Chapter 13:

Rehabilitation Technology

Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Policy and Procedures Manual

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# Section I. Definitions

* 1. "Rehabilitation engineering " means the systematic application of engineering sciences to design, develop, adapt, test, evaluate, apply, and distribute technological solutions to problems confronted by individuals with disabilities in functional areas, such as mobility, communications, hearing, vision, and cognition, and in activities associated with employment, independent living, education, and integration into the community.
	2. “Rehabilitation technology” means the systematic application of technology, engineering methodologies, or scientific principles to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by, individuals with disabilities in areas that include education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living, and recreation. The term includes rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services.
	3. “Assistive Technology Device (AT)” means any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to:
		+ CCTVs
		+ Digital devices
		+ Adaptive software
		+ Electronic magnifiers
		+ Braillers and Braille Notetakers
		+ Scanners
		+ Braille embossers
	4. “Assistive Technology Service” means any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Such term includes:
		1. The evaluation of the assistive technology needs of an individual with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the impact of the provision of appropriate assistive technology and appropriate services to the individual in the customary environment of the individual;
		2. a service consisting of purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by individuals with disabilities;
		3. a service consisting of selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, replacing, or donating assistive technology devices;
		4. coordination and use of necessary therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices such as therapies, interventions, or services associated with education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
		5. training or technical assistance for an individual with a disability or, where appropriate, the family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of such an individual;
		6. training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education and rehabilitation services and entities that manufacture or sell assistive technology devices) employers, providers of employment and training services, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of individuals with disabilities; and
		7. a service consisting of expanding the availability of access to technology, including electronic and information technology, to individuals with disabilities.

# Section II. General Policy

A DBVI believes that with appropriate supports and accommodations, individuals who experience blindness or vision loss can be active and productive members of a competitive, integrated workforce. The supports include rehabilitation assistive technology that can be used to compensate for vision loss (i.e. synthetic speech devices) or enhance visual functioning (i.e. CCTVs). In other instances, rehabilitation engineering can make a worksite accessible. This includes an analysis and re-design of a job site, principles of ergonomics, or work area modifications.

B. Rehabilitation engineering, rehabilitation technology and related services may be provided at any stage in the rehabilitation process: during determination of eligibility (Chapter 1: Eligibility, Ability to Benefit from DBVI services and Trial Work); plan development (including worksite assessment); as a service in an IPE to reach a vocational goal; and as a post-employment service.

C. DBVI will provide rehabilitation technology (i.e. assistive or adaptive devices) determined necessary to achieve an employment outcome. This includes, but is not limited to, equipment, devices, and software that translate text into large print, speech, and braille. Replacement and repairs may also be covered if contained in the individual’s IPE or it is otherwise needed to achieve an employment outcome.

# Section III. Rehabilitation Technology Specialist

1. DBVI serves individuals whose disability is partial or total vision loss. These individuals may need various rehabilitation or assistive technology devices or services to accommodate their vision loss at home, in the community, or the employment setting. In most cases, the individual will be referred to DBVI’s Rehabilitation Technology Specialist who may perform, as needed by the individual’s situation, the following functions:
	1. Conduct a job analysis.
	2. Provide job modification information to the individual, counselor, and employer.
	3. Make recommendations for high- and low-tech adaptive aids and equipment; and/or,
	4. Provide on-site training in the use of adaptive equipment and software.
	5. Assessment and training may be done at the individual’s home or at a worksite.

# Section IV. Provision of Rehabilitation Technology and Services

A. **Individuals who are Employed**

* 1. DBVI will encourage employers to provide an employee with rehabilitation/assistive technology (AT) and services as a reasonable accommodation for the employee’s disability as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). DBVI and an employer may negotiate/share responsibility for AT needed to obtain, maintain, regain, or advance in employment.
	2. DBVI will provide rehabilitation/assistive technology devices when the AT is not considered a reasonable accommodation within the responsibility of the employer to provide under the ADA.
	3. DBVI will provide necessary AT when a consumer’s employment may be jeopardized by asking the employer to provide the technology or services.
	4. DBVI will loan AT devices to a consumer participating in short-term employment or a volunteer activity of six (6) months or less. In all cases, the AT devices are the property of DBVI and must be returned to DBVI when no longer needed.
	5. DBVI will provide AT for an approved job training opportunity leading to a skill or credential or an employment outcome.
	6. When a consumer has a change in employment, the existing AT will be utilized whenever possible.
	7. Regular seasonal employment will be treated in the same manner as year-round employment.
1. **Individuals who are Self-Employed**
2. DBVI will purchase and install AT and provide training in its use where the self-employment is the individual’s primary means of financial support;
3. DBVI’s AT specialist will evaluate the individual’s need for any assistive device or adaptive equipment in the work setting. They will also determine what type of equipment and training is necessary for the individual to perform the duties of the work activity.
4. Individuals who are self-employed are expected to have a plan for funding repairs to assistive technology or adaptive equipment (i.e. computers) for problems not related to the DBVI provided AT. This includes identifying a repair source for any repairs needed.
5. **Individuals who are participating in post-secondary training or education**
6. Individuals who want to enroll in college, a vocational training program, or take courses that require AT, are expected to discuss their plans with their DBVI counselor at least three months prior. This will allow DBVI time to evaluate, purchase, install, and train the individual in the appropriate use of the AT device.
7. Individuals who attend college or training on a part-time basis not leading to a degree, certificate, or industry credential may be loaned necessary AT. The AT will remain the property of DBVI and must be returned to DBVI when no longer needed or there is a decision to transfer ownership of the AT to the individual.
8. Individuals who drop out of college or training programs will return their technology to DBVI. The Director or designee may grant an exception to this provision if extenuating circumstances exist.
9. DBVI will consider replacement of AT when the current technology no longer meets academic requirements associated with the employment outcome in the IPE.
10. Individuals are expected to have a plan for repairs of AT that DBVI purchased for them consistent with the provision sustained in the DBVI Equipment Agreement included at the end of this chapter.
11. **High School Students**
12. High school students whose goal is to attend a post-secondary educational institution will be identified in their junior year to ensure they can establish proficiency with AT before graduation. DBVI counselors will identify these students as part of the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities. See Chapter 14, “Pre-Employment Transition Services”.
13. High school students will be evaluated in the fall semester of their junior year. Appropriate technology will be issued during the spring semester of their senior year.
14. High school students whose needs require the use of a computer at home will be expected to secure the technology through their school.
15. DBVI may furnish a CCTV for home use to students who are currently using one in school. The unit provided will be the same, or a DBVI AT evaluation will be provided to determine the appropriate device.
16. It is expected that the school will be responsible for the provision of technology and training except when provided by DBVI during the senior year. Exceptions will be at the discretion of the Director or designee.
17. **Rehabilitation Technology Services and Training**
18. DBVI will provide training in the use of any AT device needed to achieve an employment outcome.
19. DBVI will provide training in the use of the adaptive component of any AT purchased by the individual.
20. DBVI will provide training in the use of programs when adaptive skills are required to operate the AT device.
21. Individuals are responsible for specialized programs or skills beyond those necessary to perform employment or educational related tasks.
22. DBVI will provide assistive technology services to individuals pursuing full- or part-time employment, post-secondary education, or training as deemed appropriate and necessary by the rehabilitation technology specialist, the individual, and DBVI counselor.
23. Assistive technology services are exempt from the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits. However, comparable services and benefits shall be used unless seeking those benefits would interrupt or delay:
24. the progress of the individual’s progress toward achieving an employment outcome in the IPE;
25. an immediate job placement; or
26. the provision of services to an individual at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by a qualified medical professional.

See Chapter 19, “Comparable Services and Benefits”.

# Section V. Spending Guidelines – General Provisions

1. The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), with input from the State Rehabilitation Council, shall establish and maintain reasonable spending guidelines which shall be reviewed annually.
2. DBVI may not place absolute dollar limits on a specific service or total services provided. However, it can set reasonable spending guidelines to ensure reasonable costs to the program. The guidelines may not be so low as to deny the individual a necessary service.
3. When considering exceptions to the spending guidelines, the DBVI Director or designee must consider the individual’s ability to contribute to their services. The individual’s contribution must be:
4. Reasonable;
5. Based on the individual’s financial need; and
6. Not so high as to effectively deny the individual a necessary service.
7. DBVI cannot require individuals who are SSDI or SSI beneficiaries to provide funding toward their services, including post-secondary education and training.

# Section VI. Specific Funding Guidelines

1. The DBVI Director or designee must approve rehabilitation technology services beyond the expertise of the DBVI rehabilitation Technology Specialist and the anticipated cost exceeds $2, 000 per case.
2. The DBVI Director or designee must approve rehabilitation engineering services purchased out-of-state.
3. DBVI will provide AT equipment without cost to individuals who are participating in post-secondary education or training programs, employed, or self-employed as determined necessary by the rehabilitation technology specialist.

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# Attachment A

**Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living**

**Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**EQUIPMENT AGREEMENT**

This agreement by and between the State of Vermont, Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, acting by and through the Department’s Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (“Department”) and (“Consumer”), as follows:

* + 1. Department agrees to purchase and furnish the consumer the following property:
		2. Except as otherwise provided herein, title to the aforesaid property shall remain with the Department.
		3. Consumer shall have full and complete use and control of the aforesaid property so long as the consumer uses such property for the purpose for which it was furnished.
		4. In the event that the aforesaid property is no longer needed or used by consumer for the purpose for which it was furnished, or at such time as the useful life of the property is exhausted, said property shall be returned to the Department or otherwise disposed of by consumer as directed by Department.
		5. In the event that any business enterprise or occupational pursuit undertaken by consumer is expanded in accordance with any plan or proposal approved in writing by Department, said Department may, at its option, grant to consumer the right to sell or trade the aforesaid property, such permission to be in writing, and to apply the proceeds thereof to the purchase of new, larger or more expensive replacement. In such case, all right, title, and interest in such property shall pass to the consumer and the consumer shall retain title to the newly acquired equipment.
		6. Acceptance of the aforesaid property by consumer shall relieve Department of any and all responsibility for its condition or the use thereof by consumer and consumer further agrees to hold Department and all of its officers, agents and employees harmless from any claim arising by virtue of the condition or use by consumer of said property.
		7. Consumer agrees to comply with the agreements of Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 relating to discrimination against persons with disabilities, and to Title 21 V.S.A., Chapter 5, Subchapter 6 relating to fair employment practices, to the extent applicable.

Agreement Specific to Computers and Electronic Magnifiers

Computers

Department shall retain title to computer related equipment, including all hardware, software, adaptive equipment and peripherals, for three years. The Department shall provide maintenance and support for three years, with the exception that consumer will be responsible to arrange and purchase maintenance/repair costs up to $150 after the first year of possession. After three full years, title to all equipment will pass to the consumer with full responsibility for repairs and service. Consumers are advised that a computer’s normal life span is three – five years.

Electronic Magnifiers

Department shall retain title to the Electronic Magnification equipment for four years. The Department shall provide maintenance and support for four years. After four years title to all Electronic Magnification equipment shall pass to the consumer with full responsibility for repairs and service. Consumers are advised that Electronic Magnifiers have a life span of 5 – 8 years.

Consumer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_