

# **Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Technology Services Guidelines**

**Definition of Technology:** For the purpose of these guidelines, technology is defined as computer hardware, software and peripheral devices, both mainstream and adaptive.

## **Services to Individuals with Active VR Cases**

### **Inclusion of Technology in the Client's Plan**

When a client and his/her VR field counselor are considering including technology in the IPE, a technology specialist shall be involved in the assessment of the specific technology needs. The technology specialist will assist the client and his/her VR field counselor by making recommendations on appropriate equipment after the initial assessment of the client's needs.

When technology training is needed, the client and VR field counselor will outline training goals, with input from the technology specialist, based on the individual's current skills and the expected outcomes. The training goals developed by client and VR field counselor will be incorporated into the IPE, detailing the resources that will be used (staff time, third party provider, software, hardware, tutorials, classes, etc.). Progress evaluations will be made by the client, field counselor and technology specialist to ensure that the training goals are being achieved. Any necessary adjustments to the technology services will be made in the IPE.

When clients are at the center, midway through their training, a staffing will include the Center staff and VR field counselor to evaluate the technology needs related to the IPE.

## **Services to Individuals with Active IL Cases**

Technology will not be purchased for IL consumers if more than one or two instructional sessions with a Technology Specialist or other staff member is indicated. Exceptions will be considered depending on the consumer's need for technology. If denial of technology and requisite support will affect the person's ability to maintain independence and quality of life, and if no other resources are available, the Commission will provide that service.

Technology for IL consumers may also be purchased if training can be arranged with third party providers rather than Commission staff. This may involve identifying and developing local providers where such support is not available.

### **Requests for the Purchase of Technology**

When an active client requests financial support from the Commission for the purchase of technology, the following steps should be followed:

1. The request will be made in writing or other appropriate format by the client and reviewed by the VR field counselor and the district technology specialist. The submitted request should demonstrate the client has an understanding of why this technology is required to achieve their vocational goal, and should include the anticipated cost of the technology.

Exceptions may be made in cases where obtaining or retaining a job requires immediate purchase of technology and/or services. The technology specialist will be consulted to ensure compatibility with software and existing technology.

If the request is being made by the VR field counselor, the VR field counselor will discuss the technology needs with the district technology specialist to help ensure that all appropriate alternatives and available technology are considered prior to

fulfilling a request. In cases where the field counselor is making the request, the written request from the client may be omitted, but is still encouraged.

2. A hands-on assessment with the requested technology should take place prior to its purchase. This will help to ensure the client has appropriate expectations of the technology. In the case where a VR field counselor makes a request, the VR field counselor, along with the client, should be involved in the hands-on assessment when possible. When the specific technology in question is not available for a hands-on evaluation, reasonable attempts to gain access to the technology for the purpose of evaluation will be made. A reasonable attempt may involve borrowing technology from the AT4All website, a vendor, arranging a demonstration at a vendor's site, demonstration software, or evaluating a similar piece of technology. This evaluation should take place prior to the written request.
3. The district technology specialist and field counselor will review the request. The technology specialist will discuss the request with the client and/or VR field counselor if more information is needed prior to making a recommendation. It is not the technology specialist's role to approve or deny requests, rather to review them and make appropriate recommendations. The purpose of this step is to help ensure that all appropriate alternatives and available technologies are considered prior to fulfilling a request.
4. Clients will be informed of the responsibilities that come with ownership of technology including the costs associated with upgrades and repairs before purchases are made. When technology is issued to a client, they will be given a supplement to the acceptance agreement, which will include

detailed explanations of the responsibilities specific to the technology they are being issued.

5. The VR field counselor and supervisor, if appropriate, will approve or deny the request after considering the client's requests and the recommendations of the district technology specialist.
6. The VR field counselor will inform the client of the approval or denial of the request and the reasons for the approval or denial, in person or by phone. If another NCBVI staff person is working with the client, inform that staff person by email of the approval or denial of the request and the reasons.
7. REMINDER: If the client disagrees with the decision, remind the client of the Client Assistance Program.
8. The original request along with any documentation of the technology specialist's recommendation should be included in the client's file.

### **Requests for Technology Support Service to Active Clients**

Maintenance and updates of equipment are the responsibility of the VR client. Requests for technical assistance beyond email, or short telephone or remote assistance contacts, or if it is determined that the issue does not relate to a vocational goal, the technology specialist will refer the client to technical support for their product or other local resources. If other resources have been exhausted or are unavailable, the technology specialist, in conjunction with the client and field counselor, will determine whether or not Commission resources can be used to resolve the issues and if so, which resources. On-site visits by technology specialists for the purpose of installing upgrades or maintaining equipment for any

client will only be done when it is determined to be necessary for the client to reach their vocational goal.

### **Services to Individuals without Active Cases:**

Requests for technology support from individuals without active cases will be limited to short email, telephone or remote support. If the issue cannot be resolved in a brief period of time or if it is a recurring issue, the technology specialist will refer the individual to the vendor of the product or other local resources.

Technology specialists cannot provide on-site visits/support for individuals who do not have an active case or for routine maintenance unless it is for the purpose of gathering information to determine the need for opening a case. If support from a technology specialist beyond that outlined in these guidelines is necessary, an application for active VR services will be made.

If the support needed is related to an employment situation, the Services to Employers guidelines will be used.

### **Services to Employers**

Evaluate and assess client's technology needs and ability to perform essential job duties.

Technology specialist and/or consultant will evaluate potential employer's computer system for accessibility and compatibility with adaptive technology.

When counselor, supervisor and employer deem it necessary, equipment recommended by technology specialist will be purchased for the job site.

Install and customize necessary adaptive technology to perform essential job duties.

Technology specialists will make a recommendation with NCBVI supervisor as to providing direct service or contracting for service.

The employer needs to provide a computer administrator account for technology specialist/consultant, or have an administrator available at all times, when technology specialist/consultant is on-site, if applicable.

When a consultant is needed for a job site, the technology specialist, district supervisor and employer will determine who will pay for consultant fees.

The employer will designate a person within the business who will work with Commission staff to coordinate ongoing training and support. The Commission will provide training to client and the employer's designee on use of adaptive technology. Written documentation, in accessible format, will be provided to client and employer.

After employment begins and technology is in place, the technology specialist will continue to maintain contact with employer, client and counselor until placement is considered successful.

Routine computer maintenance is to be completed by employer's designated technology staff. If employer's technician is unsure about an adaptive technology issue, the employer should first contact the NCBVI technology specialist.