

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



Figure 1: Person in a wheelchair using a computer.

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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

This brochure is designed to provide general information about assistive technology in Pennsylvania for persons with traumatic brain injury.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS INFORMATION IS NOT INTENDED TO BE LEGAL ADVICE APPLICABLE TO SPECIFIC FACTUAL SITUATIONS. IF YOU HAVE A LEGAL QUESTION, PLEASE CONTACT A LAWYER.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology is a device or service that can help you to function better 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 things. Assistive technology can also be a service, such as an evaluation or a repair.



Figure 2: Laptop computer.

How can assistive technology help persons with traumatic brain injury?

Comprehensive rehabilitation can help you to regain the skills and abilities that you lost because of your brain injury. Any comprehensive rehabilitation plan should include an assessment of your abilities and impairments. The assessment should determine whether you can use and benefit from assistive technology. Comprehensive rehabilitation should also include training on how to use the assistive technology in your daily life.

Assistive technology can help with rehabilitation in many ways. You may have problems with memory, attention, planning, and task completion. You may experience confusion and changes in mood. Assistive technology can help you to organize a schedule, to have reminders, and to concentrate on things. 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, and durable medical equipment, so that you can live at home and be a part of your community.

What pays for assistive technology in Pennsylvania?

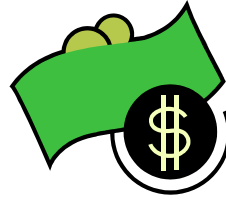


Figure 3: Money and dollar sign.

The following programs may pay for assistive technology devices or services. You may not be eligible for all of the programs, though:

- Medical Assistance (Medicaid)
- Medicaid Home and Community Based Waivers
- Medicare
- Private Health Insurance
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- School Districts or Intermediate Units
- Pass Program (if you are on SSI)
- Area Agency on Aging
- Telecommunications Device Distribution Program
- Family Savings Account
- Charities, disability groups, churches, and local businesses
- Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (low-interest loans, mini-grants)

- Recycled Equipment Exchange Program, through Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (free or low-cost equipment)

Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology also has a Lending Library, where anyone can borrow a device for free.

Are there special programs for persons with traumatic brain injury?

Yes. In Pennsylvania, there are special programs for persons with traumatic brain injury that pay for rehabilitation, including assistive technology. These programs are:

1. Medicaid Home and Community Based Waivers. Waivers are Medicaid programs that help you to live in the community. Your income can be higher than allowed under regular Medicaid, and you can still enroll in a Waiver. Pennsylvania has several Waivers that may pay for rehabilitation services, including assistive technology. To apply for a Waiver, please contact United Disabilities Services at 800-995-9581 (toll free) or Liberty Resources at 888-634-2155 (toll free) or 215-634-6630 (TTY). For more information, please contact the Department of Public Welfare. The website for the Department of Public Welfare is: www.dpw.state.pa.us.

The Medicaid Waivers that serve persons with traumatic brain injury are:

▶ COMMCARE Waiver for adults with traumatic brain injury.

This Waiver provides service coordination, personal care services, respite care, habilitation, transportation, pre-vocational services, supported employment, and other services. This Waiver can pay for environmental adaptations to your home and to your vehicle, assistive technology/specialized medical equipment and supplies, and a personal emergency response system.

▶ Independence Waiver for adults with physical disabilities.

This Waiver provides service coordination, personal care services, visiting nurse/therapies, respite care, transportation, educational services, and other services. This Waiver can also pay for environmental adaptations to your home, assistive technology/specialized medical equipment and supplies, and a personal emergency response system.

► OBRA Waiver for adults with developmental disabilities.

This Waiver provides service coordination, personal care services, visiting nurse/therapies, respite care, transportation, adult day services, pre-vocational services, education services, supported employment services, and other services. This Waiver can also pay for environmental adaptations to your home, assistive technology/specialized medical equipment and supplies, and a personal emergency response system.

Figure 3: Scales of Justice.



If you are denied a Medicaid Waiver, or denied services under a Medicaid Waiver, then you have the right to make a written appeal to the Department of Public Welfare. There is a deadline to make an appeal, so contact a lawyer or an advocate for help right away.

2. Head Injury Program. The Pennsylvania Department of Health provides intensive rehabilitation services through the Head Injury Program. The purpose of the Head Injury Program is to help you live independently in your home. The program pays for one year of rehabilitation services or

\$100,000 in services, whichever comes first. Services include assessment, attendant care, 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 on this program. The phone number for the Department of Health is: 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 telephone number for the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania is: 866-635-7097 (toll-free voice). The website for the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania is: www.biapa.org.

Figure 4: Scales of Justice.



If you are denied entry into the Head Injury Program, or denied a service under the Head Injury Program, you have the right to make a

written appeal to the Department of Health. There is a deadline to make an appeal, so please contact a lawyer or an advocate for help right away.

Who can I contact for help?

Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania. The telephone number is: 800-692-7443 (toll-free voice) or 877-375-7139 (TTY). The email address is: drnpa-hbg@drnpa.org.

Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania. The telephone number is: 866-635-7097 (toll-free voice).

The mission of the Disability Rights Network is to advance, protect, and advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of Pennsylvanians with disabilities.

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