

Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH BRAIN INJURY

What Is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology is a device or service that can help you to be more independent in your daily life. Assistive technology can be expensive, such as a motorized wheelchair or an augmentative communication device.

Assistive technology can also be less costly, such as labels to help you remember. Assistive technology can also be a service, such as an evaluation or a repair.

How Can Assistive Technology Help Persons with Brain Injury?

Rehabilitation can help you to regain the skills and abilities that you lost because of your brain injury. A comprehensive rehabilitation plan should include an assessment of your abilities and impairments. The assessment should determine if you can use and benefit from assistive technology.

Rehabilitation should also include training on how to use assistive technology in your daily life.

Assistive technology can help with rehabilitation in many ways. You may have problems with memory, attention, planning, or task completion. You may experience confusion or changes in mood. Assistive technology can help you to organize a schedule, have reminders, or concentrate.

Examples are pill holders with alarms, watches with timers, phones with speed dial, pagers, and headphones. You may also need a wheelchair, an augmentative communication device, other equipment, or home modifications so that you can live at home and be a part of the community.

What Pays for Assistive Technology in Pennsylvania?

The following resources may pay for assistive technology devices or services:

- Medical Assistance (Medicaid)
- Medicaid home and community-based waivers
- Medicare
- Private health insurance

- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- School districts or intermediate units
- Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) (if you get SSI or SSDI)
- Area Agency on Aging
- Telecommunications Device Distribution Program
- Family Savings Account
- Charities, disability groups, houses of worship, local businesses
- Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (loans and grants)
- Recycled Equipment Exchange Program (free or low-cost equipment)

Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology also has a lending library that loans assistive technology devices for a free trial period.

Are There Programs for Persons with Brain Injury?

Yes, in Pennsylvania, there are programs for persons with brain injury.

These programs may pay for assistive technology.

1. Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waivers

Waivers are programs funded by Medical Assistance (Medicaid) that help people with disabilities to live in the community. To apply for a waiver, contact MAXIMUS (Independent Enrollment Broker) at 1-877-550-4227.

The waivers for which persons with brain injury may qualify are the COMMCARE Waiver for adults with traumatic brain injury, Independence Waiver for adults with physical disabilities, and the OBRA Waiver for adults with developmental disabilities. These waivers can pay for services such as service coordination, personal assistance services, respite, community integration, non-medical transportation, supported employment, and other services. These waivers can also pay for home and vehicle accessibility adaptations, equipment, technology and medical supplies as well as a personal emergency response system. The COMMCARE and OBRA Waivers may also pay for residential habilitation.

If you are denied eligibility for a waiver, or denied services under a waiver, then you should get a written denial notice. You have the right to appeal to the Department of Public Welfare by asking for a fair hearing. There is a deadline to make an appeal. The deadline to appeal will be stated in the denial letter that you get. However, you can make an appeal even if you do

not get a written denial notice. Contact a lawyer or an advocate for help immediately.

2. Pennsylvania Head Injury Program

The Pennsylvania Department of Health provides intensive rehabilitation services through the Head Injury Program for persons with traumatic brain injury. The purpose of the Head Injury Program is to help you live independently in your home. The Head Injury Program generally pays for one year of rehabilitation services or \$100,000 in services, whichever comes first. Services include assessment, service plan development, rehabilitation, and case management. Rehabilitation services may include assistive technology to help you live in your home and to be in the community. Please contact the Department of Health for more information. The phone number for the Department of Health is 1-877-724-3258 (toll-free voice). The website for the Department of Health is:
www.dsf.health.state.pa.us.

You may also wish to contact the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania for help in applying for the Head Injury Program. The phone number for the

Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania is 1-866-635-7097 (toll-free voice).

The website is www.biapa.org.

If you are denied eligibility for the Head Injury Program, or denied a service under the Head Injury Program, then you should get a written denial notice.

You have the right to make a written appeal to the Department of Health.

There is a deadline to make an appeal. The deadline to appeal will be stated in the denial notice that you get. However, you can make an appeal even if you do not get a written denial notice. Contact a lawyer or an advocate for help immediately.

Contact Information

If you need more information or need help, please contact the intake unit of the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania (DRN) at 800-692-7443 (voice) or 877-375-7139 (TDD). The email address is: intake@drnpa.org.

The mission of the Disability Rights Network is to advance, protect, and advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of Pennsylvanians with disabilities. Due to our limited resources, the Disability Rights Network cannot provide individual services to every person with advocacy and legal

issues. The Disability Rights Network prioritizes cases that have the potential to result in widespread, systemic changes to benefit persons with disabilities. While we cannot provide assistance to everyone, we do seek to provide every individual with information and referral options.

IMPORTANT: This publication is for general informational purposes only. This publication is not intended, nor should be construed, to create an attorney-client relationship between the Disability Rights Network and any person. Nothing in this publication should be considered to be legal advice.

PLEASE NOTE: For information in alternative formats or a language other than English, contact the Disability Rights Network at 800-692-7443 Ext. 400, TDD: 877-375-7139, or drnpa-hbg@drnpa.org.

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