



Introduction to Assistive Technology for Adults

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology, or AT, is a device that helps a person with a disability perform everyday tasks. It can be any item or piece of equipment that you buy or create that is used to maintain or improve your ability to do tasks you need or want to do. It can also be a service that helps you choose, get and use an AT device.

AT may be very simple or it may be high-tech. It might be as basic as a pencil grip, a cane, or a magnifying glass. High-tech devices could include items like modified computer equipment, a motorized wheelchair, communication devices, or assistive listening devices. AT services include evaluating your needs to deciding what AT would help you, adapting a device specifically for your needs, training you on how to use the device, and repairing and maintaining the AT.



Who needs Assistive Technology?

Many people can benefit from AT. If you have problems with communication, mobility or any other daily living task—whether at work, home or in the community—you may want an evaluation to see if AT can help you. Your doctor, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, audiologist, or other licensed medical professional can assess your need for AT. Funding sources require this professional assessment and recommendation before paying for AT.



Assistive Technology can be funded in a number of different ways.

- **If you receive Medicare**, you can reach the **Medicare Helpline** at 1-800-633-4227.
- **Medicaid:** If you receive Medicaid, you can reach **Department of Medical Assistance Services Recipient Helpline** at 804-786-6145. If you get **Medicaid Waiver** services, AT may be a covered service.
- Some **private insurance** policies may pay for AT. They often require both pre-authorization and a Letter of Medical Necessity. Coverage varies. Read your policy carefully and talk with your provider before making a purchase.

- **Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)** may be able to assist you if you need AT in order to get or keep a job. www.vadars.org/
- **Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)** www.vdbvi.org
- **Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH)** www.vddhh.org
- **Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS)** provides information on AT products, funding, and resources. VATS also contracts to collect, repair and recycle durable medical equipment, and may provide short-term equipment loans. www.vats.org
- **Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority (ATLFA)** makes low-interest loans and loan guarantees to people with disabilities for equipment and technology that promote independence, quality of life and employment opportunities. <http://atlfa.org>

Other possible resources are local agencies such as a Community Services Board, Center for Independent Living and Department of Social Services; private AT vendors and providers; and local and national charities.

If you are denied AT services, the provider should provide you with the reason for the denial and a statement of your appeal rights.