



**Bob Riley**  
GOVERNOR

Alabama Department of  
**REHABILITATION SERVICES**



**Cary F. Boswell**  
COMMISSIONER

Thursday, July 29, 2010

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Kathleen McGehee  
334-293-7500 or 1-800-441-7607

## **Apple iPad, iPod Touch give consumers a voice**

Although Justin Harvill has Down's syndrome and is unable to articulate his words, he did not like to use his DynaVox in the classroom.

"It was so big, and it attracted too much attention," said his mom, Kim Harvill, about the assistive technology. "It caused a lot of confusion in the classroom."

To give consumers such as Justin another, less obtrusive way to communicate, the Montgomery CRS office recently purchased an iPod touch and an iPad for the Augmentative Communication Technology ( ACT ) Clinic as an alternative to traditional augmentative communication devices.

"It is an option to other devices," said Jeff Mega, rehabilitation technology specialist. "Some people do not want to carry those bulky devices around."

CRS staff have loaded speech-generating software on the two devices to allow the consumer to communicate.

One application, known as Proloquo2Go, provides natural sounding text-to-speech voices. It also has a default vocabulary of more than 7,000 of the most commonly-used words in the English language.

"It is good for people of all ages and all different cognitive levels," said Emily Stringfellow, the speech-language pathologist in the Montgomery CRS office. "This kind of software is opening a whole lot of doors that have never been opened before."

Purchasing the software with the iPad or iPod Touch is less expensive than purchasing large communication devices. Proloquo2Go costs about \$200. The iPod touch costs about \$300, while the iPad runs about \$500. Traditional communication devices can cost anywhere from \$3,000 to \$9,000, said Mega.

Even so, the downside of using the iPad or iPod touch is that Medicaid and insurance companies have not approved the devices to be purchased for people with speaking difficulties.

"We're working on trying to get it approved by Medicaid," Stringfellow said.

As for Justin, after testing both devices in ACT Clinic, he decided to go with the iPod Touch. CRS is working with his family to get the device for him along with speech software – all just in time for his junior year of high school.

"It is something that is really cool and can fit in his pocket," his mom said. "He can fit in more with his peers."