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STAR and its partners are proud to offer free device demonstrations and device loans to Minnesotans statewide.



Constellations

Winter 2012

VR Services and AT

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), part of the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), is a state agency that assists persons with significant disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain gainful employment in the community. The mission statement of (VRS) is: *To empower Minnesotans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independent living, and community integration.*

The services provided by the VRS program play an important role in assisting people with disabilities obtain and maintain employment. Assistive Technology (AT) can be a useful tool in the career development process. VRS works with people of all ages who are seeking competitive, integrated employment. To apply for VR services an individual must have a medically documented disability that affects employment in one of seven areas of serious functional limitations (SFL). These seven functional limitation areas are: Mobility, Self-Direction, Self-Care, Interpersonal Skills, Communication, Work Tolerance, and Work Skills.

Once an individual is determined eligible for VRS and meets Priority for Service, they can begin working with a Rehabilitation Counselor on an employment plan which consists of services required to get them employed within a reasonable job goal that meets their interests, abilities, and informed choice. At times, an Assistive Technology can assist an individual to overcome barriers to employment. Under the federal Assistive Technology Act of 1998, VR programs are directed to provide state of the art services to assist people with disabilities in becoming employed, which includes AT and has increased the focus on AT and related services.

VR can assist in the assistive technology assessment process by helping to select which type of AT would be a good fit for an individual and locating a device for trial through the Minnesota STAR Program; assist in finding funding opportunities for AT; assist in locating devices for purchase; and, work with schools and employers to implement AT. Often employers are obligated to provide reasonable accommodations under the American's with Disabilities Act.

Typical areas of AT that can assist with employment are Augmented and Alternative Communication (AAC), Aids for Daily Living (ADL), Computer Access, Wheelchair and Mobility Aids, Environmental Control Systems, Home/Worksite Modifications, Prosthetics/Orthotics, Seating and Positioning, Vision and Hearing Aids, and Adapted Driving.

(continued on page 3)



STAR Spotlight

Discover what activities STAR and its partners are working on around the state.

Partner News

Assistive technologies, including devices for employment-related tasks, are available for free demonstration and short-term loan from STAR's statewide device loan program. To request a loan or for more information about assistive technology, contact STAR or its partners.

Center for Independent Living 218.262.6675, 800.390.3681, (Hibbing): AccessNorth Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota (CILNM)

CILNM recently added a number of new devices to its device demonstration and device loan inventory. Low technology items, such as the one touch jar opener and one touch can opener, are two kitchen items now available for trial. Other new additions to the program include Dragon Naturally Speaking 11 (software), iPad 2, Bluetooth Switch Interface for iPad and iPod Touch, Responsible personal alert system, and a two call-button pager system. Contact Pam at 218.262.6675 or email parson@accessnorth.net for more information.

PACER Center, Simon Technology Center

952.838.9000, 800.537.2237 (Bloomington):

In any work environment involving a repetitive task, workers could benefit from assistive technology. PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) has software programs that remind computer users to take breaks. Stretch Break for the PC and Time Out for the Mac allow the user to customize the settings and set up reminders to take stretch breaks. STC also added Optelec's ClearReader+ Advanced to its statewide loan inventory. This portable device converts printed text to speech and, when connected to a monitor, magnifies up to 16x the original document. For more information, contact STC at 952.838.9000 or email stclibrary@pacer.org.

[Additional devices, not part of the statewide loan inventory, are also available with a paid STC library membership.]

STARIE
Reusing Assistive Technology!
www.mnstarte.org

Ability Building Center, People Achieving Change through Technology (PACTT)
507.281.6262 (Rochester):

PACTT recently added a number of devices to its device demonstration and device loan program. New devices include the Maxlupe handheld video magnifier, Sennheiser TV sound amplifier system, Mino Digital Personal (Sound) Amplifier, and a switch adapted digital camera. A Dynavox VMax+ communication system was also added to PACTT's inventory. For more information or to request a demonstration or device loan call 507.281.6262 or email michaelb@abcinc.org.

UCP of Central Minnesota 320.253.0765, 888.616.3726 (Saint Cloud):

In December Aaron Cross joined United Cerebral Palsy of Central Minnesota as the Assistive Technology Coordinator. Aaron will be responsible for the STAR Assistive Technology Device Demonstration and Loan program. UCP-CM is excited to have Aaron on board and he's ready to share his knowledge of assistive technology with people with disabilities in Minnesota. New devices added to the UCP-CM device inventory include the i.d. mate Summit®, a talking barcode reader. This portable device is preprogrammed to read over a million barcodes and has room for the user to add additional barcodes. For more information contact Aaron at 320.253.0765 or email tech@ucpcentralmn.org.

UCP of Minnesota/MATLN program

651.646.7588, 877.528.5678 (Saint Paul):

New technology dedicated exclusively for use as augmentative communication has evolved. Likewise, an increasing number of apps for mobile devices are available for individuals to use as a means of communication. Apps with word and symbol based language systems containing robust vocabulary include Proloquo2Go, Touch Chat Suite, Sono Flex, and Grace. Picture/photo-based apps include Tap to Talk and Pictello. UCP of Minnesota's MATLN program offers a wide range of AAC systems and apps for demonstration and short-term loan. For further information, please contact mathn@ucpminn.org.

VR Services and AT (continued from page 1)

Transition-age youth ordinarily have their AT needs addressed by their school prior to graduation. Schools are required to provide the proper assessments and AT under IDEA, which states that schools provide what is necessary for a student to receive a free and appropriate education. VR can work with the IEP team while the student is still in school and assist in obtaining funding for the device so that they may use it after graduation and pick up where the school left off to ensure a seamless transition in employment-related services. Another population VR works with is those in post-secondary training if it is required to reach a job goal. AT can be provided for a student to be successful in the classroom. VR can work with the student and Disability Services of a college to assist with this.

Funding of AT through VR may be possible depending on whether the consumer has a Consumer Financial Participation (CFP) contribution, which is based upon their income. Other possible comparable benefits that must be first considered are Medical Insurance, Medical Assistance, County Waiver Programs, Social Security Work Incentives, Veteran's Affairs, Independent Living Centers, and local service, charitable, religious, and civic (organizations). Low interest loans may also be an option through the Alternative Finance Program (AFP) which is a program of EquipALife (www.equipalife.org).

(Submitted by: John Bredehoft, AT Specialist with Minnesota VRS, Rochester Office, John.Bredehoft@state.mn.us www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/People_with_Disabilities)

State & Regional Updates

Launching in 2012: STAR's new online device database!

Looking for a device to borrow? Want an easy way to search for devices available for demonstration and loan from STAR's partners? Be sure to check STAR's website (www.starprogram.state.mn.us) in January for the launch of its new searchable device database.



Mark Your Calendar

January

ATiA Orlando (January 26-28, 2012) Caribe Royale, Orlando, FL. More information is available online at www.atia.org.

2012 MS Annual Conference (January 28, 2012) Hyatt Regency Minneapolis. For more information, call 612.335.7900 or visit MSsociety.org.

February

Handi Medical Supply, 14th Annual Education and Equipment Conference (February 17, 2012) Crowne Plaza, Saint Paul. For more information, call 651.644.9770 or visit www.thehandiconference.com.

27th Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference (February 27 - March 3, 2012), San Diego, CA. More information is available online at <http://www.csun.edu/cod>.

March

The Arc Midstate, Regional Potpourri Conference (March 3, 2012) For more information call 320.251.7272 or visit http://arcmidstate.org/_potpourri/

27th Annual Conference for Professionals in Brain Injury (March 29 & 30) Northland Inn, Brooklyn Park. For more information, call 612.378.2472 or visit <http://www.braininjurymn.org>.

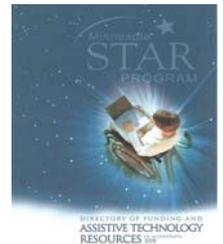


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- Check out the online edition of STAR's Funding and Assistive Technology Directory
- Subscribe to STAR Point and receive emails on assistive technology news and events
- Subscribe to Constellations, our newsletter
- Visit our Web site www.starprogram.state.mn.us
- Become a registered user of STAR Technology Exchange at www.mnstarte.org



For more information, contact STAR by calling 651.201.2640, 888.234.1267 (toll-free) or send an email to star.program@state.mn.us. Minnesotans with a hearing or speech disability may call us through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 800.627.3529.

When you are done reading this newsletter, please share with others or recycle. Thank you!

All STAR materials are available in alternative formats

This document can be made available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, audio tape or disk by calling 651.201.2640 or 888.234.1267 (toll free). Consumers with a hearing or speech disability may call us through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 800.627.3529, or by sending an email to star.program@state.mn.us.

¡FOLLETOS EN ESPAÑOL! STAR ha empezado traducir folletos en Inglés a Español. Actualmente, STAR tiene dos folletos en Español: "Directorio de Recursos de Financiamiento para Tecnología Asistiva en Minnesota" y "El Programa STAR: Un Sistema de Tecnología para Lograr Resultados."

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