

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 1884

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to telecommunications services for hearing or speech impaired.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Ogden, Poulsen, Crouse and Kenney; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

**House Committee on Children & Family Services**  
**Senate Committee on Economic Development & Telecommunications**

**Background:**

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) of DSHS provides services to the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind communities throughout Washington. There are approximately 14,000 profoundly deaf citizens in Washington; approximately 62 percent receive a service from DSHS.

The ODHH, under a license from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), contracts for Telecommunications Relay Services which provide telecommunications access to all teletypewriter (TTY) users in the state. The Telecommunications Access Service (TAS) distributes equipment such as TTYs, TTYs with Braille, amplified phones, and signaling devices to deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, and speech-impaired persons.

The TAS buys equipment in bulk. Program applicants receive purchasing discounts based on income. Applicants who pay for the equipment own the equipment; others are loaned the state-owned equipment. Contracted trainers deliver and install the equipment, train the user, and troubleshoot any equipment malfunctions.

The program is funded through the telecommunications relay service excise tax. The program budget needs are determined by the ODDH and the Office of Financial Management. The Utilities and Transportation Commission then determines the amount of the excise tax needed to fund the program. The tax may not exceed 19 cents per month per access line. The tax is identified on each ratepayer's bill with the statement Funds federal ADA requirement.—

**Summary:**

The statute providing for Telecommunications Relay Service and Telecommunications

Access Service is updated to reflect changes in technology and recent FCC changes. Obsolete statutes are also deleted.

The authority of DSHS to determine program operating procedures and eligibility requirements is broadened.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House 98 0

Senate 48 0

**Effective:** July 22, 2001