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## **CPUC PILOT PROGRAM LOANS IPADS TO THOSE WITH SPEECH DISABILITIES TO AID IN COMMUNICATION**

SAN FRANCISCO, January 11, 2017 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) today launched an 18-month pilot speech technology program called Voice Options, which will offer iPads with speech applications to people with speech disabilities for short- and long-term loan through 10 demonstration centers throughout the state.

Using an iPad with a speech application may make being understood easier and allow people with speech language disabilities to speak independently. Speech applications designed for iPads will allow users to control an alternative voice. Users enter what they want to say on the iPad, and it is voiced through speakers.

Californians who are not able to speak or have difficulty speaking may borrow iPads with speech applications to determine if using an iPad increases their ability to communicate. All program iPads are equipped with the following speech apps: Go Talk NOW Plus, LAMP words for Life, Predictable, Proloquo4Text, and TouchChat. Individuals may borrow an iPad for up to 30 days to determine if using a speech app increases their ability to communicate. If the user determines a speech app on the iPad works well for them, they may apply for a long-term loan of the device and their favorite speech app. Long-term loans require a verification of disability status by a designated professional.

The pilot program is associated with the passage of Assembly Bill 136 (Beall, 2011). It is administrated by the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers and funded through the CPUC's Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program.

Individuals can participate in this program by visiting one of 10 Demonstration Centers operated by the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers in the following cities: Anaheim, Grass Valley, Los Angeles, Redding, Sacramento, Salinas, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Jose, and Santa Ana, or by visiting <http://VoiceOptions.org>, or calling toll-free (800) 390-2699, or emailing [info@voiceoptions.org](mailto:info@voiceoptions.org).

For more information about the CFILC, please visit <http://cfilc.org>.

For more information about the CPUC, please visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov).

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