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UM PROGRAM SEEKS FEEDBACK, SLATES FORUMS

MISSOULA —

Montanans with disabilities can voice their appraisals of a University of Montana-based program via interactive videoconferencing at several locations Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, June 4 and 5.

MonTECH, a statewide program that focuses on assistive technologies and services, scheduled the televised forums over METNET to find out how well the program is serving its constituents.

Specifically, forum organizers want to know how helpful the regional Access Cooperatives for Assistive Technology have been, what new directions MonTECH should take and what are the main barriers to getting assistive technology in Montana’s current systems.

"Public forums are a crucial part of the process," said Barbara Larsen, MonTECH’s funding development coordinator. "This information will help MonTECH with preparation for our next five-year funding cycle."

MonTECH is a program of UM’s Rural Institute on Disabilities. Its funding agency, the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, has called for "systems change," Larsen said.

"In other words," she said, "by our final year of operation, the policies and practices of agencies and organizations within Montana -- such as schools, private insurance and Medicaid -- should be much more responsive to the assistive technology needs of Montanans of all ages with disabilities than when MonTECH started in 1991."

Forums are scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. June 4 at The University of Montana—Missoula’s
Harry Adams Field House, corner of South Sixth Avenue East and Van Buren Avenue, Room 161; in Kalispell at Flathead Community Hospital’s Learning Resource Center, 777 Grandview Drive, Room 120; at Great Falls College of Technology, 2100 16th Ave. S., Room 147; at Helena College of Technology, 1115 N. Roberts St., Room 209; in Butte at TRI-ENTECH, Hennessy Building, 130 N. Main, second-floor auditorium; and at Montana State University—Bozeman’s Culbertson Hall, Harrison Avenue between Eighth and 11th streets, Room 102.

Forums are scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. June 5 in Missoula as listed above; at Montana State University—Billings, Special Education Building, 1500 N. 30th St., Room 162; at Glendive Medical Center, 202 Prospect Drive; at Glasgow’s Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital, 621 Third St. S.; in Miles City at Miles Community College, 1715 Dickenson St., Room 106; and at Sidney’s Community Memorial Hospital, 216 14th Ave. S.W. People who cannot attend may send written comments to MonTECH, 634 Eddy Ave., Missoula 59812.

Those planning to attend who need special access or a sign language interpreter should call their local Access Cooperative for Assistive Technology: Action for Eastern Montana in Glendive, 365-3364 or (800) 488-3587; North Central Independent Living Services in Great Falls, 452-9834 or (800) 823-6245; Montana Independent Living Project in Helena, 442-5755 or (800) 735-6457; Summit Independent Living Center in Missoula, 728-1630 or (800) 398-9002; Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow in Billings, 259-5181 or (800) 488-3587; and Parents, Let’s Unite for Kids in Billings, 657-2055 or (800) 222-7585.

Contact: Barbara Larsen, (406) 243-5773.