



Free & Low Cost Tune-Ups: Some Accessibility Steps You Can Take With Little or no Money

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Introduction:

Increasing accessibility to services for people with disabilities is critical in meeting our missions on serving the needs of all victims of violence. Unfortunately, most programs operate with small budgets and often find it difficult to make significant changes that increase accessibility. Yet, if your organization has some basic phone and computer equipment and phone/Internet services, there are many free and low cost steps to consider taking that can increase your website and agency's accessibility via technology. While some free and low-cost tools are not always as powerful as devices that cost money, still there are:

1. Free phone and Internet-based accessibility services like Telecommunications Relay Services;
2. Free web-based services, online communication tools, and assistive technology software;
3. Simple accessibility modifications you can make to your computer's operating system; and,
4. Free website accessibility checkers and screen readers.

This is NOT a comprehensive list of assistive technology (AT) freeware and options. It does, however, highlight some resources and **6 starter steps** you might take to incrementally increase the accessibility of your agency's AT tools and website. This piece will also provide other resources you can explore to find more free or low-cost AT tools and will highlight places you might contact to help people with disabilities acquire low-cost or subsidized devices via financing, loans, and grants. If you know of other resources not listed here, please tell us via email at: safetynet@nnev.org

Safety & Privacy Reminder:

If an abuser/stalker has remote or physical access to a device (phone, computer, TTY, Screen Reader, etc.) or service that a survivor uses, it can sometimes be very risky for a survivor to use that device or service to seek help. An abuser may be able to cause harm by: intercepting, impersonating, or tracking/monitoring communications and computer/phone activities. An abuser also might change settings in ways that decreases accessibility and causes isolation. Safety Net Project staff are happy to help an organization assess the benefits and risks to setting up specific assistive technology options on a computer that might be used by staff and/or survivors. Contact the Safety Net Project at safetynet@nnev.org for more information about proactively planning for safety around an assistive technology's specific benefits and risks.

Now let's travel through some starter steps.

STARTER STEP 1:

Familiarize yourself with the many services and devices available for communication with people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing or who have speech disabilities.

1st Familiarize yourself with all Relay Services, including:

- Text-to-Voice TTY-based TRS
- Hearing Carry Over (HCO)
- Speech-to-Speech (STS) Relay
- Shared Non-English Language Relay Services
- Captioned Telephone Services
- Voice Carry Over (VCO)
- IP Relay
- 711 Access
- Video Relay Services (VRS)

Telecommunications Relay Services enable people who are Deaf or have hearing or speech disabilities to place and receive phone or Internet-based calls. Relay operators/communication assistants facilitate “calls” between people with hearing or speech disabilities and other individuals. There is no cost for using a Relay Service. Read the FCC’s TRS webpage for descriptions of each Relay Service at:

<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/trs.html>

Safety & confidentiality issues when using a Relay Service:

According to U.S. Federal Communications Commission regulations,

- The Relay Operator must relay the conversation verbatim unless a relay user requests summaries.
- The Relay Service provider (whether a 711 Operator or an IP Relay Operator) must ensure user confidentiality. The Operator may not keep a record of the conversation contents.
- One limited exception is for Speech-to-Speech Relay users who have the right to ask a relay service to keep information from a particular call if it helps process subsequent relay calls more efficiently. A STS Relay user may also have a relay service maintain lists of names and phone numbers that the user commonly calls.

Survivors may have serious privacy concerns about using a Relay Service to communicate with your program as it brings in a third party (the operator).

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Additionally, survivors may not feel safe using their home computer or TTY to make a Relay Call, so they may look to accessing these services or other devices elsewhere.

2nd Test free Relay Services like IP Relay and Video Relay:

IP-Relay website at <http://www.IP-Relay.com> has free easy services -

- Simply enter 10-digit phone number into the website's "Quick Connect Now!" window & click "Go" to have the IP Relay operator call the phone number.
- You can also add "My IP Relay" to your AIM Buddy list. Then, if you send the 10-digit phone number you want to call as an instant message to My IP Relay, it will start a relay call.
- Or, you can download free IP Relay software to a Sidekick or Blackberry. This will add an IP relay icon to the main screen of your Blackberry or Sidekick. All you do then is select the IP Relay option, and enter the 10-digit phone number into a dialog box, to make a Wireless IP call.
- See the website for more detailed information.



IP-Video Relay website at <http://www.ip-vrs.com> has free video relay services. To access these services, a user needs access to a high speed Internet connection and either a personal computer with a webcam or a videophone connected thru a TV. Visit the website for more instructions about set up.

3rd Obtain devices that will increase the accessibility of your program.

Because of various safety and privacy concerns that exist when individuals contact your program, it is important that you look into obtaining your own devices rather than always rely on the Relay Services described above. Having devices within your program can allow for direct communication with a survivor without the presence of a third party (the Relay Operator). Additionally, the computer or device a survivor may use at home could be monitored by the abuser, so a survivor may feel safer contacting you directly from a device housed at a local library or service provider. Programs who have their own equipment in addition to being familiar with Relay Services will be the most prepared to meet the communication needs of all survivors.

TTY / TDD devices:

TTY stands for Text Telephone and can also be called a TDD, or Telecommunication Device for the Deaf, although TTY is the



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more widely accepted term. A TTY is a device used by people who are Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or have speech disabilities.

TTY's can be used in two ways. The first is when both parties having a conversation have a TTY, and they both type messages back and forth to one another. The second makes use of the Relay Services described earlier in which the user with the TTY types to the Relay Operator who then speaks to the hearing caller that does not have a TTY.

- For information about purchasing a TTY visit <http://www.abouttty.com/index.html>
- For helpful links to learn about and obtain a TTY, visit <http://www.deafnix.com/Technology/communication.html>
- Check in with your local disability programs to see if they can provide your organization with a free or discounted TTY. Many disability programs upgrade their devices and have older devices in storage. Not only could contacting them get you a free or discounted price, but it could also start a very beneficial partnership for the survivors in your community.
- Learn about common abbreviations for TTY use so that you're prepared to communicate with someone over the TTY:
 - GA = Go Ahead
 - HD = Hold
 - IMPT = important
 - SK = Stop Keying
 - SKSK = Stop Keying & hanging up
 - XXXXXX = error, ignore last mistype
 - THX = thanks
 - GA TO SK = Go ahead if you have more to say but I'm finished
 - For more examples, see FAQs and General TTY Etiquette Tips for New TTY Users at: <http://wally.rit.edu/depts/ref/research/deaf/ttyuse.html>

Safety and Privacy with TTY's:

- Many TTY's come with a built in printer that prints the conversation being typed. Although this can be helpful in making sure you don't miss a critical part of what the caller is saying (since the typing across the screen can disappear quickly), this can definitely be a privacy concern.
- We recommend that programs do not save a print out or log of the conversation without the person's knowledge or consent. Keeping a full transcript of a TTY conversation without consent is similar to recording a phone conversation with a hearing person. It is an unnecessary invasion of privacy and your TTY print outs

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might get subpoenaed by an abuser's lawyer as admissible evidence in a court case. Instead, keep only necessary information and shred print copies.

- If you are communicating with survivors via a computer, have a standard practice of NOT logging the communication. Some TTY's also log the conversation in the memory of the device. Program should be clearing the device memory after each call.

Videophones:

A Videophone refers to the technology that allows for communication between people through both video and audio. For people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing and speak American Sign Language (ASL), Videophones allow for fluid conversations.

A Videophone can be a basic telephone that has a video screen built into it, but they can be cameras that are connected to either a TV or computer monitor. Using either, a caller can sign (using ASL) into the camera and watch a person sign back to them. These can be used for two people to sign directly back and forth to each other, or through Video Relay, in which one user signs to the Operator who speaks to the other caller and signs back to the user.

- Sorenson Videophones are made specifically for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community. They connect to a TV monitor or through a personal computer with a webcam. Individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing and use sign language can apply for a free Sorenson VP-200® Videophone at <http://www.sorensonvrs.com/apply/application>

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI):

VRI enables Deaf and hearing individuals who are in the same location, but without interpreter services, to communicate through a remote interpreter. For example, if a survivor who was Deaf came into your program in the evening and there was no way to get an on-site interpreter until morning, you could utilize remote interpreting services to ensure that you're able to address the survivors' immediate needs and provide some general information about your services.

- To learn more about Access America Video Remote Interpreting, visit <http://www.accessamericavri.com/pdf%20documents/AccessAmerica%20Expanded%20Explanation.pdf>

STARTER STEP 2:

Test free online communication tools like Instant Messaging Programs and ask people with disabilities how they use these tools.

Free Instant Messaging and video chat services and programs, like AIM, MSN, Yahoo Messenger, iChat, and others increasingly provide free multimedia options for online communication. AIM, iChat AV, and Yahoo Messenger all offer text messaging services, the ability to communicate with phone users, free computer-to-computer phone calls, the ability to hold Audio/Video conversations, and group conference/chats.

AOL's messaging client, Triton, is free to download and provides a variety of online communication tools:

http://www.aim.com/get_aim/win/latest_win.adp?aolp=0



About AIM Instant Text Messaging & Group Chats:

- People who are Blind can use AIM text messaging to communicate via free TTY IP relay services such as those offered on www.IP-Relay.com
- People who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing can use instant messaging to text directly with others or to a crisis agency from a computer or PDA (like a Sidekick).
- AIM group chat options can be useful alternatives to phone conference calls that involve group conversations between people who are Deaf and those who are hearing.

About AIM Video Chat:

- People who are Deaf can use video chat in lieu of video relay to directly communicate in sign language with another person who can sign. All each party needs is access to a computer, a web camera, and a fast internet connection so the camera can present uninterrupted, non-jerky signing.
- It can also be used in conjunction with Video Relay Services, such as the free services offered at www.ip-relay.com.

Web-cameras:

Inexpensive webcams (some as low as \$15) might be used with Video Relay or Video Chat. For example, the Logitech Webcam Plus is advertised for \$15-30 at various websites. Manufacturers often offer deals. Dell at: <http://www.Dell.com/SmallBusiness> offers some webcams for as low as \$40.



STARTER STEP 3:

Familiarize yourself with accessibility tools for People who are Blind, have vision loss, or who have learning or cognitive disabilities (e.g. dyslexia).

First learn about the basic accessibility tools that come with your computer's operating system (e.g. Windows 98, 2000, NT, XP or Macintosh OS X) and then explore freeware or demonstration Screen Readers, Text-to-Speech Programs, Magnifiers, etc.

1st Work to decrease barriers and meet an individual's computer-based accessibility needs by asking educated questions and providing options:

Some individuals with vision loss may need or want changes in font size or color themes, screen resolution, or icon sizes. Others may want to use a screen magnifier. Some people with vision loss will want to use a Text-to-Speech Program; a person with dyslexia may use the same Text-to-Speech program with functionality like text highlighting. People who are Blind will likely require a robust Screen Reader tool to fully access and navigate computer functions, office applications, websites, and more.

2nd Support a person's right to privacy:

- For people using read aloud tools such as a Screen Reader or Text-To-Speech, be sure to provide earphones or a private space.
- For people using screen magnification tools, try to provide a space or computer set up where folks passing by cannot glance easily at the magnified screen.

3rd Learn the accessibility options that come with your computer's operating system:

Windows Operating System: Microsoft Accessibility has a variety of information at: <http://www.microsoft.com/enable>. In current Windows Operating System suites (OS 98, 2000, NT, XP) there are built-in accessibility tools that can provide better access for some people, but are not robust enough to be a sufficient substitute for more powerful tools like Screen Readers. Here are examples of some useful Windows accessibility settings and tools:

- For Resolution and Contrast changes: [Start : Settings : Control Panel : Accessibility Options]
- For Window Color Settings: [Control Panel : Display]
- To enable Sticky Keys, a feature designed for people who type with one hand or have difficulty holding down two or more keys at a time, go to: [Start : Settings : Control Panel : Accessibility Options : check the checkbox Use Sticky Keys]

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Then select your settings. When a shortcut requires a key combination such as [CTRL+P], Sticky Keys will enable you to press one key at a time instead of pressing them simultaneously. Pushing the “Shift” key 5 times in a row will also activate Sticky Keys.

- Microsoft Magnifier: In Microsoft Windows XP, go to [Start menu: Programs: Accessories: Accessibility: Microsoft Magnifier]. Provides ten levels of magnification for the computer screen and lets you set the magnified area to track with your mouse or keyboard. Many people with vision loss will need a magnification utility program with higher functionality for daily use.
- Narrator’s Text-to-Speech (TTS): In Windows XP, go to: [Start menu: Programs: Accessories: Accessibility: Microsoft Narrator]. Windows Narrator is a text-to-speech (TTS) program that comes free with a Windows XP operating system. Narrator reads aloud text from some Windows dialogue boxes, controls, drop-down menus, and pop-up windows, and within certain programs. Narrator only performs well with some software programs and only speaks in English. For a person who is blind, Narrator’s basic TTS functions might help facilitate the installation of a more robust Screen Reader. Like many text-to-speech programs, Narrator lets the user chose voice speed, pitch, and tone via [Control Panel: Speech: Text to Speech tab: Voice selection]

Macintosh Operating System: Apple Accessibility at:

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility/> has accessibility information for Mac OS X and links to a Mac Products guide of other Mac compatible hardware and software accessibility tools (mostly for purchase). Here are examples of some useful Mac accessibility settings and tools:

- In Mac OS X, for Resolution and Contrast changes, go to: [Apple : System Preferences : Display]
- In Mac OS X, for Window Color Settings changes, go to : [System Preferences : Appearance]
- In Max OS X, you can toggle a powerful magnification tool or a text-to-speech tool on and off via: [System Preferences : Universal Access]
- In Mac OS 8 and later, if you use the program SimpleText, typing [Command – J] will read any selected text.
- <http://www.specialink.com/mac.htm> has other AT applications for older Mac OS versions.
- In Mac OS X, Voice-Over is the built-in screen reader for Mac OS X. It fully integrates with applications that run in Mac OS X environments and comes with

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magnifiers and other accessibility tools. Voice-Over's features are explained at: <http://www.apple.com/accessibility/macosex/vision.html>

4th Learn about free or low-cost Text-to-Speech, Magnifiers, & Screen Reader tools:

Freeware: Virtual Magnifier 3.2.1 is a free, open source, screen magnifier for Windows, Linux and FreeBSD that you can download at: <http://magnifier.sourceforge.net/>

Freeware: Verbose Text to Speech Software 1.2 provides Text-to-Speech functions. It can load and read aloud any plain text (.txt), web page (.html), Word rich text format (.rtf) or Word (.doc) file. It also converts selected text to audio formats like mp3s. Download it at: <http://www.brothersoft.com/verbose-text-to-speech-software-download-50244.html>

Freeware: WebAnywhere: Screen Reader on the Go, is a web-based screen reader for the web. It doesn't require any software, so it allows people with vision loss to access the web from any computer. Visit <http://webanywhere.cs.washington.edu/>

Shareware: Speak Aloud 2.0 reads any highlighted text. It can also load and read any plain text (.txt), web page (.html), Word rich text format (.rtf) and Adobe portable document format (.pdf) files. It can convert the text into most audio formats (aiff, wmv, mp3, etc.). It costs \$29.99 to purchase and can be downloaded at: <http://speak-aloud.smartcode.com/info.html>

Freeware: FireVox Suite for Mozilla Firefox at: <http://firevox.clcworld.net/>
FireVox is a free open-source screen reader web and file-browser, designed for the free web browser Firefox. Firevox is available for most operating systems including Windows and Mac OS X. It does not currently support MS Office applications or Braille accessory support. FireVox screen reading functions can navigate complex web pages (it includes flash support) and enable communications over services like Email and TTY IP.

- If you don't have Firefox web browser, install it from: <http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/>
- Download the Firevox Extension and install it into Firefox.
- Download and install the CLC-4-TTS to FreeTTS Interface.
- Learn default key commands for working Firevox, via the tutorial on "reading text and navigating web pages" at: <http://firevox.clcworld.net/tutorial/tut1.html>. For example:

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[Ctrl + Shift + A] causes FireVox to auto read a web page's content.

[Ctrl + Shift + C] tells FireVox to stop reading.

[Ctrl + Shift + m] gives you access to FireVox's menu of options.

If you want to change the key code command, open your Firefox browser, go to menu [Tools : FireVox Options] and change preferences.

5th Learn how higher priced Screen Reader applications increase accessibility:

JAWS (Job Access with Speech) by Freedom Scientific: JAWS is a professional software suite that reads information on your screen using synthesized speech. JAWS offers fully integrated web-accessibility, accessibility for the Microsoft Office software suite, and file-browsing capability. It has integrated compatibility with other AT tools such as Braille keyboards and can provide Braille output in addition to, or instead of, speech. JAWS has excellent tech support but is expensive to purchase (\$800+) and maintain. JAWS has regular updates for purchase (around \$130 per upgrade).

- Discounts & Subsidies: Buying 10 copies at once reduces the cost from around \$800 to \$400 per copy. Discount rates for single copy purchases are not offered to rehabilitation clinics and training agencies. Some Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies have options in their budget to purchase JAWS software for an individual.
- For more information about JAWS or to download a free trial go to:
http://www.freedomscientific.com/fs_downloads/jaws.asp

STARTER STEP 4:

Test Your Website & Take Steps to Make it More Accessible

Despite that our society is becoming increasingly dependent on the Internet to communicate or access information, many widely available tools to navigate the web are built on assumptions that exclude a significant user base from fully accessing the web. A person with a disability who is surviving violence has the right to fully access online information about the domestic and sexual violence resources that your organization provides; your agency's services might be a vital option for supporting that person's safety, autonomy, and independence.

Start Now! Take Regular Steps to make your website more accessible:

The W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>) is committed to universal accessibility. It has guidelines explaining how to make your website fully accessible and provides checklists (Priority 1, 2, and 3 checklists) so you know what you should prioritize first to increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

Depending upon your organization's staffing and budgets, it may take a little while to get your website to fully conform to WC3's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, but it is very important to start. First, learn how your website isn't accessible and then take steps every month/week to make it more accessible. If you are lucky enough to have someone (staff, volunteer, intern, consultant, system administrator) who understands website design and coding, then you may be able to meet basic (priority 1) accessibility requirements quickly. Don't stop there. It is vital that you keep working to make your website fully accessible.

1st Test your website pages.

AChecker, at <http://achecker.ca/checker/index.php>, is a free online tool to quickly check the accessibility of your website. The results can be difficult to understand though, so it's important to have someone familiar with developing and maintaining websites look at this.

WAVE is a free web accessibility evaluation tool provided by WebAIM. Rather than providing a complex technical report, WAVE shows the original webpage with embedded icons and indicators that reveal the accessibility of that page. Available at <http://wave.webaim.org>

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Mozilla Accessibility Extension (2006) by Illinois Center for Instructional Technology Accessibility is a useful Plug-In tool bar for Mozilla and Firefox browsers. The toolbar's functions make it easier for people with a disability to view and navigate web content. Website developers can also use the toolbar to check the structural markup of their web pages to make sure it matches the webpage content. Learn more and download for free at: <https://addons.mozilla.org/firefox/1891/>

You can learn a lot by using these above tools to experience how someone would navigate your website. Remember that no matter how robust a website accessibility evaluation tool is, it might not catch all accessibility issues. It is still critical to have someone who uses these tools or specializes in website accessibility check your website.

2nd Learn about the ways different people with disabilities use the web.

Ask people with disabilities what they like and dislike about using the web and your website. Don't get defensive about your website. Listen and Learn.

Read other web-based resources about how people with disabilities might use assistive technologies to access the web. Here are a few examples:

- WC3: How People with Disabilities Use The Web
<http://www.w3.org/WAI/EO/Drafts/PWD-Use-Web/Overview.html>
- WC3: Alternative Web Browsing
<http://www.w3.org/WAI/References/Browsing>

3rd Start modifying your website to make it more accessible:

- Create easy to understand links: When you add a link on your website to another webpage, don't just say "Click Here". A Screen Reader will be reading the text of the link, so choose text that briefly but clearly communicates what the link will take someone to.
- Provide alternative text (HTML ALT tags) descriptions for all images, animations and other non-text items on your website. Provide text captions and descriptions for multimedia and text transcripts for any audio.
 - For example: on one web page, a linked image of a house may represent a link to a home page; on another web page it might be a graphic that links to a list of various Domestic Violence shelters. For the screen reader to

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correctly tell a person who is blind what that image communicates, you need to provide ALT text tags for the image and clear text descriptions for the link.

- Provide methods for skipping over navigation links to get to main content of the web page.
- Avoid use of frames in your website. Many freeware screen readers and text-to-speech tools don't handle frames well. Only use frames if you provide an html title for each frame element and framed web page and use accessible source code that complies with WC3's guidelines.
- Provide a web site map accessible from every web page.
- Provide text-only versions of your web pages. This is especially a priority if you cannot seem to make your website accessible in any other way (or quickly enough).

4th Review other checklists and suggestions about website accessibility and keep taking steps to decrease the design barriers that are in your website.

Here are a few shorter pieces to complement to WC3's comprehensive information:

- WC3's brief checklist: Ten Quick Guidelines on Making your Site more Accessible: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/References/QuickTips/>
- IBM's Website Accessibility Guidelines & Checklist: <http://www-306.ibm.com/able/guidelines/web/accessweb.html>
- National Public Website on Assistive Technology piece titled: Web Site Accessibility. Conformance to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0: <http://www.assistivetech.net/about/accessibility.php>
- Tech Soup's Accessible Technology page has a few articles on inexpensive ways nonprofit organizations might make their websites accessible: <http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/access/index.cfm>
- All Things Web has many articles on increasing accessibility: <http://pantos.org/atw/>

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5th Learn about Section 508 requirements that U.S. federal agencies use to make their information technology accessible. Section 508 provides 16 objective measurable standards for web accessibility. Many non-federal organizations are adopting Section 508 as their own standard. If you receive federal funds and provide services on your website, you could be held liable if you don't comply with Section 508. See Section 508 website at: <http://section508.gov>

- United States Access Board. A federal agency committed to accessible design at: <http://www.access-board.gov>
- The Accessibility Forum and the Buy Accessible Wizard are sponsored by U.S. Goods and Service Administration and connect government and industry with accessible tools to comply with Section 508: <http://accessibilityforum.org>

STARTER STEP 5:

Learn how people with disabilities use augmentative & alternative communication devices including speech generating devices such as speech synthesizers.

Freeware: CHIPSpeaking stands for Conversational Help for Individuals with Problems Speaking and is a free speech synthesis system for people with vocal disabilities. CHIPSpeaking was created after the creator discovered that 'name brand' programs were expensive and required additional proprietary software to work. The creator considered the high prices "as an affront to the humanity of the victims of this (Lou Gehrig's) disease" and designed CHIPSpeaking for his brother who had been losing the capacity to speak due to A.L.S. (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis or Motor Neuron Disease). Both CHIPSpeaking and CHIPSpeech have buttons that are easy and fairly large to accommodate persons with motor skill difficulties. Both programs require a multimedia equipped IBM-compatible computer with a microphone to record and audio capacity to speak the voices. Download from: <http://www.chipspeaking.com/>

- CHIPSpeaking freeware speech synthesis software has an area to type what you want the computer to say. It also can let you paste text into the speech entry area. This people who have difficulty seeing small text on the screen to hear their messages. It runs in Windows 95, 98 or 2000.
- CHIPSpeech works with Windows XP, and allows people who are progressively losing their voice to record their voice as it is now and preserve the phrases and sentences that are needed in everyday life, so they can recall them in their own voice, and save that speech indefinitely. The recordings are saved to disk in small files, which can be saved on diskette for use on other computers. It supports 99 common phrases and one emergency alert button.

Read Frequently Asked Questions on Augmentative & Alternative Communication at: http://atwiki.assistivetech.net/index.php/Augmentative_and_alternative_communication
This piece summarizes types of devices, how they work, cost (between \$10 to \$8000+) and payment and loan options.

The Center for Assistive Technology has an Assistive Technology Training Online Project (ATTO) at <http://atto.buffalo.edu> that provides online tutorials on augmentative and alternative communication tools for reading and writing including Clicker 4, word prediction programs, and other tutorials including one on JAWS that is designed to prepare a sighted user to train a person who is blind about JAWS functions.

STARTER STEP 6:

Help people with disabilities acquire low-cost or subsidized devices via websites and agencies that offer discounted tools, or through financing, loans, and grants:

To ensure full accessibility, a survivor fleeing violence may need to acquire a laptop, a switch, Braille keyboard, hearing aid, an internet connection, a Screen Reader, a PDA, an audio card, a speech synthesizing program, or something completely different. Always ask the person what s/he wants, needs, and prefers. Recognize that someone may need many assistive technology tools.

Read: "Using Assistive Technology For a Student with Multiple Disabilities" from the SEE/HEAR newsletter for an eloquent story of what can be involved in meeting the AT needs of a person with disabilities.

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach/seehear/spring03/tech.htm>

1st Contact organizations that have a primary mission to support people with disabilities in obtaining useful tools and services and getting connected with affordable solutions:

- National Public Website on Assistive Technology at <http://www.assistivetech.net> Has a searchable database that helps you narrow down solutions, determine costs, and find vendors of AT products.
- The Alliance for Technology Access at www.ataccess.org provides information on free or low-cost devices and services that private foundations and other organizations make available for people with disabilities.
- The American Foundation for the Blind has a comprehensive Assistive Technology Product Database at: <http://www.afb.org/prodMain.asp>
- ABLEDATA has a searchable database of global assistive technology products and rehabilitation equipment that summarizes product information into 19 categories based upon the product's intended function or the features it possesses. They do not sell products but do provide vendor contact information. Go to: <http://www.abledata.com> and select the Products in the website header.

2nd Learn about options available in your community to fund assistive technologies:

In the U.S. there are various public and private loans, grants, and subsidies available that can defray costs for one or more devices someone needs. Some

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use income-eligibility requirements to prioritize people with disabilities living in poverty. Here is some information to get you started:

- U.S. Laws like the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 and the Improving Access to Assistive Technology for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 are facilitating access by authorizing funding for such things as:
 - Alternative financing programs (state/federal partnerships) that provide low interest loans to people with disabilities to purchase assistive technology.
 - Grants to states to address the assistive technology needs of people with disabilities, by providing a variety of services including AT demonstration centers, AT equipment loan and recycling programs, and product information and referral services.

- The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA), whose purpose is to improve the potential of people with disabilities to achieve their goals through the use of technology, has several projects that can be helpful.
 - The Alternative Financing Technical Assistance Project (AFTAP) supports loan programs that provide financing to individuals with disabilities for the purchase of AT devices. For a list of State AT and Telework Financial Loan Programs: <http://www.resnaprojects.org/AFTAP/state/RESNA.html>
 - National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership (NATTAP) State contact list: <http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/at/statecontacts.html>
 - Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) project provides legal advocacy to individuals with disabilities to help them acquire AT devices: <http://www.nls.org/paatstat.pdf>

- The National Assistive Technology Advocacy Project's Funding Link (housed at Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.) has a wide array of resources to support the advocacy efforts of attorneys, advocates, service agencies, persons with disabilities and their families as they seek funding for AT services and devices. Website: <http://www.nls.org/natmain.htm>

- Many states have Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Programs (TEDP) or Telecommunications Access Programs (TAP) to provide specialized devices for persons with disabilities. Depending upon the state, a TEDP or TAP may provide amplified telephones, visual signaler for when a phone rings, an augmentative communication or other speech generating device like an artificial larynx TTY/TTDs and Braille products such as a refreshable keyboard that

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enable deaf-blind persons to use as TTY/TDDs. Some programs have income eligibility requirements and all programs require demonstration of need and/or ability to use the device.

- TEDP website: <http://www.tedpa.org>
- TEDP/TAP state program list: <http://www.tedpa.org/directory/?linkid=177>

- Disability Services and non-profits within your state may also be helpful in determining what financial assistance and programs exist in your state for people with disabilities who are seeking equipment and devices. For example, The Center for Communication, Hearing, and Deafness in Wisconsin lists sources of financial assistance in the state: http://www.cchdwi.org/financial_assistance.php

- Medicare covers certain equipment for people with disabilities. For example, it provides cost reimbursement based on a fee schedule for Speech Generating Devices, mounts, and switches. They reimburse up to 80% of the necessary device if a Speech Language Pathologist documents need. Other U.S. federal funding programs also subsidize the purchase or rental of an assistive technology for eligible individuals provided need is documented by a certified professional. For a handbook on assistive technology funding via Medicaid, private insurance, and Social Security, go to: <http://www.trace.wisc.edu/archive/fintech/fintech.html>

- Cornell University's Independence Project has a concise table of U.S. government programs, policies, and initiatives that impact people with disabilities titled, Worker & Family Oriented Policies. It describes who is impacted by public income support programs, in-kind benefits, job training, and tax policies, and describes Employer Oriented Policies: <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/independence/reference.htm?pisp=true>

3rd Search Websites that offer donated and discounted technology products:

Tech Soup: The Technology Place For Nonprofits, at: <http://www.techsoup.org/>
TechSoup Stock connects nonprofits with donated and discounted technology products. Choose from over 240 products from 25 providers including Cisco and Microsoft. Go to: <http://www.techsoup.org/stock/>

- Cost: This is mostly a low-cost solution since there is usually an administrative fee for each piece of software, but it is much less than you'd pay for software in a store.

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- Tip: Upgrading your software is not as simple as just ordering from Techsoup. First you need to assess if your hardware and operating system are compatible with the software you might purchase. Then, plan time and training activities for your staff to get used to new software programs or versions.

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Provides a wide range of freeware and shareware and most companies offering services there have discounted or reduced prices for non-profit orgs.

GOOD LUCK!!!!!!

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