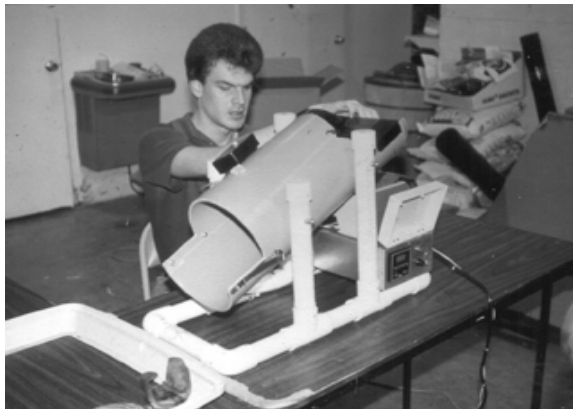


Technology is constantly changing. Your needs change. You may have to ask your counselor to revisit your rehabilitation technology needs in the future.

Remember, **you** know more than anyone how you have learned to accommodate to the limitations of your disability. **You** know what unique ways you have to get things done. **You** know what your problems are and what you might need to help you go to work. **By law, your choices MUST be considered when your vocational plan is being developed.**

This guide exists through the efforts of the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. It was developed by Clint Brizendine, Dr. Barney Fleming, Dave Matheis, and Darrell Mattingly.



The Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability in employment or the provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all programs and activities.

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Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

Consumer Guide to Rehabilitation Technology Services

Putting People & Solutions To Work



What is rehabilitation technology?

Rehabilitation technology is the application of assistive technologies, engineering methods and scientific principles to assist individuals with disabilities to learn, to go to work, and to live more independently in their communities.

The Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation may provide rehabilitation technology devices and/or services if they are needed to help you obtain your vocational goal. Any devices or services that are to be provided by the Department must be included in your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).

The Definition from the Rehab Act

Rehabilitation technology is the systematic application of assistive technologies, engineering methods, or scientific principles to meet the needs of and address the barriers confronted by individuals with disabilities in rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living, and recreation.

Assistive technology is any mechanical, electronic, or computer-based equipment (non-mechanical or non-electric aid) or specialized instructional materials that persons with disabilities can use to assist them in learning, in making their environment more accessible, in competing in the work environment, in enhancing their independence, or in otherwise improving their quality of life.

Rehabilitation technology includes compensatory strategies as well as aids and devices. It is the process of or services that accompany an appropriate piece of equipment for a person with a disability. It includes information, evaluation recommendations, fitting, training, maintenance, and follow-up with a prescribed or fabricated aid or device.

(From the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998)

assistive technology is relatively small and new so you may have limited choices.

TRAINING AND FOLLOW-UP: Once you receive your rehabilitation technology equipment, your counselor and/or the rehabilitation technology coordinator should make sure that you are trained on the device. Department staff may perform the training or it may be purchased from a third party. Whatever the case, make sure you are thoroughly trained and are comfortable with the use of any device or equipment. Tell your counselor if you need more training now or in the future. Your counselor or the rehabilitation technology coordinator should check with you periodically on how you are doing with your rehabilitation technology. However, if you are having problems with the technology or feel that you are not getting the most use out of it, **YOU** should contact your counselor to let them know there is a problem.

Important things for you to remember when receiving rehabilitation technology from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation are:

If the equipment or service that you want or need does not relate to achieving your vocational/job goal, the Department will NOT provide it.

If the equipment or service is not clearly documented on the Individual Plan for Employment OR on an amendment to that plan, the Department has not agreed to provide it.

If the equipment is purchased for you, but you are not using it for the intended purpose of achieving your vocational goal, the Department may ask for the equipment to be returned.

Your equipment may be upgraded or replaced in accordance with state regulations if the equipment is needed to obtain or maintain employment.

technology assessment at the Department's Carl D. Perkins Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center. The Center has a fully-equipped assistive technology lab with trained staff.

NOTE: Remember, it is **YOUR** Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), and you should be involved in all decisions, including who does the assessment. If at all possible, a rehabilitation technology assessment should be performed in the environment or situation where the rehabilitation technology will be used. The individual performing the assessment should give you a variety of options. You should be closely involved in the selection of any equipment or services. You will be the individual using the rehabilitation technology, so you should be the person who is comfortable with its use.

PLANNING: Once an assessment has been performed and a report produced, you will meet with your counselor to discuss the results. Then you and your counselor will decide:

What (if any) rehabilitation technology devices and services will be purchased or leased;
Who will purchase the technology;
When the rehabilitation technology will be purchased;
What vendor will be used;
Who will set up the equipment for you;
Who will train you how to use the equipment and when you will be trained;
Who will service the equipment when necessary;
What your responsibilities will be concerning the rehabilitation technology?

PURCHASE: Once it has been determined what devices and services are needed, the counselor will help you locate the resources to purchase them. When appropriate, the Department will provide the technology. In other cases, you may have to receive assistance elsewhere. You need to be involved in selecting who will provide the equipment and/or services. Remember, however, that the field of

When should rehabilitation technology be considered?

You and your counselor may consider the use of rehabilitation technology services and/or devices at any time during the vocational rehabilitation process:

- ☛ When you first apply for services and during assessment;
- ☛ When your eligibility for services is being determined;
- ☛ When you and your counselor are developing your employment plan;
- ☛ When your plan is being implemented;
- ☛ When you start working;
- ☛ After you have been on the job and might need further services.



What types of rehabilitation technology devices and aids are available?

Aids for Daily Living -- self-help aids for use in activities such as eating, bathing, cooking, dressing, toileting, and home maintenance.

Augmentative Communication -- devices that provide a way to communicate for persons with limited speech.

Computer Applications -- special devices that can be added to a computer that can enable a person with a disability to use a computer.

Environmental Control Systems -- systems that enable someone who has problems with mobility to control things in their home or at work such as appliances, telephones, electronic aids, adjustable beds, and security systems.

Home/Worksite Modifications -- ramps, lifts, and bathroom or work station modifications that help an individual with a disability to move around in the home, at the job site, or elsewhere which will enable them to go to work.

Vehicle Modifications -- adaptive driving aids, hand controls, wheelchair lifts, modified vans or other specialized motor vehicles.

Note: *Such things as prosthetics and orthotics, aids for individuals with visual disabilities and hearing disabilities, wheelchairs and other mobility aids are considered assistive technology, but they are provided as physical restoration devices by the Department. Hearing aids and other devices for individuals with hearing disabilities are provided as rehabilitation technology under some circumstances.*

What is the DVR process for providing rehabilitation technology?

The Department follows these steps to determine if rehabilitation technology is needed by a consumer, what technology is appropriate, and whether the Department can provide it.

ASSESSMENT: At any time in the vocational rehabilitation process, the Department can provide you with a rehabilitation technology assessment to determine if there are rehabilitation devices, equipment, or services that can help you in obtaining your job goal. Just ask your vocational rehabilitation counselor for an assessment. There are a number of options:

- < The counselor may choose to conduct the assessment, with your help. This will depend upon the comfort level of the counselor and the extent of the assessment needed. However, many situations may be more complicated and you and/or the counselor may decide that additional knowledge is needed.
- < With your agreement, the counselor may request the involvement of one of the Department's rehabilitation technology coordinators. These specially trained staff members perform rehabilitation technology assessments and make recommendations.
- < Another option is for the counselor, again with your agreement, to arrange for a third party outside of the Department to perform an assessment. (This option can be considered if the rehabilitation technology coordinator is unable to perform the assessment in a *timely manner* or if your needs are so individualized that more specialized skill is needed.)
- < Yet another option would be to receive a rehabilitation

What other things might be considered when selecting the right rehabilitation technology for you?

Answering these questions will help you select the appropriate technology:

- 8 How does the technology meet my particular needs?
- 8 How does the technology operate?
- 8 What limitation or problem is it intended to address?
- 8 Are there safety concerns?
- 8 Is it easy and comfortable to use?
- 8 Is training required?
- 8 If training is required, will you have to go somewhere to get that training?
- 8 How reliable is it?
- 8 Where will it be used and does the environment affect how it is used?
- 8 If it is powered, is there access to reliable sources of power?
- 8 Does it have alternative power options?
- 8 Can it be moved from place to place easily?
- 8 Does it look and feel right?
- 8 How might it look after a year or two of normal use?
- 8 How will it affect the way you appear to other people?
- 8 Will it last?
- 8 What maintenance is required and, if so, can you or your family maintain it?
- 8 Will it be easy to get?
- 8 If the Department cannot provide the technology, who else might pay for it?
- 8 Who will pay for repairs or replacement in the future?



‘High Tech’, ‘Medium Tech’, ‘Low Tech’ and ‘No Tech’

When people hear the words ‘assistive technology’, they often think of something complex and expensive, but assistive technology devices can vary greatly in price, complexity and availability. They can range from ‘high tech’ devices to ‘low tech’ or even ‘no tech’ devices.

‘High tech’ devices are generally difficult to make or obtain and expensive. They often incorporate sophisticated electronics or computers. Relatively complicated mechanical devices such as conventional wheelchairs could be considered **‘medium tech’** devices. **‘Low tech’** items are cheaper and less complex and would include such items as adapted spoon handles, non-tipping drinking cups, etc. **‘No-tech’** solutions involve existing items in the environment that would not normally be identified as assistive technology and making use of them to serve specific functions for individuals with disabilities.

Who is qualified to determine your rehabilitation technology needs?

You and your counselor, perhaps with help from other family members, may have enough information to select and use rehabilitation technology. In other cases, a rehabilitation technologist, rehabilitation engineer, assistive technology practitioner, physician, or therapist may be able to help you better identify your employment-related needs and give you ideas about what technology might assist you. It is important to make informed choices before obtaining a device. Some items may require a prescription from a licensed or certified person like a doctor, audiologist, occupational therapist, optometrist, physical therapist, or speech pathologist.

What can help you in choosing the right rehabilitation technology?

7 Identify Your Needs

Identify your needs related to employment and how technology might be able to meet these needs.

7 Focus on Your Abilities, Not Disabilities

An assessment of your abilities is used as a starting point. Environments, tasks, and activities are modified to match your abilities. Technology is used to enhance your abilities.

7 Focus on the Environment

Rehabilitation technologists assume that the problem is in the environment, not the person. Rehabilitation technology will emphasize changing job environments and requirements to match your capacities and abilities.

7 Look for Your Comfort

Some individuals with disabilities accept and use technology

more eagerly than others. You should work closely with your counselor in exploring all available rehabilitation technology options. It is important that **YOU** feel comfortable using the technology that you will be getting.

7 Use Common Sense

Seek obvious solutions based on common sense. Rehabilitation technology is sometimes confused with high tech and high cost, but many solutions to functional problems are simple and inexpensive.

7 Be Specific

A good understanding of the problem is the first step to rehabilitation technology. Both your abilities and the tasks, activities, and environment must be accurately identified.

7 Do Your Own Research

You don't have to rely on others to provide you with the information you need. Do your own research into possible rehabilitation technology solutions. Find catalogs, talk to knowledgeable people, call information banks, and search the Internet. A listing of helpful Internet sites follows.

<http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/projects/dvr/rehabtech.htm> This is the Department's website for rehabilitation technology services. It contains many links to other valuable sites.

<http://trace.wisc.edu> The Trace Research and Development Center has information on adapted computer hardware and software, web site accessibility, universal design and a library of disability-related documents.

<http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/> The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides information about job accommodations and the employability of people with disabilities.