

*Iowa Utilities Board***NEWS***Elizabeth S. Jacobs, Chair**Nick Wagner, Board Member**Sheila K. Tipton, Board Member***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 22, 2014**Contact** | Rob Hillesland, 515.725.7322, rob.hillesland@iub.iowa.gov **Web site** | <http://iub.iowa.gov>

Iowa Utilities Board reminds lowans of telephone relay assistance programs

Deaf Awareness Week is September 21-27, 2014

(Des Moines) – National Deaf Awareness Week is being held September 21-27, 2014, and the Iowa Utilities Board reminds lowans of Relay Iowa/CapTel Relay and Telephone Equipment Distribution Programs available to lowans who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or those who have difficulty speaking.

Telephone relay and equipment distribution services are essential for helping lowans with hearing loss or difficulty speaking stay connected to family and friends, employment, community resources, and vital emergency services. The Board oversees these two programs that provide telephone accessibility for lowans who are hearing, deaf, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing, and those who have difficulty speaking.

Relay Iowa is a telephone relay service that enables those with hearing loss and difficulty speaking, and their contacts, to communicate effectively with each other over the telephone. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with no restrictions on the length or number of calls. Specially trained communication assistants process relay calls and stay on the line to relay conversations electronically, over a text telephone (TTY) or captioned telephone (CapTel), or verbally to hearing parties. Users of TTY, captioned telephone, and voice services may initiate calls through Relay Iowa. For more information, visit [the Relay Iowa web site](#).

The Iowa Equipment Distribution Program, [Telecommunications Access Iowa \(TAI\)](#), helps individuals with hearing loss or difficulty speaking pay for specialized telephone equipment and allows them to communicate effectively with anyone. Qualified individuals can receive a voucher for approximately 95 percent of the average cost of this specialized equipment. For more information on how to apply for an Equipment Distribution Program voucher, contact TAI toll-free at 1-800-606-5099 (voice), 515-282-5099 (voice), 515-282-5130 (TTY), 515-200-2899 (videophone), or 515-237-3917 (fax), or email TELEIOWA@aol.com.

Governor Terry Branstad has signed a [proclamation](#) recognizing September 21-27 as Deaf Awareness Week in Iowa. The proclamation notes that 307,400 to 430,300 deaf and hard-of-hearing persons live in Iowa, including students, parents, employees, community volunteers, and neighbors.

(MORE)

The Iowa Association of the Deaf, World Federation of the Deaf, and National Association of the Deaf are also observing Deaf Awareness Week and the Deaf Services Commission of Iowa has announced Iowa's 2014 Deaf Awareness Week activities to be held on the University of Iowa campus in Iowa City. Events will include a family story time in American Sign Language (ASL), a signing lunch and coffee chat, a workshop about ASL interpreters, and panel discussions about issues for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. See <http://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/asl> and <http://clas.uiowa.edu/dwllc/node/1067> for more information. The public is welcome to attend.

Additional program information is also available on the Board's website, <http://iub.iowa.gov>, [Telephone Programs Page](#), and [Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program Page](#).

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The Iowa Utilities Board regulates utilities to ensure that reasonably priced, reliable, environmentally responsible, and safe utility services are available to all Iowans.

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