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## Reviewers

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Special recognition is given to the following groups:

- Blind Bowlers
- Busy Bees Craft Group
- Center for Sight & Hearing Advisory Council
- Fellowship Club
- Friends, family and persons receiving low vision or employment services
- Rockford Noon Lions
- Rockford Senior Citizens for the Deaf
- Staff of the Center for Sight & Hearing
- Staff of the Midwest Center for Postsecondary Outreach
- Winnebago County Association for the Blind



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This handbook is a guide. Write in it, make notes and answer the questions. Read it to learn about assistive technology and decide if you want to use assistive technology.

## What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology is a product or a device that helps a person with a disability perform everyday activities. Assistive technology helps people live more independently and enjoyably. You may find that people use different words to describe assistive technology, including: adaptive aids, rehabilitation technology, sensory aids, assistive devices or products.

The Technology Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (for children) are two laws that help people with disabilities find out about and help them use assistive technology.

## Assistive technology

You may buy assistive technology products off the shelf at a store, and most products cost less than \$100. You can try these products, buy them and take them home the same day. Others require setup or training by a professional who goes to your home or job to install the product and help you learn to use it.

## Adaptive technology

Products which are changed or modified to make them work for a person with a disability may be called adaptive technology. These range from simple labeling (for example, using rubber bands to identify canned goods) to changes in a computer workstation. A professional usually helps to implement these changes.

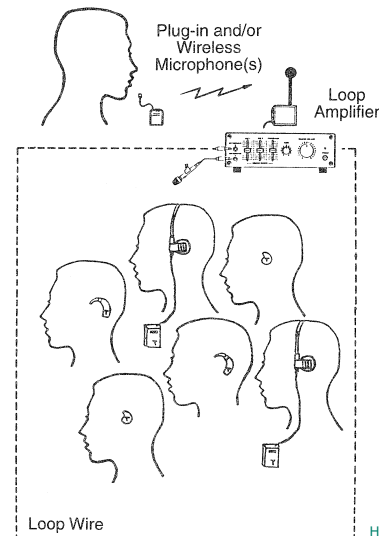
For persons who are deaf or have a hearing loss, assistive technology devices flash, vibrate or amplify sounds.

■ **Signaling and alerting** devices alert you of fire, the telephone, the doorbell, a crying baby, a personal call or a specific time. The signal is sent through flashing lights in your home or a vibration device like a pager. Most of these devices are wireless. Some use batteries and others are wired directly into your home's electrical system. Most signalers are very easy to use and install.



Photo: Harris Communications

■ **Amplification or assistive listening** devices have a microphone and a receiver. You can use them in classrooms, theaters, small groups or one-on-one situations. They are also used to listen to TV or radio. To transmit sounds, they may use FM signals (like a radio), infrared signals or wires.



Harris Communications

■ **Telecommunication devices** attach to most telephones so that the caller's voice or telephone ringer sounds louder. Some telephones are equipped with a built-in amplifier to control the volume of incoming sounds.



Photos: Harris Communications

Telephone communication requires a device called a TTY (teletype machine), TDD (telecommunication device for the deaf) or TT (text telephone). The device looks like a small typewriter and sends electronic tones across telephone lines to another device (TTY). Users can type and read the conversation on a display on the device. Computers that have special software can also be used for this type of communication.



Photo: Harris Communications

■ **Closed Captioning** allows you to read dialogue printed on the bottom of the TV screen. Since July, 1993, all 13" or larger TVs must have caption decoding as a standard feature. You can find and turn on closed captioning in the menu on your TV. If you have an older TV, you can purchase a closed-caption decoder device and hook it up to your TV for the same results.



Photo: Harris Communications

■ **Computerized Assisted Real-Time Captioning (CART)** is a written translation of spoken words onto a television or movie screen. A court stenographer uses a computer to caption live or real-time meetings, presentations, etc.



For more information about services or products for people experiencing a vision and/or hearing loss, call 800-545-0080 V/TTY or 815-965-4454 V/TTY.

For persons who are blind or have a vision loss, assistive technology devices make sounds or talk, use Braille or raised marks, have enlarged print or use different bold colors.

■ **Personal management devices** include clocks and watches, kitchen aids (Braille timers, high contrast cutting boards and liquid identifiers) and recreation aids (adapted board games, playing cards and Bingo cards).



Photo: LS&S, LLC

■ **Communication devices** help you read, write and take notes. Guides and templates help you follow text or write in a straight line. Tape recorders and memo recorders keep your messages. Some books, magazines or identification labels may be in Braille or large print.



Photo: LS&S, LLC

■ **Money management devices** use guides or templates that are placed over a check to guide you when filling it out. Talking calculators tell you numbers and totals. Wallet organizers keep bills and coins separate.



Photo: Maxi Aids

■ **Medical adaptations** include some medical equipment with guides, large digital displays or talk at the touch of a button. Others have magnifiers that enlarge liquid levels, large print or markings that can be felt. Examples are talking scales, glucometers and thermometers.



Photo: LS&S, LLC

■ **Reading machines** are electronic magnifiers that adjust (like a microscope) to help you read, look at photos and do other tasks. Whatever you want to see (book, newspaper, pill bottle, photograph, etc.) is placed under a camera and the print or picture appears larger. You view the print or picture on a monitor in black-and-white or color. Some reading machines are used with a computer.



Photo: Maxi Aids



Photo: Optelec

■ **Computer adaptations** change frequently and new designs appear every year. Special software and equipment enlarges the text on the screen, allows the computer to read the text aloud or changes the text to Braille. Reading machines and scanners are used with a computer to read other documents.



Photo: Telesensory

For more information about services or products for people experiencing a vision and/or hearing loss, call 800-545-0080 V/TTY or 815-965-4454 V/TTY.

This checklist is to help you decide if assistive technology can help you. You may ask yourself or a professional these questions:

### ■ Personal Concerns

What do I want to do?

What technology do I want?

Will it help me with my current needs? How?

Will it help me do something that I am currently unable to do?

How?

Where can't I use it?

Will I be able to learn to use this device easily?

Is it comfortable and easy to use?

Will it make me feel better about myself?

### ■ Training Needs

Briefly, how does this piece of technology work?

Is it ready to use?

Do I need training to use it?

Where can I get training?

How long will my training take?

Will it require travel or an overnight trip?

Is training included in the purchased price?

### ■ Care and Safety

Can I move it if necessary?

How do I clean it?

Can it be used indoors and outdoors?

Professionals at the Center for Sight & Hearing are available to help you answer questions about assistive technology. Call 815-965-4454 (V/TTY).

Is there a battery pack?

Does it use electricity?

Are there any safety concerns or risks when I use this technology?

If so, what?

### ■ Costs and Upgrades

What is the cost of the device?

Is the cost reasonable and affordable?

Is there a cost for training?

Who will pay for the device and training?

Are there trial, rental or lease arrangements?

Is it likely that it will need to be changed or upgraded in the future?

Is there a trade-in allowance?

### ■ Warranty and Maintenance

How much will I use it?

Is it durable?

What is the average life expectancy?

What maintenance is needed?

Can members of my family or I perform the needed maintenance?

Where can I get it fixed?

What will it cost to get it fixed?

Who will pay for repairs?

How long will it take to get fixed?

Can I get a loaner if my device must be sent in for repair or maintenance?

### Where can I find assistive technology?

Products are available from many sources. A doctor, counselor or social worker may have information to help you to find the products.

Simple Solutions at the Center for Sight & Hearing provides hands-on demonstrations and sells assistive technology products. Our trained professionals can also help you choose the best technology for you.

Call or visit a resource near you for more information.

#### Center for Sight & Hearing

625 Adams Street, Rockford, Illinois 61107

V/TTY 800-545-0080 or 815-965-4454

FAX 815-965-6023

#### Other

- Internet (*use key words: assistive technology, adaptive technology, sensory aids, rehabilitation technology, or rehabilitation products*);
- Independent living centers
- Audiologists and ophthalmologists
- Catalogs and electronics stores

### Who can I call for funding information?

Money to purchase assistive technology may be available to assist people who have a vision and/or hearing loss. Each resource has different requirements and rules for funding.

#### Possible resources

- Local service clubs such as Lions, Kiwanis, The Grange, etc.
- Vocational rehabilitation and other social service agencies (*check the yellow pages for list*)
- Churches
- School districts
- Employers
- Family and friends
- Insurance.

## Assistive Technology Services

The Center for Sight & Hearing is accredited by CARF, the national Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission in the area of Employment Assistive Technology.

Simple Solutions, our Assistive Technology Center, has products for you to try, borrow or buy. The show-room is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM through 4:30 PM. Professionals who have knowledge and experience about assistive technology can talk to you to see what service or product you need. Training is available to help you understand the device and use it properly and safely.

A trial of different assistive technology products may be needed to help you decide which one works best for you. Training is also available for computer assistive technology.

Presentations, consultations and training are available for employers, businesses and organizations.

## Other Services

We offer many services for persons of all ages and skill levels who have a vision and/or hearing loss.

**Rehabilitation teaching** covers areas to assist you to live or work on your own. Examples are daily activities: grooming or cooking; reading and math skills for work or home; or communication skills. Our CARF accredited **Employment Services** include help for you to find the right job, learn interview skills, and help for an employer who hires or has a worker with a hearing or vision loss.

**Counseling** is available to help you learn to solve problems. For persons with vision impairment, we provide **Orientation & Mobility training** to assist in travel in your home, work place, or community. If you have a recent vision loss, we offer **New Visions class**. The class helps you learn skills to feel better about your life and vision loss and familiarizes you with services that may help you. Grade I or II **Braille literacy classes** are also available.

**Low Vision Services** include a special examination to help you use your remaining vision. Our specially trained optometrist evaluates how well you see and how glare; lighting, contrasts, and background affect your vision. Special lights, magnifiers, or glasses may be prescribed. Then you learn how to use the special devices.

**The Social Recreation Program** offers many scheduled events and activities if you receive services at the Center. The monthly recreation schedule is printed in *Sights & Sounds*, the Center's monthly newsletter.

## More Information

For more information about services or products for people experiencing a vision and/or hearing loss, call 800-545-0080 (V/TTY) or 815-965-4454 (V/TTY).

To meet your assistive technology needs, the Center for Sight & Hearing has trained professionals, including a low vision specialist. In addition we work with ophthalmologists, audiologists, ear nose and throat specialists, occupational and physical therapists and other professionals within the community.

## Center for Sight & Hearing

625 Adams Street

Rockford, Illinois 61107

Phone 800-545-0080 V/TTY, 815-965-4454 V/TTY  
or 815-965-6023 FAX

## Discrimination

The Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

## Equal Opportunity Employer

The Center considers applicants for employment on the basis of ability and credentials and does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, race, color, creed or national origin. The Center actively seeks applicants and employees from diverse populations. We provide appropriate and reasonable accommodations to promote full inclusion.