

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding Assistive Technology in Delaware

State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are a major funding source for assistive technology (AT) for working-age individuals with disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR) services, one must:

- Have a significant disability that is a barrier to employment
- Be willing to pursue vocational goals and employment
- Be a working age adult (age 16 or older).

Federal Laws and DVR Requirements

Federal law requires that state VR agencies presume that a person with a disability is able to work, regardless of the severity of the disability, unless the DVR counselor can clearly demonstrate otherwise. A counselor must exhaust all options, including AT intervention, before denying eligibility on the basis of a person's inability to work.

This same law exempts AT purchases from vocational rehabilitation agencies' customary "comparable services and benefits" regulations. This means that DVR beneficiaries do not have to endure delays in obtaining AT while the counselor searches for other funding sources.

Obtaining AT and/or Related Services

Upon entry into the DVR program, an applicant works with a counselor to determine which services may be needed. After the client's needs are evaluated, an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) is developed. The IPE should document any needed AT devices or services. Thereafter, the individual's counselor arranges for the necessary AT or services. At times, DVR will combine its resources with those of other public and private agencies in order to maximize its ability to obtain AT for clients.

DVR has specific guidelines in the case of certain types of AT, such as home modifications, vehicle modifications, and hearing aids. (DVR

will pay for home and vehicle modifications if they are in the IPE and if they will help promote or advance progress toward an employment goal.) For example, in the case of vehicle modifications, the agency will condition eligibility based upon certain factors such as the age of the vehicle, mileage, and its condition.

DVR has a Supported Employment program that trains persons with severe disabilities, such as mental retardation, mental illness, and traumatic brain injury, to find and retain employment. If a client needs a relatively simple AT device for an activity of daily living (for example, an oversized alarm clock), the Supported Employment program may provide this directly to the client.

Consideration of Other Options

Though AT is exempt from DVR's comparable benefits restrictions, it is sometimes better for the client to obtain AT such as seating, positioning, and mobility devices through other funding sources such as private insurance or Medicaid. If a DVR counselor suspects that an item is medically necessary, the case is forwarded to DVR's medical consultant.

In some circumstances, an individual's employer has the responsibility to purchase AT as a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act. In other instances, if the person's disability resulted from a work-related illness or injury, Worker's Compensation may cover the cost of AT devices and services.

Social Security and Vocational Rehabilitation

Recipients of Social Security benefits such as Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income may be eligible for various income "set-aside" programs such as Impairment-Related Work Expense and Plan to Achieve Self Support. These programs, which are discussed in greater detail in the Social Security Funding Fact Sheet, enable persons to set aside income to pay for AT or services while retaining Social Security eligibility.

The "Ticket to Work" program is also administered by the Social Security Administration. These "tickets" can be used to obtain vocational rehabilitation and employment services, including AT, from

an approved provider of the recipient's choice.

Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a consumer-based organization that advocates for persons with disabilities and provides information and referral services. Individuals can also contact CAP if they are having difficulty in accessing VR services or if they have complaints about services that have already been provided.

Questions may be directed to the CAP office in the individual's county of residence.

New Castle County
(302) 764-2400 (voice)
(302) 764-8708 (TDD)

Kent/Sussex County
(800) 640-9336
(302) 698-9336 (voice)
(302) 698-9338 (fax)

Contact Information

DVR office telephone numbers are as follows:

Central Office, Wilmington
(302) 761-8275 (voice)
(302) 761-8296 (TDD)

Wilmington Office
(302) 761-8300 (voice/TDD)

Churchmans Center Office,
New Castle
(302) 326-8930

Pencader Office, Newark
(302) 368-6980 (voice)
(302) 368-6555 (TDD)

Odessa Professional Park, Middletown

(302) 378-5779 (voice/TDD)

Carroll's Plaza, Dover
(302) 739-5478 (voice/TDD)

Georgetown Office
(302) 856-5730 (voice/TDD)

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