



ANNUAL REPORT – TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY EQUIPMENT PROGRAM

Fiscal Year 2025–2026

Pursuant to Delaware House Bill 53

Delaware Department of Labor

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Program Background.....	2
Legislative Authority.....	2
Program Development and Implementation.....	3
Outreach and Community Engagement	4
Fiscal Year Statistics and Required Reporting.....	4
Equipment Distribution Summary	5
Financial Summary	5
Program Impact and Early outcomes	5
Challenges and Lessons Learned	6
Future Goals and Recommendations	6
Appendices.....	7
Appendix A – Program Timeline and Major Milestones	8
Appendix B – Outreach and Community Engagement Activities.....	10
Appendix C – Approved Equipment and Program Resources.....	12
Appendix D – Program Administration and Implementation Framework	13
Appendix E – Program Statistics, County Distribution, and Equipment Distribution Tables.....	14



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fiscal Year 2025–2026 marked the initial implementation phase of Delaware House Bill 53 (HB53), which established funding and support for telecommunications and accessibility equipment for eligible Delaware residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, or have speech disabilities.

During this reporting period, the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) focused on developing the program infrastructure necessary to support long-term service delivery and program sustainability. Key activities included policy development, creation of internal procedures, business planning, coordination with partner agencies, equipment evaluation, vendor engagement, application development, and establishment of program administration processes.

ODHH worked closely with the Delaware State Fire Marshal, equipment vendors, community stakeholders, and state partners to develop a framework for implementation of accessible telecommunications and a fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment program.

As the program was in its initial implementation stage during this fiscal year, significant effort was dedicated to building the operational foundation necessary to support future applicant intake, equipment distribution, and program oversight.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program was established through Delaware House Bill 53 to increase access to telecommunications equipment, assistive technology, and safety-related alerting devices for eligible Delaware residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, or have speech disabilities.

Prior to the enactment of HB53, Delaware maintained statutory provisions related to telecommunications equipment and services for individuals with hearing loss and speech disabilities. HB53 modernized and expanded the program framework to address evolving technology, communication accessibility needs, and emergency preparedness considerations. The legislation authorized support for a broader range of telecommunications and accessibility equipment, including visual and tactile alerting devices designed to improve safety and independent living.

HB53 established the Telecommunications and Accessibility Fund, which is supported through assessments associated with Delaware Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS). The Fund is administered by the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) and is used to support allowable expenditures authorized under the statute, including accessibility equipment, program administration, and related implementation activities.

The Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing administers the program and works collaboratively with community partners, vendors, state agencies, and stakeholders to support communication accessibility, emergency preparedness, and independent living opportunities throughout Delaware.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

This report is submitted pursuant to Delaware House Bill 53, which established funding and support for telecommunications and accessibility equipment for eligible Delaware residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, or have speech disabilities.

HB53 requires the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to administer the program and submit an annual report regarding program activity, expenditures, and implementation efforts during the preceding fiscal year. This report summarizes activities undertaken during Fiscal Year 2025–2026 and documents the progress made toward implementation of the program.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Fiscal Year 2025–2026 focused primarily on establishing the operational framework necessary to implement the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program authorized under HB53.

Following enactment of the legislation, the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) initiated development of policies, procedures, administrative processes, and program infrastructure required to support long-term implementation and oversight of the program.

Key implementation activities during the fiscal year included:

- Development and review of program policies governing telecommunications and accessibility equipment eligibility, distribution, administration, and program oversight;
- Development of comprehensive policies, procedures, applications, eligibility requirements, installation processes, and program documentation for accessible smoke and carbon monoxide alerting equipment, establishing the program infrastructure from inception;
- Establishment of procedures governing equipment storage, inventory control, retrieval, transfer documentation, and program accountability in collaboration with the Delaware State Fire Marshal;
- Coordination with the Delaware State Fire Marshal regarding residential assessments, equipment recommendations, installation procedures, inventory management, and implementation of accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment;
- Development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Delaware State Fire Marshal to establish roles, responsibilities, inventory management, and coordination for installation of accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment. Installation of equipment began on July 1, 2026.
- Evaluation and selection of telecommunications and accessibility equipment, including accessible smoke and carbon monoxide alerting technologies, to ensure compliance with program requirements, participant needs, and operational reliability;
- Conducted research and consultation with NASADHH members and representatives from other states regarding telecommunications equipment distribution programs, accessibility initiatives, and program administration practices. While telecommunications equipment distribution programs exist in many states, limited comparable models were identified for integrating accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment into a statewide accessibility equipment program. During implementation, ODHH also responded to inquiries from other states regarding Delaware's program development approach, policy framework, and implementation activities, reflecting growing interest in the program's accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment component;
- Procurement activities, vendor evaluation, and development of contractual agreements necessary to support acquisition and distribution of approved accessibility equipment;
- Engagement with equipment vendors and distributors regarding procurement processes, equipment specifications, pricing, and program implementation requirements;
- Development and revision of program applications, participant agreements, approval and denial letters, program forms, and supporting documentation necessary to support participant enrollment and eligibility determination;
- Creation of tracking and data management systems to support application processing, equipment inventory management, program reporting, and ongoing program oversight;
- Development of public-facing information and website resources to support awareness of available equipment and services; and

- Ongoing collaboration with community stakeholders, partner agencies, and subject matter experts to support implementation of the program.

As the program continued through its initial implementation phase, efforts remained focused on establishing sustainable administrative processes, ensuring regulatory and operational compliance, and preparing for long-term service delivery to eligible Delaware residents.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout Fiscal Year 2025–2026, the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) conducted outreach and engagement activities to increase awareness of communication accessibility resources, assistive technology, emergency preparedness initiatives, and services available to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and speech-disabled Delaware residents.

ODHH participated in community meetings, stakeholder discussions, equipment demonstrations, and educational presentations designed to inform the public and partner organizations about telecommunications accessibility and emergency notification solutions.

Key outreach and engagement activities during the fiscal year included:

- Conducting community outreach events and public information sessions regarding communication accessibility resources and services available through the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- Presenting information on effective communication, accessibility requirements, and Deaf awareness to public agencies, community organizations, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders;
- Collaborating with the Delaware State Fire Marshal to promote awareness of accessible smoke and carbon monoxide alerting equipment and emergency preparedness initiatives for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals;
- Conducting equipment demonstrations and educational events showcasing accessible telecommunications, visual alerting, and tactile notification technologies designed to improve safety and independent living;
- Collaborating with local, regional, and national partners through stakeholder meetings and joint initiatives to strengthen communication access, accessibility resources, and service delivery efforts;
- Engaging with equipment vendors, service providers, advocacy organizations, and community members to support implementation of HB53 and related accessibility initiatives; and
- Providing information, referrals, technical assistance, and accessibility resources to individuals, families, service providers, employers, and community organizations throughout Delaware.

These outreach activities helped establish awareness of the program, gather stakeholder feedback, strengthen interagency partnerships, and support future implementation efforts.

FISCAL YEAR STATISTICS AND REQUIRED REPORTING

During Fiscal Year 2025–2026, the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing received 42 applications under the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program. Of those applications,



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

26 were approved, 4 were ineligible, and 12 remain pending at the close of the fiscal year. Equipment distribution and applicant statistics are summarized in Appendix E.

EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION SUMMARY

During the initial implementation phase, approved equipment included smoke alert systems, carbon monoxide alert systems, flash receivers, bed shakers, doorbell transmitters, and other approved accessibility equipment. Detailed distribution statistics are provided in Appendix E.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Total Funds Expended

\$20,706.67 **Initial equipment stock was provided through ODHH/State General Funds*

\$31,346.55 CapTel

Administrative Costs

4 hours - AEP

3 hours – ODHH

\$2,937.20 – interpreting & mileage for AEP

Administrative support from the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been in-kind this fiscal year. Cost allocation of administrative support will be included in the upcoming year.

Remaining Fund Balance:

\$242,509.43

PROGRAM IMPACT AND EARLY OUTCOMES

Although Fiscal Year 2025–2026 primarily focused on program development and implementation, the establishment of the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program represents a significant milestone in expanding accessibility and safety resources for eligible Delaware residents.

During the fiscal year, ODHH established the operational foundation necessary to support future equipment distribution and program administration. Policies, procedures, applications, tracking systems, and partnerships were developed to ensure the program could effectively serve Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and speech-disabled individuals throughout Delaware.

During Fiscal Year 2025–2026, ODHH's program development efforts received national recognition through invitations to participate as a panelist at two national conferences. These invitations reflect growing recognition of Delaware's innovative approach to accessibility and interagency collaboration. Collaboration with the Delaware State Fire Marshal, vendors, community stakeholders, and partner agencies helped establish a framework for improving access to telecommunications equipment and accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting devices.

The development of these resources positions the program to enhance communication access, emergency preparedness, independent living, and overall quality of life for eligible Delaware residents in future program years.

Program development activities also generated interest from other states seeking information regarding Delaware's implementation approach, particularly related to accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment and interagency coordination efforts.

As the program continues to mature, ODHH anticipates documenting participant outcomes, equipment distribution impacts, and additional success stories in future annual reports.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

As with any newly established program, implementation during Fiscal Year 2025–2026 presented several challenges and opportunities for process improvement.

Key implementation challenges included developing policies and procedures within the first year of the program, establishing administrative processes, identifying appropriate equipment options, coordinating with multiple stakeholders, and developing application and tracking systems to support long-term program administration.

An additional challenge during the initial implementation period was establishing the program within a compressed timeframe following enactment of HB53. Significant effort was required to develop policies, procedures, partnerships, and administrative systems necessary to support long-term program operations while simultaneously preparing for participant enrollment and equipment distribution.

Additional efforts were required to evaluate equipment compatibility, establish procurement processes, coordinate with installation partners, and ensure compliance with statutory requirements and program objectives.

Despite these challenges, the implementation process provided valuable insight into program administration, stakeholder coordination, equipment needs, and operational requirements. Lessons learned during the initial implementation phase will help strengthen future program operations, improve efficiency, and support long-term sustainability.

FUTURE GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During Fiscal Year 2026–2027, ODHH will continue expanding implementation of the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program and enhancing services available to eligible Delaware residents.

Future goals include:

- Continued processing of applications and eligibility determinations;
- Expansion of equipment distribution activities throughout Delaware;
- Ongoing coordination with the Delaware State Fire Marshal and community partners;
- Enhancement of data collection, reporting, and tracking systems;
- Continued evaluation of telecommunications and accessibility equipment options;
- Continued evaluation and expansion of approved equipment categories based on participant needs and technological advancements;
- Increased public awareness and outreach regarding available services and resources;
- Development of additional program resources and educational materials; and
- Ongoing assessment of program effectiveness and participant needs to support future improvements.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

ODHH remains committed to ensuring eligible Delaware residents have access to telecommunications and accessibility equipment that supports communication access, safety, independence, and quality of life.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Program Timeline and Major Milestones
- Appendix B – Outreach and Community Engagement Activities
- Appendix C – Approved Equipment and Program Resources
- Appendix D – Program Administration and Implementation Framework
- Appendix E – Program Statistics, County Distribution, and Equipment Distribution Tables



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Appendix A – Program Timeline and Major Milestones

Period	Milestone
Jul 2025	HB53 enacted, establishing the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program and Telecommunications and Accessibility Fund.
Oct 2025	Community Relations Coordinator hired to support program implementation and administration.
Fall 2025	Program planning, research, and evaluation of eligible telecommunications and accessibility equipment initiated.
Winter 2025-26	Development of program policies, procedures, business plans, and administrative documents.
Winter 2025-26	Development of applications, participant agreements, approval and denial letters, and supporting program forms.
Jan 2026	Public Town Hall conducted to introduce the program and gather stakeholder feedback regarding implementation.
Spring 2026	Coordination established with the Delaware State Fire Marshal regarding assessments, installation procedures, inventory management, and implementation of accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment.
Spring 2026	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) finalized with the Delaware State Fire Marshal to support statewide implementation of accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment.
Spring 2026	Vendor evaluation, procurement planning, pricing review, and contractual agreements established.
Mar 2026	Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Device Program policies finalized.
Apr 2026	Public demonstration of accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment conducted to increase awareness and community education.
Spring 2026	Inventory management, storage, retrieval, and tracking procedures established.
Spring 2026	Website resources, public information materials, and program documentation developed and finalized.
Jun 2026	Initial implementation phase completed.
Jul 2026	Initial equipment installations were completed, with four installations conducted across New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties.
Aug 2026	Outreach brochures, marketing materials, and referral forms developed in partnership with the Delaware State Fire Marshal to support statewide program implementation.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Period	Milestone
Aug 2026	Fifth residential installation was completed, expanding implementation of the statewide accessibility equipment program.
Sept 2026	Community outreach presentations initiated to educate the public on the Accessibility Equipment Program and Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Device Program.
Sept 2026	First community presentation was conducted at the MOT Senior Center, attended by approximately 20 participants.
Sept 2026	Additional presentations scheduled at Modern Maturity Center and Newark Senior Center to expand statewide outreach and education.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Appendix B – Outreach and Community Engagement Activities

Date	Activity	Purpose
Jan 2026	Public Town Hall	Introduced the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program, provided an overview of HB53, and gathered community feedback regarding program implementation and equipment needs.
Feb–Mar 2026	Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Device Program Development Meetings	Coordinated with the Delaware State Fire Marshal, vendors, and stakeholders regarding equipment selection, installation procedures, inventory management, and program implementation.
Apr 2026	Accessible Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Equipment Demonstration	Demonstrated accessible smoke and carbon monoxide alerting equipment and provided education regarding available technologies and program services.
FY2025-2026	Vendor Consultation and Equipment Evaluation Activities	Conducted equipment reviews, pricing discussions, procurement planning, and implementation meetings related to approved telecommunications and accessibility equipment.
FY2025-2026	Program Information and Technical Assistance	Responded to inquiries from prospective applicants, community members, service providers, and partner agencies regarding program eligibility, equipment options, and application procedures.
FY2025-2026	Website and Public Information Development	Developed and updated program resources, application materials, and public information to support awareness and access to the Telecommunications and Accessibility Equipment Program.
Aug 2026	Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Device Outreach Marketing Materials	In partnership with the Delaware State Fire Marshal, collaborated with Senior Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Coordinator Rebekah LePore to develop brochures, outreach forms, and marketing materials supporting statewide education, referrals, and program implementation.
Sept. 2026	MOT Senior Center Presentation	In partnership with the Delaware State Fire Marshal, presented the Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Device Program to approximately 20 attendees, providing education on eligibility, available equipment, emergency preparedness, and home fire safety.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Date	Activity	Purpose
FY2026	Program Implementation and Community Response	Received additional program applications and positive feedback from participants and community members, who expressed increased peace of mind, improved emergency preparedness, and greater confidence in their safety through participation in the program.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Appendix C – Approved Equipment and Program Resources

Equipment Category	Purpose
Smoke Alert Systems	Provides visual and/or tactile notification when smoke is detected.
Carbon Monoxide Alert Systems	Provides visual and/or tactile notification when carbon monoxide is detected.
Flash Receivers	Provides visual alerts through flashing light notifications.
Bed Shakers	Provides tactile notification through vibration while sleeping.
Doorbell Transmitters	Configured to transmit smoke and carbon monoxide alarm notifications to compatible receivers and alerting devices.
Other Approved Accessibility Equipment	Additional equipment approved in accordance with program policies and participant needs.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Appendix D – Program Administration and Implementation Framework

Program Component	Description
Program Administration	Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) oversees program administration, eligibility review, recordkeeping, and reporting.
Eligibility Determination	Applications are reviewed to verify residency, qualifying disability status, and other applicable program requirements.
Equipment Evaluation	Equipment options are reviewed to ensure compliance with program policies and participant needs.
Equipment Procurement	Approved equipment is obtained through authorized vendors and procurement processes.
Fire & Carbon Monoxide Alert Program	Accessible fire and carbon monoxide alerting equipment is coordinated in partnership with the Delaware State Fire Marshal.
Inventory Management	Equipment inventory, distribution records, and related documentation are maintained for accountability and program oversight.
Public Information and Outreach	Program information, educational materials, and outreach activities support public awareness and access to services.
Reporting and Oversight	Program activities, expenditures, and outcomes are documented through ongoing reporting and annual reporting requirements.



Delaware Department of Labor / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Delaware Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

4425 N. Market St • Wilmington, DE 19802 • ODHH (302) 504-4741 • DOL_DODHH@delaware.gov

Appendix E – Program Statistics, County Distribution, and Equipment Distribution Tables

Application Activity

Metric	Total
Applications Submitted	42
Applications Approved	26
Applications Denied	4
Applications Pending	12

Equipment Distribution

Equipment Type	Quantity Distributed
Smoke Alert Systems	52
Carbon Monoxide Alert Systems	30
Flash Receivers	54
Bed Shakers	13
Magnetic Plates	29
Alarm Clock w/ Shaker	13
Pagers	7
Pager Chargers	7
Wall Mount	3

County Distribution Summary

County	Applications	Approved	Denied	Pending	Equipment Distributed
New Castle County	7	1	2	4	6
Kent County	11	8	0	3	50
Sussex County	24	17	2	5	152
Total	42	26	4	8	208