

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TOOLKIT





Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Purpose of this AT Toolkit..... | 2 |
| AT Toolkit Users..... | 2 |
| Using this Toolkit..... | 2 |
| SECTION ONE: Understanding Your Organization’s AT Needs, Capacity, and Resources | 3 |
| Look at Your Organization’s AT Needs and Capacities..... | 4 |
| Understanding Your AT Program..... | 4 |
| Partner with your AT Program | 4 |
| SECTION TWO – Understanding Assistive Technology | 5 |
| Defining Assistive Technology | 6 |
| Defining the Broad Range of AT Services | 7 |
| Identifying and Matching AT Devices and Services..... | 7 |
| Developing a Funding Strategy..... | 9 |
| SECTION THREE – Developing an Effective Collaboration Plan | 10 |
| How to learn more about State or Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs..... | 11 |
| Interagency Collaboration | 11 |
| Benefits of Interagency Collaboration | 11 |
| Assembling an AT collaboration Plan | 12 |
| Examples of Assistive Technology | 13-14 |
| Educational and Training Opportunities..... | 15 |
| Examples of Aging and Disability Network Collaborations with Assistive Technology Act Programs | 15 |
| NEXT STEPS | 16 |
| RESOURCES | 17 |

INTRODUCTION

Assistive Technology can impact a person's well-being by improving their ability to see, speak, hear, walk, eat, bathe, connect with loved ones and live more independently. As defined in the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-364), assistive technology means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

In the course of helping someone who might benefit from AT, how does a service provider routinely consider AT and have easy access to the AT resources that can help individuals with disabilities or who are older?

The State and Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs (AT Programs) are a key resource and partner to improve AT awareness, consideration, and access. AT programs provide activities, programs, and services that help older adults and people with disabilities learn about, use, and acquire the assistive technology that best meets their unique needs. This AT toolkit seeks to organize AT considerations and resources to make it easier to serve people nationwide.



PURPOSE OF THIS AT TOOLKIT

The purpose of this AT Toolkit is to provide the aging and disability networks and others who serve older adults and people with disabilities a range of tools to improve awareness about AT and to find out about resources to help select and acquire AT and connect individuals with AT device and service resources.

The Toolkit consists of three sections:

- (1) Understanding Your Organization's AT Needs, Capacity and Resources;
- (2) Understanding Assistive Technology; and
- (3) Developing an Effective Collaboration Plan.

AT TOOLKIT USERS

Case workers, information specialists, outreach workers, options counselors, program managers and others who assist older adults, persons with disabilities and their families are all examples of the many individuals who may find this AT Toolkit useful. It is aimed at being a resource for the aging and disability network and its partners. This can include, but is certainly not limited to, the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Centers for Independent Living, Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), and Developmental Disability entities.

USING THIS TOOLKIT

This Toolkit can help agencies and their partners start a conversation to utilize the existing AT resources in their states and communities and to look at diverse agency structures and capacities to see what steps can be taken to more fully provide awareness and resources to older adults, persons with disabilities, caregivers and others about AT devices and services.

SECTION ONE:

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S AT NEEDS, CAPACITY, AND RESOURCES



LOOK AT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S AT NEEDS AND CAPACITIES

Organizations that serve the aging and disability network have different structures, different services, and serve varying target populations. The purpose of this step is to encourage discussion within the organization and amongst staff as well as review the organization's AT needs, capacity, and awareness of current collaborations with AT resources in their state and community.

PARTNER WITH YOUR AT PROGRAM

The 56 State and Territory AT Act Programs vary in structure, services, and identification across the nation.

State and Territory AT Programs may have very different programmatic titles from state to state; and differ depending on their lead agency (which could include: non-profits, state government, or universities) they do not vary in their core AT services.

Some AT Act Programs provide additional AT services. Many State and Territory AT Programs also use partners or sub-contractors with different names to provide some services. All State and Territory AT Programs, however, serve older adults in addition to persons with disabilities throughout the lifespan.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR AT PROGRAM

State and Territory AT Programs provide a continuum of services that lead a consumer through specified state level and state leadership activities that promote the ability of people with disabilities to know about, have access to, and ultimately be better able to obtain assistive technology (AT).

AT Act Programs provide the following AT services:

State Level Activities

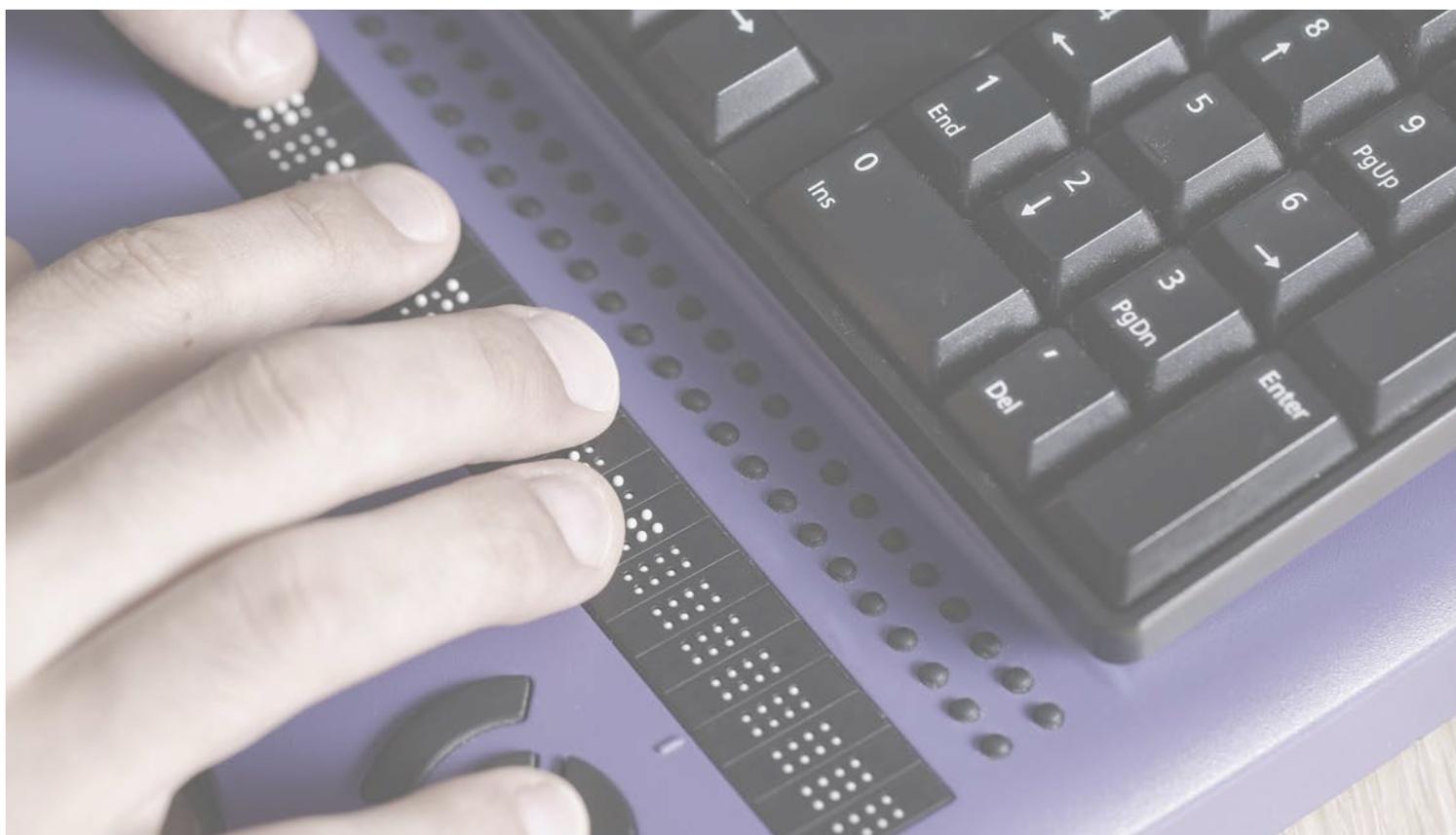
- Device Demonstration
- Device Lending
- State Financing
- Device Reuse

State Leadership Activities

- Training
- Technical Assistance
- Public Awareness

Services provided at State and Territory AT Programs can vary outside of the consistent State Level and State Leadership Activities offered. It is important that entities learn about other activities their State and Territory AT program may provide. It is also important to clarify that State and Territory AT Programs are not statutorily permitted to purchase assistive technology for the consumer with federal formula funds through the AT Act. These formula funds are used for state level and state leadership activities.

SECTION TWO: UNDERSTANDING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY



DEFINING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

As mentioned in the Introduction, an assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities (P.L. 108-364).

This broad definition means that assistive technology is anything that helps someone do something they couldn't do because of a disability or functional limitation.

Assistive Technology can be:

- Homemade or store bought
- Used “as is” or modified
- Range from no cost to expensive
- Require no training or months of instruction

Examples of Assistive Technology include:

- Tennis balls placed on walker legs to make it easier to glide over carpet
- Paint used for wayfinding or as a memory aide – “Follow the blue line to the cafeteria”
- Text-to-Speech software that reads text to an individual with a print disability
- Assistive Listening devices that improve hearing. Devices include personal amplified, FM, Infrared, and Bluetooth systems as well as audio induction or hearing loop
- Speech Generating Device used to facilitate communication using a device to generate words and messages



DEFINING THE BROAD RANGE OF AT SERVICES

Assistive technology services assist in the selection, acquisition, or use of assistive technology.

Assistive Technology services include:

- Evaluation of the assistive technology needs of an individual with a disability or older adult experiencing functional limitations due to aging and evaluating the impact of providing AT and AT services in the appropriate environment
- Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of AT
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, replacing, or donating AT devices
- Coordination and use of necessary therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices. For example, services associated with education or rehabilitation plans and programs
- Training or technical assistance for an individual with a disability, a family member, guardian, advocate, or authorized representative
- Training or technical assistance for professionals who serve individuals with disabilities, employers, or others providing services to employ or assist with major life functions
- Expanding the availability of access to technology, including electronic and information technology Act.

IDENTIFYING AND MATCHING AT DEVICES AND SERVICES

Knowing that there is a need for AT is just the first step toward finding a solution. The information in this section will help identify additional steps to take when looking for AT devices and services.

Identifying and matching AT to the needs of the user may include:

- Informal consultation and observation. This is usually a preliminary service to explore needs and a range of potential AT solutions and may include device demonstrations.

-
- Formal assessment and evaluation. This service is performed by a skilled AT practitioner or team of professionals (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech language pathologist) trained in the use of assistive technology. The evaluation will include multiple methods to determine need as well as appropriate product and service recommendations.
 - Working with service providers to:
 - Order AT
 - Arrange for installation or modification, if needed
 - Train and provide support during the learning process and beyond
 - Provide maintenance and repair services

It is critical that the individual with a disability or older adult in need of assistive technology be involved in the decision-making process.

Check out information about AT Frameworks for considering AT and learn how to use person centered planning to identify AT solutions that are meaningful to the user in the Resource section of this Toolkit.

Don't forget - AT Act Programs provide services such as device demonstrations and device loans, that can help identify and match AT to the needs of the user. [Find your state or territory AT Act Program.](#)



Developing a Funding Strategy

Follow the steps below to develop a funding strategy when help is needed to purchase AT.

KEEP RECORDS THAT SHOW:

- Why assistive technology is needed. Records could include written evaluations, medical prescription, letter of medical necessity or other documents that justify the need.
- What assistive technology devices and services are needed. Be sure to include information about the results of any AT trials that justify the request.
- How much the AT and any related services costs. Documentation should include vendor information and explain why certain features or services are needed, especially if they increase the cost. If needed, explain why less expensive solutions are not appropriate and will not adequately meet the need. Providing results from AT trials that justify the request can make all the difference!

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES. THE FUNDING STRATEGY SHOULD:

- List sources whose mission aligns with the purpose for using AT. For example, is the AT medically necessary? If so insurance companies, Medicare or Medical Assistance might be added to the list of potential funding sources. If the AT is for employment, consider adding the employer or Vocational Rehabilitation Services to the list.

RETAIN DOCUMENTATION OF PAST EFFORTS:

- Previous funding sources, if any, along with any requirements (e.g., age, income) and restrictions.
- Contact information. Communicating with the same person, provides continuity and minimizes the need to repeatedly explain the reason for the request.
- Correspondence and records of phone calls and meetings.

SUBMIT REQUIRED FORMS AND PAPERWORK. BE SURE TO:

- Follow instructions.
- Attach required documentation (e.g., insurance card, medical prescription).
- Include current contact information. If possible, provide a phone number and email address as well as a mailing address.
- Provide documentation (e.g., written evaluation report, letter of medical necessity) that justifies the request.

BE PREPARED – NO MATTER WHAT THE RESPONSE.

- Check to see if the funding source provides a response time. Set a calendar reminder to follow-up with the funding source if no response is received within a reasonable or expected time.
- If the request is denied, check to see what the process is to appeal the decision. Be sure to note any deadlines. For example, some agencies may require an appeal to be filed within 30-days of denial.
- Review your notes to determine if there are other funding sources to pursue.

SECTION THREE: DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION PLAN



Within the aging and disability network the opportunity to partner together and find solutions to common problems is a shared value.

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) supports efforts within states and territories to address the needs of older adults and people with disabilities to gain access to affordable and readily available assistive technology. This access can be an essential factor that allows older adults and individuals with disabilities to live at home, engage in employment, and enjoy their communities. This AT Toolkit encourages collaborative approaches between the aging and disability network and State and Territory Assistive Act Programs to better utilize existing resources. These programs are a key resource to improving AT awareness, consideration, and access. The first step to an effective collaboration is to get to know your potential partners

HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT STATE OR TERRITORY ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT PROGRAMS

For more information about each of the individual 56 State or Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs, links to Website addresses, and contact information is available on the [AT3 Center website](#).

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

An interagency collaboration is two or more agencies working together in partnership. Potential partner agencies provide unique services to the same people as the AT Act Program with the intention of achieving a similar goal or goals..

BENEFITS OF INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

- Reduces duplication of services.
- Encourages greater efficiencies in the use of resources. Often, when multiple services are required, the effectiveness of any single service is related to the availability and effectiveness of other services needed by the individual.
- Promotes joint problem solving.
- Creates the ability to take a holistic approach to service delivery.
- Increases understanding and trust between agencies.
- Understand the diverse structure and capabilities of your AT Program.
- Necessary steps to increase awareness and resources to older adults and individuals with disabilities related to Assistive Technology devices and services.
- Increase training on Assistive Technology devices and services.
- Blend funding to provide additional Assistive Technology devices and services to the individuals you serve.

A second step to preparing for an effective collaboration is to identify needed supports.

ASSEMBLING AN AT COLLABORATION PLAN

- Understand where Assistive Technology fits into your agency mission, environment, activities, and the expectations of your front-line staff.
- Improve on existing Assistive Technology resources in your State or Communities
- What information and support would best fulfill your mission?
- What information regarding Assistive Technology devices and service would best support activities related to information, referral and assistance activities?

EXAMPLES OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The purpose of the lists below is to increase AT awareness and is not an endorsement by ATAP or AT3 of any product or service mentioned.

Assistive Technology to Address Social Isolation

NO/LOW TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

- Cards & Letters
 - Arrange for family and friends to send cards and letters
- Outside visits using social distancing and masks
- Phone
 - Schedule regular phone calls with family, friends, and neighbors
 - Use [Radio Talking Book](#) service to listen to newspapers, magazines and books if a vision impairment makes it difficult to read print.
- Radio & TV
 - Local stations
 - [Call-in radio shows](#)
- Window visits

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

- Digital Photo Frames
 - Nixplay Digital Photo Frame – family and friends can send photos and videos to the frame. Requires WiFi Internet connection.
- Robotic Pets and Dolls
- Smart Speakers
 - Amazon Echo Show – smart speaker with video calling, media streaming, photo album, and ability to control compatible smart home devices
 - Google Nest Home Max – smart speaker with video calling, media streaming, photo album and ability to control compatible smart home devices
- Social Engagement – Systems
 - GrandPad Tablet – tablet preloaded with simple to use apps
 - iN2L – person-centered content-driven systems for assisted living, long-term care, adult day care
- Telepresence Robots
 - Double Robot
 - Ohmni Robot



Assistive Technology to Support Daily Living

The most common types of assistive technology are related to activities of daily living (ADLs). These are essential tasks people must perform to sustain a quality of life.

The examples below are not exhaustive but do represent some of the most common types of assistive technology.

FOR DRESSING

- Dressing sticks
- Reacher's
- Long handled shoehorns
- Button hooks
- Velcro
- Elastic shoelaces
- Sock aids
- Legs straps
- Hip-kits

FOR BATHING

- Tub chair/tub bench with a back
- Transfer board
- Handheld shower
- Long-handled sponge
- Grab bars
- Thermometer
- Shower chair
- Transfer board or mechanical lift
- Wash mitt

FOR TOILETING

- Commodes
 - Toilet aid to assist with cleaning the perineal area
 - Leg straps to assist lifting legs



FOR EATING

- Universal cuff to hold utensils
- ADL wrist splint to stabilize wrist
- Non-skid bowl
- Plate guard
- Scoop dish
- Adaptive utensils
- Long straw
- Mobile arm supports
- Robotic eating assistance system (Obi)

FOR BASIC MOBILITY

Mobility can range from walking to driving to the grocery store. Often times, a physical therapist will recommend and provide instruction on basic mobility devices.

- Walkers
- Rollators
- Canes
- Crutches
- Power and manual wheelchairs
- Ramps
- Lift chairs
- Stair lifts

TO PREVENT INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- Portable lifts
- Ceiling track systems
- Roll in showers

EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Visit the AT3 Center YouTube Channel to watch videos on a range of AT-related topics, including:

- Vision
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication
- Living with Macular Degeneration
- Mobility Device Management



Access these videos and more at [AT3 Center Videos](#).

EXAMPLES OF AGING AND DISABILITY NETWORK COLLABORATIONS WITH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT PROGRAMS

1. AGE IN PLACE: North Dakota Assistive, the North Dakota Assistive Technology Act Program, has a current collaboration with the North Dakota Agency on Aging. The Assistive Safety Device Distribution Service program, also known as the Senior Safety program, is designed to assist those with aging-related disabilities remain safe in their homes using assistive safety devices. You can find out more about this program at [North Dakota Assistive](#)

2. STAY CONNECTED: The Stay Connected Program is funded through the Administration for Community Living from Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress as an emergency stimulus package to address COVID-19 needs. This program helps older adults and persons with disabilities engage with medical providers, community, family, and friends during COVID-19. This new program is operated out of the Connecticut Department of Aging and Disabilities Services in a collaboration between the State Unit on Aging and the Connecticut Assistive Technology Program, called the Connecticut Tech Act Project. You can find out more about this program at [Stay Connected](#).

NEXT STEPS

This AT Toolkit is intended to increase your understanding of the impact a wide range of assistive technology devices and services can have on the lives of the aging population and individuals with disabilities you serve.

As entities pursue information about assistive technology, a recommended step is to contact your State or Territory Assistive Technology Program. The State and Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs are prepared to support AT efforts and provide information and referrals to those who come to you in need. Furthermore, your State or Territory AT Act Program is a valuable resource and partner for collaboration in order to achieve common goals.

[Connect with your State or Territory AT Act Programs.](#)



RESOURCES



General Awareness Videos

- AT3 AT Programs – Demonstration, Device Loan Services, <https://youtu.be/H2nCMgZsGdw>
- Understanding Assistive Technology: Simply Said, (<https://youtu.be/DB9pKkZoJDc>)
- Understanding Assistive Technology Lending Libraries: Simply Said <https://youtu.be/AYvuS1L5Jbs>
- [AT Flow Chart](#)
- [How to find your AT Act Program](#)
- [Explore AT](#)

Awareness Videos and Selection of AT

- Determining needs using a [person-centered approach](#)
- Frameworks to help during the consideration process
 - [SETT](#)
 - [WATI](#)
 - [HAAT](#)

AT Tips and Solutions

- [Remote AAC Assessments – Tips, Considerations, and Unexpected Surprises](#)
- [Prepare for the Hospital – Plan Your Communication Strategy](#)
- [How to Prepare for a Routine Telehealth Visit](#)
- [AT for Dementia and Companionship](#)
- [Got Ramps for Holiday Visiting?](#)
- [AT for Bedrest](#)
- [AT for Managing Medication](#)
- [Visual or Vibrating Alert Devices](#)
- [The Wonderful World of Adapted Pens](#)

RESOURCES



Publicly Funded Options for Assistive Technology

- [State and Territory Assistive Technology Programs](#): Every state along with D.C. and the territories have Assistive Technology (AT) Act programs that can provide resources to help individuals acquire AT. This directory provides contact and website information for services and possible funding resources for each state and territory.
- [Adaptive Telecommunications Equipment](#): Most states have programs that provide different types of adapted telecommunications equipment such as adapted phones for individuals who have functional limitations such as vision, hearing, mobility, etc. Some also provide other types of devices such as iPads or tablet devices for telecommunication purposes. Most are provided at no cost for eligible individuals. This directory provides links to state telecommunication program websites.
- [ABLE \(Achieving a Better Life Experience\) Accounts](#): In 2014, Congress created tax-advantaged savings accounts called ABLE accounts. The money in ABLE accounts can be used for qualified disability-related expenses such as education, housing and transportation. Most importantly, ABLE accounts allow people with disabilities to save money without losing their eligibility for federally funded benefits such as Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services – Home and Community Based Waivers](#): HCBS programs are operated generally through a state agency such as Medicaid or the state’s Human Services agency. HCBS programs generally fall into two categories: health services and human services. HCBS programs may offer a combination of both types of services specifically carved out to meet the needs individuals with disabilities in their state.
- [Department of Veteran Affairs](#): If you’re a U.S. military veteran, learn about medical benefits for which you may be eligible.
- [Head Start/Early Head Start](#): Department of Health & Human Services provides funding and oversees local agencies providing Head Start services. Head Start promotes school readiness of children under 5 from low-income families through education, health, social and other services.
- [Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind](#): Grants are made to states to support services for individuals age 55 or older whose severe visual impairment makes competitive employment difficult to obtain but for whom independent living goals are feasible.

RESOURCES



Publicly Funded Options for Assistive Technology

- Medicaid: State-administered programs designed to ensure that certain low-income individuals receive the health care they need. Each state sets its own guidelines for eligibility and covered benefits.
- Medicare.gov: The official U.S. site for people eligible for and/or covered by Medicare.
- Medicare Savings Program: Learn about state programs that help Medicare beneficiaries with limited income and resources save money on Medicare premiums, deductibles and/or co-pays.
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI) Work Incentives: Special rules make it possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. Social Security calls these rules “work incentives.”
- Special Education Services: under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Local Education Agencies are responsible for providing needed assistive technology devices and services as identified by the Individual Education Program team for students with disabilities.
- State Health Insurance Counseling and Assistance Programs (SHIPs): State offices provide information about choosing Medicare plans, understanding your Medicare bills, how to appeal Medicare decisions and more.
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Services: This federal program provides funding to assist States in operating statewide vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs, each of which is an integral part of a statewide workforce development system. The VR program is designed to provide VR services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

RESOURCES



Privately Funded Options for Assistive Technology

This list is just a few national disability related organizations that may be able to provide assistive technology at the federal, state or local levels.

- Easterseals: Provides opportunities for people of all ages with a range of disabilities to achieve their full potential.
- Hike Fund: Provides hearing devices for children with hearing losses between the ages of newborn and twenty years whose parents are unable to meet this special need financially.
- Multiple Sclerosis Association of America: The MSAA Equipment Distribution Program offers clients products designed to improve safety, dignity, mobility, and independence. MSAA provides these products at no charge and ships directly to the client. Items distributed through the program include home safety products such as shower chairs and grab bars, as well as mobility devices including canes, walkers, and wheelchairs. If you have any questions, please call MSAA at (800) 532-7667 or email
- Muscular Dystrophy Association: MDA's national equipment program helps provide good-condition, gently used wheelchairs and other medical equipment, such as shower chairs, hospital beds, walkers, canes, communication devices and similar items, when available and as feasible.
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society: Many local chapters provide equipment reutilization programs to assist their members. MS navigators can assist you in your search for additional financial assistance.

Preparation of this publication was financed by Grant Number 90ATTA0001-05-00 from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living under provisions of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended (Public Law 108-364)