

Notice Regarding Eligibility of Personal Computing Devices

Effective: May 10, 2022

To: All Vendors Participating in the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP).

From: Steven G Stovall – NSTEP Administrator.

RE: NSTEP Eligibility of Personal Computing Devices.

I. Commission’s Policy Statement On Personal Computing Devices:

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (Commission) periodically receives requests for financial assistance in providing certain wireless personal computing devices such as iPads/tablets/other personal computing devices in the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP). **This notice serves to clarify inconsistent treatment between eligible speech generating devices (SGDs) and iPads/tablets/other personal computing devices reconfigured as SGDs.**

Discussion Regarding Statutory Definition. Nebraska law defines Specialized Telecommunication Equipment as, “Specialized telecommunications equipment means any telecommunications device enabling deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired persons to communicate using conventional telephone systems.” *Neb. Rev. Stat.* § 86-310.

The Commission’s policy has consistently allowed for speech generating devices (SGDs) since these devices employ an ‘other adaptive technology/function’ in allowing communication for speech-impaired individuals. Note that under this treatment, stand-alone devices such as iPads/tablets/other computing devices are disallowed as they do not serve the primary function of communication for individuals with speech disabilities.

II. Personal Computing Devices Clarification Regarding Eligibility:

The following criteria shall be followed when allowing iPads/tablets/other personal computing devices for applicants requesting assistance in the NSTEP program:

- 1) The device must be a dedicated speech-generating device (SGD). Speech-generating devices, also known as voice output communication aids, are electronic devices used to supplement or replace speech or writing specifically for use by individuals with a speech disability.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices. The term, ‘AAC’ device is often used interchangeably with terms such as speech-

generating device (SGD) or assistive communication device or simply communication device. ****Note**** the term ‘AAC’ when used within the NSTEP context shall always be analogous to a dedicated speech-generating device outfitted with AAC software;

- 2) Apps/Other software. Apps or other software provided separately from the device shall ***not*** be allowed in the program as this does not satisfy the term ‘Specialized Telecommunication Equipment’ (STE);
- 3) Vendors are still subject to the maximum allowable voucher expenditure in this program which is \$1,000 (including taxes).

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact TRS/NSTEP Program Manager Brett Bode at 402 471-0225 or Brett.Bode@nebraska.gov.