

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Assistive Technology

Program Overview

The Assistive Technology (AT) Program works to support full access and integration for Vermonters with disabilities and aging related needs in education, work and their communities. We provide creative tools and strategies that help people live, learn, work, and play. Staff support consumers and organizations by providing information and assistance, equipment demonstrations and loans, technical assistance, funding resources as well as consultations for VR consumers.

Staff and Partners

DAIL staff include one Program Director and one Service Coordinator who work in partnership with the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion (CDCI) at the University of Vermont. CDCI operates three regional AT Tryout Centers, each staffed by an AT Specialist serving Vermonters across the state. Other partners include:

- Linking Learning to Careers
- Vermont Center for Independent Living
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Fanny Allen
- Opportunities Credit Union
- Vermont Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program
- Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports
- Children with Special Health Needs
- Vermont Communication Task Force

Recent Developments and Accomplishments

- Staff helped devise a training to assist VR counselors to better serve consumers with hearing loss. This training included education on various types of hearing loss, hearing aids and devices, and funding opportunities for consumers.
- Program staff have been working closely with Linking Learning to Careers to provide technical assistance to the program and training for two new AT Specialists who have been hired to work in Vermont communities to improve career and college readiness for high school students with disabilities.

Future Directions

- Program staff are working with community partners to promote services and reach additional Vermonters. An example of this includes technical assistance that staff provided to the Aging and Disability Resource Connection to create an equipment demonstration kit as well as a video training series to be distributed to Area Agency on Aging staff and clients.

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- Staff are working on an initiative with the Agency of Digital Services, Department of Human Resources, Buildings and General Services and Office of Risk Management to provide State of Vermont employees greater accessibility to information and communication technology.

Results

Information and assistance:

- 1044 individuals were given information and assistance relating to AT Devices or Services
- 146 individuals were given information and assistance related to AT Funding

Device Demonstrations:

- 809 demonstrations

Device Loans:

- 733 items loaned out

Outreach:

- 55 outreach events and trainings for approximately 2,748 participants

Success Stories (pseudonyms used)

Laura was having a very difficult time hearing and it was impacting her job and general quality of life. She worked with staff at one of our tryout centers to determine the best hearing device for her. Laura borrowed it, tried it out and ended up purchasing one for herself. She now hears much better and reports, “it’s my favorite piece of equipment. I don’t have to struggle anymore.”

Sara is a 72-year-old writer who is no longer able to type. Staff introduced her to speech recognition software that works with her computer, so she can continue to write. She thought the technology would be challenging but found it to be easy to learn and use.

Sharon, a speech and language pathologist from a home health and hospice agency, approached AT staff to help Thomas who had been diagnosed with ALS and relied on his partner for all daily living tasks. Staff helped configure a computer tablet that Thomas was able to use to operate the lights, phone, and television in his home as well as the internet, including social media. As a former engineer, Thomas is grateful for the technology and the level of assistance and independence AT provides him.