

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Monday, Jan. 5, 2015

**CONTACT:** Patrick Baker, DHS communications officer, (605) 773-5990 or [patrick.baker@state.sd.us](mailto:patrick.baker@state.sd.us)

## **South Dakota adds smart devices to telecommunications equipment programs**

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) has revised its telecommunications programs to make smart devices available to residents with disabilities.

Programs administered by the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) provide devices to help South Dakotans with disabilities communicate using telephone services. A bill passed by the Legislature in 2014 expanded the services and devices that can be provided by the telecommunications fund – established 25 years ago – to include current and developing technology such as smartphones and tablets.

“Technology was a lot different in 1989 when these programs were first established,” said DHS Secretary Gloria Pearson. “We expanded the programs to bring them in step with current times, adding modern telecommunications devices like tablets and smartphones to the list of available equipment.”

The goal of the department is to offer specially designed phones and other telecommunication devices to match the individual needs of South Dakotans with disabilities. The newly available smart devices – iPads and iPhones – will be available to eligible participants meeting income guidelines. DHS’ telecommunications equipment programs will continue to provide devices such as amplified, captioned and hearing carry-over telephones as well as other specialized equipment and accessories at no charge.

DHS will begin offering the new devices Jan. 5. To learn more or apply, visit [dhs.sd.gov](http://dhs.sd.gov) or contact DHS by calling (800) 265-9684 voice/text telephone (TTY).

“Most people probably take talking on the phone for granted, but it can present challenges for thousands of South Dakotans with disabilities,” said DRS Director Eric Weiss. “We are happy to be able to expand our programs to assist as many eligible residents as possible using the latest technology.”

### **About DHS**

The South Dakota Department of Human Services’ mission is to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities, in partnership with its stakeholders, through the programs and services offered by its divisions. Learn more by visiting the department’s website, [dhs.sd.gov](http://dhs.sd.gov), and viewing the [DHS Strategic Plan](#).