

**Department of Human Services
Division of Rehabilitation Services
Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**PROGRAM GUIDE
DRS/DSBVI 2008-05
May 29, 2008**

TO: All DRS & SBVI Staff

**FROM: Grady Kickul, DRS Director
Gaye Mattke, SBVI Director**

SUBJECT: Assistive Technology Referral Procedures and Policy

This Program Guide replaces DRS/DSBVI 00-10 on May, 29, 2008 to provide timely and quality Assistive Technology (AT) devices and services for consumers of the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI).

This policy does not impact current low-tech practices that have traditionally not resulted in referrals to an AT Service Provider. It is not the intent of this program guide to limit choices for AT services and devices to DakotaLink. Other options are available to the consumer and rehabilitation counselor as described in the informed choice section of this document.

DakotaLink will be the primary contact agency in providing AT assessments and services for DRS/SBVI consumers. The SBVI State Office Program Specialist and the DRS Rehabilitation Engineer will continue to provide technical assistance to DRS/SBVI staff and will monitor consumer services.

Referral Process

Referrals for AT shall be sent to DakotaLink electronically using the Referral for Assistive Technology Services template form (AT Referral form) in the VR FACES Document manager. The completed AT Referral form shall be submitted via the e-mail option found in VR FACES. Referrals shall not be made by telephone, mail or fax.

Step 1 Complete the AT Referral form found in the VR FACES Document Manager.

The counselor must complete the section on "Referral Priority". For medium or high priority referrals, the counselor must provide a justification for the higher level of priority. An explanation of the timeframes and expectations relating to high, medium and standard priorities are listed below. The counselor will be notified if the priority timeframes cannot be met.

High Priority – The consumer can no longer perform a time sensitive critical component of their job or IPE due to AT device failure or the need for additional AT devices and/or services and there is no way for the consumer to work around the problem. Timeline: 1-Day response to the site or consumer with a 2-Day resolution or plan for resolution.

Medium Priority – The consumer has AT device failure or needs additional AT devices and/or services to perform their job or complete their IPE but there is a way for the consumer to work around the problem until the needed AT devices and/or services are provided. Timeline: 2-Day

response to the site or consumer with a 5-Day resolution or plan for resolution.

Standard Priority – The consumer has a need for AT devices and/or services to prepare for or keep a job or to complete their IPE but it is not critical to begin provision of AT devices and/or services. Timeline: 3 to 10 day response to the consumer or site with 15 working days from referral date to begin the provision of AT devices and/or services.

It is expected that most cases will utilize the Standard Priority. There will be extenuating circumstances to this priority list. Services may depend on the timely acquisition or availability of the needed assistive technology devices and the location of the consumer or site. If this process is to be effective, the "higher priority" categories must only be utilized when the consumer's IPE or job is in jeopardy and they truly need services within the timeframes listed for medium and high priorities.

Step 2 Indicate if the referral is for employment or education.

Check the purpose for the referral, either "employment" or "education". For prioritization purposes, it is important for the counselor to check if this is a referral to assist an individual who is either planning to go or is currently in school or if they are working or going to be working and they may need the assistive technology as part of their IPE.

Step 3 Describe the consumer's functional limitations and the reason for the referral.

The most important sections of this referral are the reason for referral and the description of functional limitations. The counselor must describe specifically what they want an AT Technician to do, including a description of equipment that may be needed, areas to assess, and other services required. This is also the area that the counselor must describe the functional limitations of the individuals disabling conditions(s), and how AT may help reduce or eliminate them. Counselors must also include any additional information such as contact names and numbers, others who need to be included in the process, specific contact times, locations, etc.

Please note that there are required sections of this form, marked with an "". If these sections are not completed, either the SBVI Assistive Technology Specialist, DRS Rehabilitation Engineer, or DakotaLink will return the form and the counselor will have to complete these sections and resubmit the form.

When the AT Referral form is complete use the "actions" menu in the document manager to e-mail the form to dlsupport@tie.net. The subject line of the email will automatically be [Consumer Last Initial and First Initial] AT Referral VR". The CC box will also automatically include both the DRS Rehabilitation Engineer and the SBVI AT Specialist e-mail addresses. All SBVI referrals must be CC'd to the SBVI State Office Program Specialist and all DRS referrals must be CC'd to the DRS Rehabilitation Engineer so you will need to delete the address not needed.

Step 4 DakotaLink will e-mail a receipt to the referring Counselor/Teacher.

The receipt will include the following information:

- The name of the AT Technician who was assigned to the referral;
- The approximate contact date;
- The number of service hours anticipated with a sub-total cost;
- Projected travel time, mileage and other expenses with a transportation sub-total cost;

- Projected total cost; and

If you do not receive the e-mail receipt with the information listed above within two working days, submit the referral again including the CC to the SBVI AT Specialist or the DRS Rehabilitation Engineer.

Step 5 Authorization of Services if required.

If the DakotaLink email receipt indicates an authorization is required, the Counselor/Teacher should prepare and send a paper authorization to DakotaLink within five working days after receiving the receipt. The current fee schedule will be used for the service rates. The following are instructions for authorizing services:

- The service selected will be “Assistive Technology Service” or, if equipment will be purchased, “Assistive Technology Device”.
- The Vendor will be DakotaLink Access Center/West River Foundation, 1925 Plaza Blvd., Rapid City SD, 57702.
- Direct services and assessment services will be an hourly rate established in the current fee schedule (fees maintained in VR FACES).
- Travel time to destinations over 20 miles from the AT Technician’s base shall be authorized at 80% of the direct service rate.
- Travel expenses of mileage and motel costs shall use the current state rates.

When both AT Devices and AT Services are being authorized at the same time, they must be separate line items on the authorization.

Step 6 Delivery of Services.

The Counselor/Teacher must notify the consumer of the projected contact date and remind them of the purpose for the referral. This is critical to the scheduling of AT Technician time in order to deliver cost effective services.

Step 7 Services are completed.

DakotaLink will submit a report and invoice via e-mail to the Counselor/Teacher. For standard or medium priority referrals the report will be submitted within ten working days after the services are complete. For high priority referrals the AT Technician will contact the Counselor/Teacher by phone immediately upon completion of the service. If an authorization for devices or services is needed a report will follow within two working days. If the services and report are satisfactory, the invoice should be processed for payment. When services are delivered over an extended period of time, a partial report will be provided to the Counselor/Teacher after the first follow-up visit and subsequently every 90 days until services are complete. DakotaLink will CC the DRS Rehabilitation Engineer or the SBVI State Office Program Specialist on all reports.

Purchase of AT Devices Only

When the Counselor/Teacher is purchasing AT devices from DakotaLink without any accompanying services, an authorization for the devices should be sent to DakotaLink and the AT Referral form is not needed. If services for installation or training are being authorized with the purchase of the device(s), then the AT Referral form should be utilized. When authorizing

devices only, the Counselor/Teacher should be certain the consumer is competent to utilize and/or set up and install the device(s) or has made other arrangements to meet these needs.

Informed Choice

As mandated in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, public vocational rehabilitation in South Dakota has established policies and practices regarding the assurance of informed choice for each applicant and eligible consumer of the program.

There will be instances when an applicant or consumer may not have sufficient knowledge or information to make an informed choice in selecting assistive technology. The rehabilitation Counselor/Teacher and AT Technicians will make every effort to fully inform each consumer considering assistive technology of available options in terms of selection of products and vendors. It is the practice of public vocational rehabilitation to select devices from the state standards list for assistive devices whenever information is insufficient to make an informed choice or when the consumer and Counselor/Teacher choose to select from this list.

The public vocational rehabilitation program will make available to consumers a list of vendors that meet federally mandated criteria for flexible procurement policies as well as methods that facilitate the provision of services. In addition, agency policy requires that approved vendors must demonstrate an ability to provide a variety of products and to ensure that they will provide for the availability and scope of informed choice to consumers that is consistent with the obligations of the public vocational rehabilitation program. The list of approved vendors is subject to change, is not prescriptive and is available on request.

This policy provides an opportunity for the individual consumer and Counselor/Teacher to select other products or vendors. A range of products must be available during assessments. The Counselor/Teacher in partnership with the consumer will secure information and knowledge to the extent the consumer desires in regard to making an informed choice.

Consumer Appeal Process

As mandated by the Rehabilitation Act, all AT Providers will inform all recipients of assistive technology devices and/or services who are dissatisfied with any determination made by the vendor or the State VR Agency concerning the furnishing or the denial of assistive technology devices and/or services, of their right to appeal those determinations. In their offices, DakotaLink will post a written notice concerning consumer rights, the procedure for appealing decisions, and the availability of Protection and Advocacy Services within South Dakota.

If guidance is needed as to the purchase or selection of products or vendors, counselors or teachers should consult with the SBVI State Office Program Specialist or DRS Rehabilitation Engineer. If you have questions on this Program Guide, please contact the Assistant Director from SBVI or DRS or the State Office Program Specialist.

CC: DakotaLink