



Information on Communicative Devices and Assistive Technology

Introduction

During its October Disability Awareness Conference, the Office of Disability Rights and the D.C. Commission on Persons with Disabilities asked participants attending a workshop on communicative devices and assistive technology for feedback on barriers that prevent consumers with disabilities from accessing assistive technology. In addition to identifying barriers, workshop participants recommended strategies to overcome these barriers as follows:

Barriers

- Access to affordable assistive technology and the seeming lack of coordination among service-provider organizations.
- Many devices are not covered, such as hearing aids or customized mobility aids and consumers do not know what is out there.
- DC agencies need to know who to go to for guidance if employees cannot recommend which assistive device will best meet their need.
- There is confusion on how to complete applications for assistive technology and a need for sources of free or low-cost training with the device to be provided at the time of purchase; otherwise, the device will be useless. It was observed that even with a manual, it is hard to learn to operate an assistive device.
- Sources are needed for obtaining recycled equipment - software or assistive devices that have previously been purchased.
- Sources are needed for Federal and local funds or low-interest loans to pay for assistive devices.

Strategies

- Offer an annotated resource list of organizations providing assistive technology; not all organizations do the same thing and serve the same clientele.
- Encourage on-going partnerships between the employer and employee for work-related assistive technology needs and involve the employee in the decision.
- Partner with parents to introduce children to appropriate assistive technology early and work with the recipient into adulthood, as technology needs will change.
- Educate consumers with disabilities about how to qualify for medically necessary equipment and assistive devices.
- Increase networking among assistive technology service providers to seek feedback from consumers with disabilities re their assistive technology needs/concerns.



District of Columbia
Commission on Persons with Disabilities

Assistive Technology Specialists and Service-Provider Contact Information

The following Websites are useful resources for information on how to access and utilize assistive technology:

- Venetia Demson, Chief, Adaptive Services Division, Martin Luther King Library
www.dclibrary.org
- Kevin Curtin, Director, Target Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture
<http://www.da.usda.gov/oo/target/>
- Alicia Johns, Program Manager, DC Assistive Technology Program
www.atpdc.org
- Leonard McPherson, Assistive Technology Specialist, Phoenix Therapeutic Services Inc.
ptsot@aol.com

For further information, contact:

Denise M. Decker, Ph.D., Commissioner
D.C. Commission on Persons with Disabilities

Christina Mitchell, Special Assistant
D.C. Commission on Persons with Disabilities

441 4th Street, NW, Suite 729 N
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 481-3877
christina.mitchell@dc.gov

DCCPD Webpage: <http://www.odr.dc.gov/odr/cwp/view,a,1386,q,575704.asp>