

The AT Messenger...bringing technology to you

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Legislation Reauthorizing AT Act Passes the House

Beth Mineo Mollica, DATI Director

On Tuesday, June 15, the U.S. House of Representatives passed HR 4278, the Improving Access to Assistive Technology for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004, with unanimous consent. Before passage, Congressman Mike Castle spoke about the need for the legislation and the important changes in the new law. Castle stressed that the new law would help individuals acquire the AT that they need, and added, "I am particularly proud of the AT work done in Delaware. The DATI connects Delawareans with technologies that provide many with the opportunity to learn, work, play, and participate in community life safely and independently. Delawareans with disabilities count on the Initiative for access to technology for product demonstration and trial use, for information and consultation about equipment and funding resources, and for the coordination of resources among agencies and organizations...

There is no other source in Delaware that could replace these services and supports...[This Act] will help to ensure that access leads to opportunity, and that opportunity results in enhanced employment, academic achievement, and community life. I urge my colleagues to support this reauthorization." (*The full text of Congressman Castle's address can be found in the Breaking News section of the DATI website, www.dati.org.*)

Federal funding for DATI, and the other state programs funded by the AT Act, was scheduled to end with the FY2004 appropriation, so Congressional attention to reauthorization came just in the nick of time. In the House bill, states are required to start shifting funds from service infrastructure to services that directly impact consumers, such as equipment loan and/or equipment recycling programs. The House bill also requires states to offer alternative financing programs that would enable individuals to borrow the money they need for AT purchases. The DATI is already structured in a way that is consistent

with the new Congressional mandate, so it is unlikely that services will need to shift dramatically. That is, however, not the case nationwide. Currently, several states have opted not to offer comprehensive equipment loan and/or equipment recycling programs. In addition, many states, including Delaware, are just getting alternative financing programs off the ground.

A Senate bill is expected to be introduced very soon, and if it differs dramatically from the House bill, it may take a while to work toward a version that both Houses of Congress can support. For regular updates, check the Breaking News section of the DATI website (www.dati.org). Better yet, sign up as a Breaking News subscriber and have these newsflashes delivered right to your inbox. For more information, contact Beth Mineo Mollica at the DATI Central Site in Wilmington.

Universal Design: A Sensible Way to Build and Buy Homes

Patricia L. Maichle, Senior Administrator, Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council

What is "Universal Design" in homebuilding and why should we use it? For the newly formed Coalition for Universal Design in Delaware the answer is "it is the most sensible way to build homes for our generation and those to come." The Coalition is made up of members from the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council; the State Council for Persons with Disabilities; the American Association of Retired Persons; the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services; the Department of Health and Social Services; the Delaware State Housing Authority; the Kristi Bingham Cerebral Palsy Foundation, Inc.; Mr. Grab Bar; Mephibosheth Housing, Inc.; Independent Resources, Inc.; the Arc of Delaware; Rebuilding Together; Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative; Easter Seals of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore; ADC Housing Coalition; NAMI-DE; SST Technologies, Inc.; and Tull/Ramey, Ltd.

According to the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University (www.design.ncsu.edu/cud), universal design is housing for the lifespan of all people. "The intent of the universal design concept is to simplify life for everyone by making more

housing usable by more people at little or no extra cost. Universal design is an approach to design that incorporates products as well as building features and elements which, to the greatest extent possible, can be used by everyone." It is subtle in its differences from barrier-free, accessible, and industry standard housing. The market for universal design in housing includes everyone at some point in their lives, and the movement toward universal design in housing and consumer products is becoming more viable as our population ages.

Examples of universal features in housing are:

- Handles for doors and drawers that require no gripping or twisting to operate, such as lever or loop handles
- Living space on one floor or stair landings big enough to accept lifts
- Audible and visual alarm systems
- Storage space within reach of both short and tall people
- Wide doorways.

"Manufacturers and builders who use the universal design concept will design their products and buildings to be as usable as possible by a larger population including children, older people, and people with disabilities," states the Center for Universal Design.

Persons with disabilities, as well as those who are aging, frequently find the search for decent, safe, affordable, and accessible housing a dead-end experience. Finding housing with even basic accessibility features (e.g., an entrance with no steps) ranges from daunting to impossible. People may find a waiting list to get on the waiting list in some parts of Delaware. People with disabilities and the older population still tend to be ushered to large congregate living facilities and institutions when what they really want and need is a home of their own that they can use on a daily basis for as long as possible.

Steve Tull of Tull/Ramey, Ltd., and a Coalition member, has gone the extra ten miles to make universal design in housing a reality in Delaware. Steve's response to the question of "How do we make this happen?" was to make it happen.

“The more people that know about these features, the more people will ask designers and builders to include them. Demand drives the market,” states Tull.

With the tremendous development of land that is occurring in lower New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties, now is the time to act. Tull has offered to build a demonstration home for other builders, architects, developers, real estate brokers, policymakers, and the general population to experience. The home is scheduled to be completed this fall in Sussex County, where it is expected most of the state's new growth will occur in the next ten years.

"I think most of us would love to stay in our own homes for as long as we possibly can, and if we design those homes better they're going to be there for us when we need them," states Beth Mineo Mollica, the Director of the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, in the DD Council Video on Universal Design. This is why we must consider this design concept now while new homes are being built in Delaware.

In addition to the home that Tull is building in Sussex County, the Easter Seals of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore has offered the Coalition a portion of their newly acquired property in Sussex County on which to build another home demonstrating universal design. This home, when completed, will function as a training center for people with disabilities who are either newly disabled and need to learn to live in a home again, or people who have had disabilities and are interested in living in the community with supports. The Mephibosheth Housing, Inc., in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services and the Kristi Bingham Cerebral Palsy Foundation, Inc., will begin construction on an apartment building in Wilmington using universal design concepts in the coming year as well.

For copies of the DD Council Video on Universal Design or for information on the Coalition, contact the DD Council office at (302) 739-3333 or visit our web site at www.state.de.us/ddc.

IL Program Serves As A Good AT Resource

Tom McDonough, DATI Funding and Policy Specialist

The Independent Living (IL) Program is a good resource to consider for funding AT that is not covered by health insurance. Authorized under The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the State Independent Living Council funds a project within the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI).

IL seeks to further individual and systems advocacy and to maximize self-determination, independence, and equal access. IL services do not have to be connected to an employment goal. Therefore, IL is able to pay for AT if it will further the goal of independent living. In order to be eligible for IL services, one must be a Delaware resident age 16 or older, have a significant disability, meet a financial needs test, and seek to live more independently.

An IL applicant is assigned to an IL counselor, who helps the individual to determine which services will lead to more independent living. This process leads to the development of an Independent Living Plan (ILP). The ILP lists any needed AT or service, such as vehicle modifications or environmental control units. After developing an ILP, the counselor arranges for the necessary AT or service. Because the demand for services outweighs the program's resources, at times there may be a waiting period before the AT is provided. IL is able to combine its resources with those of other public and private agencies to maximize its ability to obtain AT for clients.

IL has specific guidelines governing access to certain types of AT. For example, IL will pay for the most "cost-conscious" home modification option. In the case of vehicles, IL will consider paying for vehicle modifications but not the purchase of a vehicle. When determining if vehicle modifications will be covered, IL takes into consideration the age, mileage, and condition of a vehicle. IL will purchase a hearing aid for persons with significant hearing loss in the conversational speech range. The need for an aid must be proven with medical documentation from a licensed audiologist. IL limits its purchase to one hearing aid or one set of bilateral hearing aids in a client's lifetime. Hearing aid repair costs are not covered.

IL resources are limited. It makes sense to first pursue private or public health insurance funding for "medically necessary" AT (e.g., wheelchairs). IL will consider funding an insurance copay in appropriate cases. For more information, contact IL at (302) 378-5779.

Significant Planning Must Accompany a Plane Ticket

Laura J. Waterland, Senior Staff Attorney, Disabilities Law Program

In 2002, travelers with disabilities spent \$13.6 billion on 31.7 million trips.¹ At least \$3.3 billion of the \$13.6 billion went to the airline industry. That figure could double if travel was made more accessible. The Americans with Disabilities Act, Titles II and III, have numerous provisions covering various aspects of the travel industry. The accessibility requirements pertain not only to hotels and restaurants, but to transportation and airports as well.² The ADA provides general non-discrimination language,³ but also creates specific rules for the acquisition of accessible transportation equipment. Frequently, getting to and from the airport can present the most daunting of battles for the traveler with disabilities.

Parking At or Near the Airport

Parking at the airport is a primary concern for many travelers with disabilities. Airports are required to provide accessible parking spaces in all lots.⁴ The number of accessible spots required depends on the total number of spots in the lot, but roughly one accessible space is required for every 25 spaces. These spaces should be as close as possible to the accessible route and shuttle bus stops.

If the parking lot is remote and requires shuttle transportation to the airport, then accessible shuttle service should be made available. The requirements for accessible transportation depend on whether the lot is public or private. Shuttle buses at airports that are run by public entities should all be lift-equipped⁵ (49 CFR sections 37.71 and 37.73).

The rules are less stringent for private parking lots. Some private lots may not offer accessible transportation even though they should. Private parking lots providing transportation to and from the airport are considered "private entities not primarily engaged in providing transportation services" (49 CFR section 37.101). Car

rental companies would also fall within this category. Both private lots and car rental companies must follow certain rules in regards to purchasing accessible equipment. These rules are similar to those for companies that are primarily engaged in providing transportation services (see below), except that the "equivalent service" option applies to the purchase or lease of new equipment that seats less than 16 people, rather than eight. Also, these companies are not specifically required to ensure that new vehicles, seating less than 16, are accessible. They must only ensure that the vehicles meet the equivalent service requirements, whether or not they purchase a new vehicle.

Transportation from Outside the Airport

If an individual chooses to travel by private transportation from his/her home or hotel to the airport, s/he may have difficulty finding accessible service. ADA compliance by private transportation providers has been poor, despite efforts by the United States Department of Justice to enforce the law.

Generally, private providers of transportation services, such as airport shuttle services, must acquire accessible new equipment.⁶ Some airport transportation service is "fixed route," meaning it goes from one fixed point to another, on a fixed schedule. Other providers have a "demand responsive system," meaning the service is not to and from fixed points and it does not operate on a schedule. The acquisition rules for private providers of transportation services are somewhat complicated and depend on the size of the vehicle and whether the service is fixed route or demand responsive.

Demand responsive transportation systems acquiring any new equipment, no matter the seating capacity, must buy or lease accessible equipment unless they are able to meet the standard for "equivalent service" (49 CFR section 37.105). Equivalent service means the system, when viewed in its entirety, provides service to people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate and is equivalent to the service provided to individuals without disabilities in regards to schedule, response time, fares, geographic area of service, hours and days of service, availability of information, and reservation capacity. The regulations do allow companies to demonstrate they are able to provide equivalent service through such means as contractual or pooling arrangements. The regulations

suggest that pooling of resources is one way small transportation providers can satisfy the requirements of the ADA without necessitating the purchase of accessible equipment by every single entity.

For fixed route systems, all acquisitions of new vehicles, other than automobiles or vans seating less than eight, must be accessible. For fixed route providers who acquire a van seating less than eight, the lease or purchase must be of an accessible van unless the provider can meet the standard of "equivalent service."

Taxi companies are only required to follow the new acquisition requirements when leasing or purchasing a vehicle other than an automobile. If a taxi company uses vans, the company must comply with all of the "demand responsive transportation system" rules. Other non-discrimination provisions of the ADA do apply to taxi services.

Other ADA requirements that airport transportation providers should follow, but sometimes do not, relate to service aspects such as reservation systems, fares, and treatment of service animals. The provider should offer equivalent means for making reservations so that if, for example, the provider has Web-based reservation capacity, a person who needs an accessible ride can make the reservation online as well.

Transportation providers may not charge a higher rate for providing accessible service. A few years ago, the Disabilities Law Program filed a complaint on behalf of a client against a Delaware transportation provider who charged a higher rate for providing a lift-equipped van as compared to an unequipped van. Similarly, a provider cannot charge extra for stowing a wheelchair or other AT device. Such surcharges clearly violate the ADA.

Likewise, a transportation provider cannot refuse to transport a service animal. A rider must be allowed to bring a service animal with him/her. The service animal need not have a certification, but should meet the ADA definition of a service animal: "a dog or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability" (28 CFR section 36.104).

A provider cannot insist that a rider with a disability have a companion. The provider must also maintain all of the accessible features that it owns. If the provider has a lift-equipped van, the ADA

requires the provider to maintain the lift in working order, and to train staff to operate the equipment safely.

The Department of Justice has entered settlement agreements in several airport transportation cases that provide some insight into how airport transportation providers should provide accessible service. In *United States of America v. Supershuttle International, Inc.*,⁷ the Department settled complaints against this nationwide provider of demand responsive airport transportation. Supershuttle had purchased 880 new vans after the passage of the ADA, and only 17 of those were accessible. Several company locations, including New York and Denver, had no accessible equipment. In the settlement, Supershuttle was ordered to develop non-discriminatory policies and reservation practices, train its employees, maintain its accessible vans in good working order, and ensure that every Supershuttle location had at least two accessible vans.

In a settlement agreement with Affordable Airport Shuttle, which operates in the Washington, D. C. area,⁸ the government required that the transportation company enter into contractual relationships with other providers until it acquired an accessible van of its own. This agreement was an example of providing equivalent service.

In *United States Department of Justice v. Skyway Group* (also known as Arizona Shuttle),⁹ a provider of fixed route transportation from Phoenix Airport to Tucson, Arizona, did not have accessible equipment and refused to allow a customer to ride with her service animal. Also, prior to the complaint being filed, the company had purchased two large inaccessible shuttle vans. The company agreed to purchase two new accessible vans and pay damages and fines to settle this case.

Airports

The airport's physical plant and services are covered by the ADA. Doorways, bathrooms, elevators, and other areas should meet the accessibility guidelines found in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities. Any complaints or questions about an airport should be directed to the airport management.

Transportation inside the airport, whether by wheelchair or by motorized vehicle, is provided by the airlines. For example, Philadelphia Airport does not own or lend out wheelchairs. They do,

however, operate a hotline to help travelers access wheelchairs from the airlines.

Heightened security at airports means there is restricted access to passenger drop-off areas. These areas may also be further away from ticketing zones. Passengers with disabilities will be subject to all of the security checks, and assistive technology will be inspected.

Air Carriers

Airline accessibility is covered by the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) of 1986 (49 USC section 41705). Before traveling by air, it is essential to become familiar with this law. Some details are listed below, but the law is quite all-encompassing. The United States Department of Transportation has a useful publication titled "New Horizons, Information for the Air Traveler with a Disability," available at <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/horizons.htm>. Since 2000, enforcement actions under this law have resulted in almost \$7 million in fines.

Under the ACAA, new aircraft (those ordered after 1990) are required to have certain accessibility features. Aircraft seating more than 30 people must have moveable armrests on half of all aisle seats. Twin-aisle aircraft must have accessible lavatories, and aircraft seating more than 100 must have storage spaces for manual wheelchairs. Ramps or mechanical lifts are required for most aircraft with 19-30 seats, and at all airports with over 10,000 annual deplanements.

The law requires airlines not to engage in discrimination against people with disabilities. An airline may, however, refuse to carry a passenger on the basis of safety, which can include health and/or disability related reasons, or if there are no lifts, boarding chairs, or other devices available to enplane the passenger. A Medical Certificate may be required only if the passenger is on a stretcher, needs oxygen during the flight, has a communicable disease, or has a medical condition that causes a carrier to have reasonable doubt that the passenger can complete the flight safely and without the need of extraordinary medical assistance. Airline personnel are not required to lift or carry passengers with disabilities. An airline may not require a passenger with a disability to travel with an attendant except when the attendant is essential for safety.

A passenger may be required to give advance notice (48 hours) to the airline for certain accommodations, such as transportation of a power wheelchair in an aircraft seating less than 60, transportation of hazardous materials such as power wheelchair batteries, or provision of an on-board wheelchair for someone who is able to use an inaccessible lavatory but needs a chair to do so. Airlines may not charge for these accommodations, but may charge for optional services such as provision of oxygen, hook-up for a respirator, or accommodations for someone traveling on a stretcher.

Practical Tips

Planning and preparation are key elements for a successful travel experience. Ground transportation should be arranged well in advance. Any issues related to seating or medical equipment should be raised with the airline well in advance. Consult with a travel agent or use an Internet disability travel database such as **www.abledata.com** or **Easter Seals' Project Action**, http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ES_PA_free_resources&s_esLocation=FR for more information. In addition, www.frommers.com has an excellent section on travelers with disabilities. A publication titled, "The Accessible Guide for Specialized Ground Transportation," which can be purchased for \$79.95 from www.accessibletransport.com, may provide additional information.

If travel plans go awry, file a complaint regarding airline accessibility immediately with the Complaints Resolutions Official (CRO) at the airport. Each carrier must have an official at each airport serviced by the carrier. If the CRO determines that no violation has occurred, s/he must provide a written summary to the passenger. Travelers may also contact the United States Department of Transportation Disability Hotline at (800) 778-4838 or (800) 455-9880 (TTY). All complaints filed with a carrier must be handled within 30 days. Another option is to contact the Department of Transportation, Aviation Consumer Protection Division at <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/problems.htm>, airconsumer@ost.dot.gov, (202) 366-2220 or (202) 366-0511(TTY) to file a complaint. A complaint form is downloadable from the department's Website.

ADA complaints may be filed with the United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Disability Rights Section-NYAV, Washington, DC, 20530, or call the ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301, (800) 514-0383 (TTY). It is also possible to proceed directly to federal court, but before doing so be sure to seek legal advice.

References:

1 Harris Survey sponsored by The Open Doors Organization, the Travel Industry Association of America, and the Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality.

2 Accessibility of airlines is usually not covered by the ADA, but rather by the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 (49 USC section 41705, 14 CFR section 382). Accessibility of airports is covered by the ADA. Private airport transportation and parking services are covered by state and local accessibility laws.

3 The ADA generally states that no entity providing transportation services may discriminate against an individual in the provision of services based on disability (49 CFR section 37.5). This would include requiring assigned seating, attendants, charging more for services, etc.

4 Publically owned airports are governed by Title II of the ADA.

5 At Philadelphia International Airport, all shuttle buses that run from the economy (remote) parking lots to the terminals are lift-equipped. Philadelphia International Airport recently published a brochure entitled "Getting Around: A Guide for Travelers with Disabilities" which is available at <http://www.phl.org/ada2.html#ada> or by calling (215) 937-5499 or (215) 937-6755 (TTY).

6 The requirement really only comes into play when a new purchase is made by an entity. If a company chooses not to purchase new equipment, then the traveler must fall back on the general non-discrimination provisions (49 CFR section 37.5).

7 DOJ Nos. 202-8-40; 73-70; 73-56,
www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/superstl.htm

8 DOJ No. 202-35-91, www.usdoj.gov/crt/foia/mdaffshuttle.html

9 DOJ No. 202-8-36, www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/skywayse.htm

Driving Down the Road to Independence

Dan Fendler, AT Specialist, Sussex County ATRC

Driving is a part of the American way of life. It's often a key component of one's own sense of independence. If a functional limitation is keeping an individual from driving, there may be some adaptive technology available that could help.

Get an Assessment

Regardless of the circumstance, whether the functional limitation is recent or long-term, consider having a driving assessment done. Currently, there is no facility in Delaware that performs driving assessments, but there is a program in Pennsylvania. The **Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital** has an Adapted Driving Program designed to meet the needs of individuals whose ability to drive has been affected by a disability, medical condition, or the aging process. Program participation requires a physician's prescription. Clients, family members, insurance companies, and other agencies may also initiate a referral. For more information, contact Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital at (610) 640-3943.

Delaware DMV

According to Kathy Wickwire, the Driver Improvement Officer of Delaware's Division of Motor Vehicles Medical Section, there are procedures that must be followed in order to ensure safe and legal operation of a vehicle equipped with adaptive equipment. For new drivers, both written and eye tests are required to receive a permit. A medical form is needed from an individual's physician that describes the nature of the driver's disability and the equipment needed to accommodate it. A permit will then be issued that allows a new driver to participate in appropriate training at a certified driving rehab center. If an individual is a new resident and already has adaptive equipment installed, s/he must take a road test with the equipment and provide a doctor's note. Please contact the Medical Division at (302) 744-2507 for any additional information or forms.

Types of Available Equipment

One of the more common adaptations available is hand controls. Hand controls enable the driver to control the gas and brake pedals without the use of legs or feet. There are two types of controls— portable units and semi-permanent mounted units. **Wheel**

Ability (www.wheelability.com, 541-342-2113) sells a portable unit, the **PHCIII** (Figure 1), for \$310. It can be used with most passenger vehicles and its design makes it suitable for temporary installations.

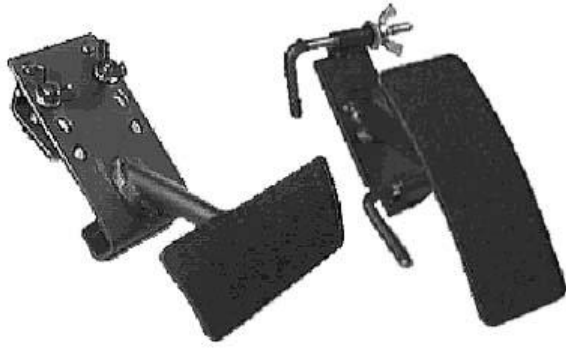


Figure 1

There are several different types of semi-permanent mounting systems for hand controls. Vendors for this type of control include **Driving Aids Development Corporation** (www.drivingaids.com, 800-767-6435) and **Kroepke Kontrols** (www.kroepkekontrols.com, 718-885-1100).

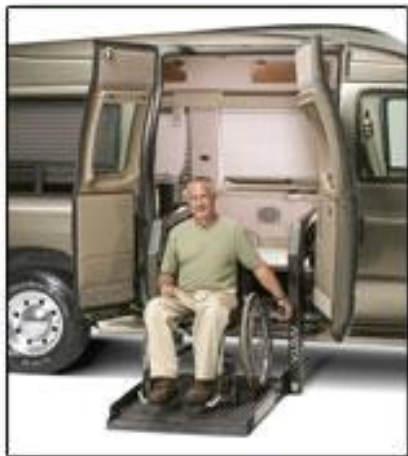
A left foot gas pedal allows a driver to operate the right-sided gas pedal from a position left of the brake pedal. Vendors of this type of device include **Handicaps, Inc.** (www.handicapsinc.com or 800-782-4335) and **North End Mobility** (www.northend-mobility.com, 905-735-5552).

Gas, brake and clutch pedal extenders lengthen the pedals and permit the driver to be further away from the wheel and airbag, which is a safety consideration in the event of an accident. Vendors include **Gary E. Colle, Inc.** (www.garyecolleinc.com, 858-748-9414) and **Drivemaster** (www.drivemaster.net, 973-808-9709).



Pedal extenders (Gary E. Colle, Inc., \$139)

Driver seats can be converted and adapted to meet an individual's specific needs. Lifts and ramps may also be added to a vehicle to enable an individual who uses a wheelchair or scooter to easily enter and leave a vehicle. Some vehicles can be modified so the individual can drive the car while sitting in his/her mobility device. Vendors for the products mentioned above include **Bruno Independent Living Aids** (www.bruno.com, 800-882-8183) and **Independent Mobility Systems** (www.ims-vans.com, 800-IMS-VANS).



Vista Series Lift (Braun Corp., contact Braun dealer for price)

The list of adapted driving devices goes on and on and includes items such as a knob that helps the driver to steer, a device that allows the driver to use the turn signals from the right side of the

steering wheel instead of the left, and a device that enables the driver to steer with his/her feet. For more information on adapted driving equipment, please contact your local ATRC.

A Beginner's Guide to DVR and DVI

Marvin Williams, AT Specialist, Kent County ATRC

Often, one of the hardest things in dealing with a disability, or any life change, is finding out just where to go to get the help that will make a difference. The goal of this article is to help people figure out how to get assistance from DVR and DVI.

Let's start with DVR. DVR stands for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It is a division of the DE Department of Labor. DVR provides services or goods that are required to assist people with disabilities in finding or keeping a job. Services include job counseling and guidance, physical assessments, interpreter services, assistive technology, etc. Each DVR referral is assigned a vocational rehabilitation counselor who makes the determination of eligibility. An individual is eligible for DVR services if s/he has a physical or mental impairment, and 1) the impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment, 2) s/he can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehab services, and 3) s/he requires vocational rehab services to prepare for, secure, or regain employment. After eligibility is established, the VR counselor helps the client through the process of finding or keeping a job.

How do I sign up? The first step is to contact the capable folks at DVR.

- Wilmington Central Office (302) 761-8275
- Wilmington VRS (302) 761-8300
- New Castle VRS (302) 326-8930
- Newark VRS (302) 368-6980
- Middletown VRS (302) 378-5779
- Dover VRS (302) 739-5478
- Georgetown VRS (302) 856-5730

For additional information, visit www.delawareworks.com/dvr.

Next we have DVI. DVI stands for the Division for the Visually Impaired. It is a division of Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS), and is a state-run program. Contrary to common belief, DVI is not affiliated with DVR. The agencies are indeed separate entities that operate distinctive services. While DVR deals with individuals with many different disabilities, DVI specializes in helping individuals with visual impairments. As stated on their Website, www.state.de.us/dhss/dvi, the main eligibility criterion for DVI services is, "...established by an individual's visual acuity as determined by their doctor and supplied by a signed doctor's report." This report is the keystone to enrollment. Thus, it is important for an individual who is applying for services to have seen a doctor within the past six months to one year. This will make it easier to get a complete and accurate report from the doctor. For more information about DVI and enrollment, contact their office in New Castle at (302) 255-9800 or dhssinfo@state.de.us.

Some helpful tips may make the registration process for either agency easier. First, make sure to see a physician and any specialists no more than six months to one year before registering.

Second, keep a journal of all the phone calls to DVR or DVI and anyone else who is contacted in the process. Keep track of the time, date, and highlights of each phone call. Note the telephone number called, as well as the names of everyone with whom you spoke. Also, jot down questions that always seem to creep up when there is no one around who is able to answer them.

The third and maybe most important thing to remember is that the people representing the agency via the telephone are people. Try to extend to them the same respect and courtesy that you would like to receive.

My fourth tip is make sure to provide the agency with complete and correct contact information, including your daytime telephone number and mailing address.

My fifth tip is to make sure the agency is aware of any accommodations that may be needed in order for you to read and complete information and forms as well as keep an appointment. Make sure the need for accommodation is stated at the beginning of your interaction.

If you have further questions regarding enrolling in either DVI or DVR, please direct them to the appropriate agency.

The AT Bargain Basement

Marvin Williams, AT Specialist, Kent County ATRC

Hello, true believers! Once again we have another unbelievable installment of the AT Bargain Basement. I'm your guide on this tour to find those little bits of AT that go unnoticed because they are inexpensive and right under our noses. As always, the most important rule of this column—the AT presented here has to be priced under \$100, otherwise, I can't call it a bargain. I also welcome all of you, dear readers, to participate by letting me know about any bargains you may stumble across. That being said, let's get to the bargains!



Figure 1

Our first item is the **IntelVoice™ Voice Activated Dimmer Switch** (Figure 1). It can be used with most lights and even some small appliances. It's nice because it is a stand alone unit, so just plug in the device to be controlled and it is ready to go. The unit has two modes—speaker independent and speaker dependent. Speaker independent mode can be controlled by any person's voice using four command words: "low," "medium," "high," and "off." Speaker dependent mode allows the user the flexibility of programming customized words in the speaker's language of choice. This allows the user to employ multiple units in the same room without dealing with command conflicts. This device is not good for soft-spoken individuals and it works best in a low noise environment without a lot of obstructions (i.e., not behind the furniture). This device should not be used to control appliances with a heating element, such as coffee pots, toasters, blow dryers, or space heaters. It is also not

recommended for use with a computer because computers do not like having their power levels played with at all. It is also best not to use this device outdoors or in damp areas. This device is recommended for use as a lamp dimmer or as an on/off function for things like a fan, television, or radio. However, do be careful in using the unit with a television as the people speaking on the screen may activate the device! The unit costs \$29.99 and is available from **Dynamic Living, Inc.**

Dynamic Living also has a wall mounted version called the **IntelaVoice Wall Switch Dimmer**. This is the same thing as the stand alone dimmer switch mentioned above, but this device is permanently mounted to the wall as part of the switch plate. Like the above unit, it has two speech recognition modes and is trainable in one. This unit is also affordably priced at \$39.99.

The next bargain recommendation is actually about two stores from which to purchase AT devices—**Home Depot** and **Lowes**. Both stores have lots of assistive technology that is useful around the house. Let's start with the kitchen sink. Sometimes it can be difficult to reach the faucet, especially if an individual uses a wheelchair and does not have a sink that the wheelchair can roll under. A pull-out faucet helps address this problem.



American Standard Reliant Bone Single Handle Pull-Out Kitchen Faucet (Home Depot, \$99)

A pull-out faucet allows the user to move the faucet to where it needs to be. While there are some wonderful pull-out faucets for well over \$200, there are also versions available from both Home Depot and Lowes for under \$100. Home Depot has three models, each priced at \$99. Lowes has a **Moen** chrome unit priced at \$98. As with

every device mentioned in this column, check with the store for availability and current pricing.

Along the same lines as the pull-out faucets, both stores have a wide selection of handheld shower heads. These are great because they bring the force of the water stream close to the bather. The handheld shower allows the user to direct the water flow. If an individual is also using a shower chair or bath bench, this item is worth its weight in gold. Prices range from \$14 to \$100 depending on the features of the unit.



Moen Chrome 8 Function Hand-Held Shower Massage (Lowe's, \$36.98)

Home Depot and Lowe's are also good places to find bath grab bars. Both stores have many different styles and colors, and quite a few models are priced below \$100. As with any type of home modification, make sure that a knowledgeable person oversees the installation. It could save many headaches (not to mention accidents).

Well, that does it for this installment of the Bargain Basement. Like always, I welcome your questions, comments, and bargains! So until next, time remember just because it's inexpensive, does not mean it has to be cheap.

Product Contact Information

Dynamic Living, Inc.

(888) 940-0605

www.dynamic-living.com

Home Depot

(800) 553-3199

www.homedepot.com

Lowe's

(800) 993-4416

www.lowes.com

Inclusion and LIFE Conference Dates Announced

Several upcoming events for Fall 2004 and Winter 2005 have been announced. For more information about these and other events in the Delaware area, please visit www.dati.org/events/index.php.

Inclusion Conference

The 11th annual Inclusion Conference, titled "Better Together," will be held at the Sheraton Dover Hotel on November 9, 2004. The conference will run from 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. This year's keynote speaker is Mike Kneale, who will discuss themes of exceptional leadership. A \$25 per person fee, which includes the continental breakfast and lunch, will be charged to participants. This year's conference offers a "3 for the price of 2" registration discount when a general education and special education teacher bring along an administrator.

LIFE Conference

The date for the 7th Annual LIFE Conference has also been announced. This conference will be held on January 27, 2005 at the Dover Sheraton Hotel. Twelve workshops will be offered throughout the day focusing on legislation, independence (through AT), family, and education.

Workshops sessions are not finalized as of press time, but topics are likely to include funding options for assistive technology, memory support technology, and how to conduct a home assessment.

If you would like more information on either conference, please contact the Developmental Disabilities Council at (302) 739-7193 or mmills@state.de.us.

Webinar to Focus on Teaching and Learning Methods

Please keep in mind the dates of September 28, October 5, and October 12, 2004. On these dates several members of the Mid-Atlantic Consortium on Accessible Information Technology in Education (including DATI) will present a three-part webinar series focusing on Universal Design for Learning.

The seminar will be held via teleconference, with live captioning online and recorded audio available. For more information, contact the DATI at (800) 870-DATI or dati@asel.udel.edu.

DATI Equipment Loan Policy

DATI has a wide variety of equipment at the Assistive Technology Resource Centers for the primary purpose of demonstration and short-term loan. The policy for the loan of the equipment is as follows:

The standard loan period is two weeks, defined as the day borrowed (e.g., Monday the 10th) to the same day two weeks later (e.g., Monday the 24th). Loans may be extended providing there are no names on the waiting list and/or that an extension will not interfere with an existing reservation. The maximum loan period is four weeks.

A maximum of four devices may be borrowed during any single loan period. However, combinations of devices may be treated as a single device if the components are interdependent—either operationally, or because one component is required for the user to access another. Equipment loans across state lines are not permitted. Equipment must also remain in Delaware throughout the loan period.

To Contact DATI's Central Site office or the ATRC closest to you, call 1-800-870-DATI

Press

#1 for English or

#2 for Spanish,

then press

#3 for the Central Site office

#4 for the New Castle County ATRC

#5 for the Kent County ATRC

#6 for the Sussex County ATRC

TDD callers: Do not press #1 or #2 and your call will be answered on a TDD line at the Central Site office.

DATI Resource Centers Throughout the State...

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative

Center for Applied Science & Engineering

University of Delaware/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children

PO Box 269

Wilmington, DE 19899-0269

1-800-870-DATI

New Castle County ATRC

Easter Seals of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore

61 Corporate Circle, Corporate Commons

New Castle, DE 19720-2405

(302) 328-ATRC; (302) 328-2905 (TDD)

Kent County ATRC

Easter Seals of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore

100 Enterprise Place, Suite One

Dover, DE 19904-8200

(302) 739-6885; (302) 739-6886 (TDD)

Sussex County ATRC

Easter Seals of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore

This center is in the process of relocating. Staff and AT equipment can still be accessed by appointment.

(302) 856-7946; (302) 856-6714 (voice or TDD)

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