survey and one is N/A.

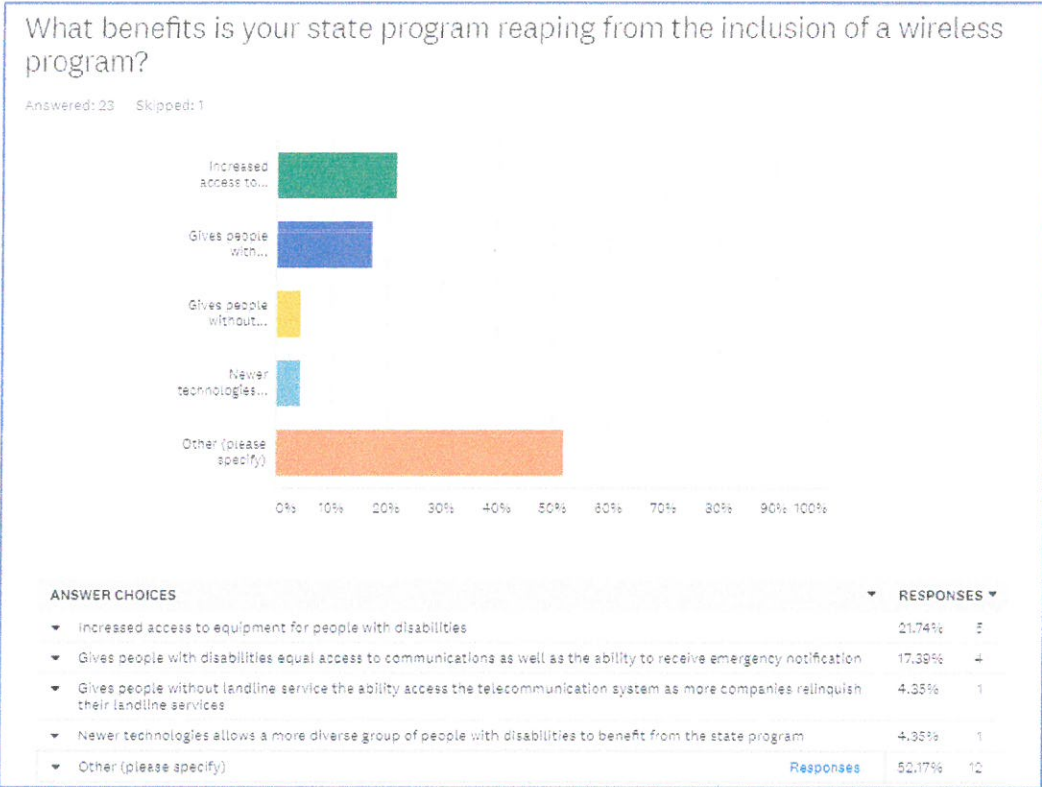


During the past few TEDPA conferences, attendees expressed to equipment vendors the need for more accessory products to assist individuals with hearing loss using wireless devices. Below are some accessories available through state programs.



### Benefits Reaped with Inclusion of Wireless in Program

Respondents were also asked about what benefits they were reaping from the inclusion of a wireless program. One of the major benefits that were raised was an increase in the access that people would have to equipment. Having the wireless program gives customers equal access to communications as well as the ability to use the equipment to get notified of emergency situations or to let others know when they needed assistance. It also gives them an increased amount of choice to be able to select equipment that works to meet their needs. In addition to access, it was raised that the program is a real benefit to those that don't have landline service at all and couldn't benefit from other phones in the state programs. More people are dropping their landline service switching to wireless services. Now days wireless is more common and, in some instances, can be a less expensive option when utilizing family plans, etc. Even though family plans are popular especially with families that act as a primary care-giver, wireless can be challenging for individuals with hearing loss. Wireless accessories present an ideal solution for this type situation.



Another important benefit was the appeal to a wider and more diverse audience. Younger people who may not be interested in standard phones or consumers who are Deaf and would prefer to use video technologies can now do so with the newer wireless technologies that are available.

Most respondents who selected *Other* stated "All of Above" as their answer to this question and four (4) indicated N/A.

### Conclusion

As technology continues to evolve state programs do their best to keep pace by offering the newest and latest devices that allows persons with hearing loss, as well as other disability groups to broadly access the telecommunications system. Five years has passed since the publication of TEDPA's 2013 Wireless Survey results and much has transpired with state EDPs. This 2018 TEDPA Wireless Survey reflects some of the changes and modifications based on the respondent's answers. This survey was designed to be used as a resource for state EDPs contemplating the idea of incorporating wireless as well as those wishing to make additional modifications to their existing program.

STATE OF FLORIDA

ART GRAHAM  
CHAIRMAN



Capital Circle Office Center  
2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850  
(850) 413-6040

Public Service Commission

May 31, 2018

Mr. Richard J. Kottler, Jr.  
TASA Advisory Committee Member  
Executive Director  
DHHS of the Treasure Coast, Inc.  
1016 NE Jensen Beach Blvd.  
Jensen Beach, Florida 34957

Dear Mr. Kottler:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. budget. I have forwarded it to be included in docket file 20180099-TF so that your concerns about the FTRI budget, and particularly equipment distribution funding, can be fully considered when it comes before the Commission, currently anticipated for July.

We appreciate your input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James A. Varian".

James A. Varian  
Chief Advisor to Chairman Art Graham

JV/bl

cc: Mr. Cayce Hinton, Director  
Industry Development & Market Analysis