

Suggested Uses of Assistive Technology in the Vocational Evaluation Process

Assistive technology resources and services should be an option at any time during a vocational evaluation. There are general places or “tech points” in any assessment where consideration of assistive technology and workplace accommodations should be taken into account. These include ***pre-evaluation preparation and orientation, initial interviewing, developing the evaluation plan, administering assessment tasks, doing career exploration and developing recommendations.***

Making pre-evaluation preparations:

- Review referral information to determine if technology needs are indicated;
- Identify functional limitations or problems that may require accommodations during the assessment;
- Ensure that all test and instructional materials that are likely to be used are available in appropriate formats;
- Ensure that the evaluation area is completely accessible for individuals with disabilities;
- Consult with technology specialists for cases where significant AT needs have already been noted.

Conducting the Initial Interview:

- Determine if the individual uses or has used any assistive devices;
- Are there any apparent functional limitations that would suggest the need for involving a technology specialist?
- Determine what the consumer’s attitude is toward using assistive technology or workplace accommodations. If any reluctance is noted, this should be explored before considering use of assistive technology.

Developing the evaluation plan:

- Arrange for any consultation or other involvement of technology specialists if AT needs have been identified;
- If immediate need for assistive technology aids/devices was noted, arrange to obtain necessary equipment;
- If formats of tests and assessment activities may not appropriate for the individual, consider what other assessment instruments or alternate formats may be needed.

Administering assessment tasks and activities:

- Observe to see if the individual is experiencing difficulties performing assessment tasks/activities. If so, be prepared to modify the task or activity to obtain the optimal performance possible.
- Permit the individual to use any device necessary to complete the assessment;
- Focus on the consumer's ability to perform essential functions and less on standardized assessment practice.

Conducting career exploration activities:

- Focus on interests and knowledge rather than on limitations or what someone cannot do;
- Use job analysis techniques to identify essential functions and explore ways to adapt the job and /or utilize devices to compensate for loss of function;
- Avoid eliminating consideration of vocational options without providing opportunity to tryout and perform work tasks;
- Often vocational options which had been considered not feasible, or perhaps not considered at all, may become feasible through use of assistive technology.

Developing Recommendations:

- If need for job accommodations seem apparent, identify specific information needed;
- Once a specific job has been identified, if necessary consult with an appropriate technology specialist to identify specific worksite accommodations strategies;
- When recommendations are made for assistive technology resources or services, exit interviews should specifically discuss use, maintenance/repair and replacement of AT equipment. Role of the employer and the individual in replacing equipment should be clarified.