

# How to Fund Assistive Technology: Navigating through Complex Funding Streams

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*Jackie Wilks, The Center for Financial Independence & Innovation (CFII)*  
*Naomi Walker, The Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO)*

*May 30, 2012*

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At the end, please evaluate us:

Please fill out this brief survey on today's  
webinar:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L6FBG2N>

# Welcome Jackie Stapleton!

- The new TFL part time team member!
- AT Funding and Resource Specialist
- Jackie@gatfl.org

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

*~Anne Lamott*



# Tools for Life

## Georgia's Federal AT Act Program

- On February 1, 2012 we joined:
  - The Alternative Media Access Center (AMAC)
  - Georgia Institute of Technology
  - Enterprise Innovation Institute [EI2]
  - [www.amacusg.org](http://www.amacusg.org)

# Tools for Life: Mission



Tools for Life increases access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services for Georgians of all ages and disabilities so they can live, learn, work, and play independently in the communities of their choice.

# Tools for Life

## Georgia's Federal AT Act Program

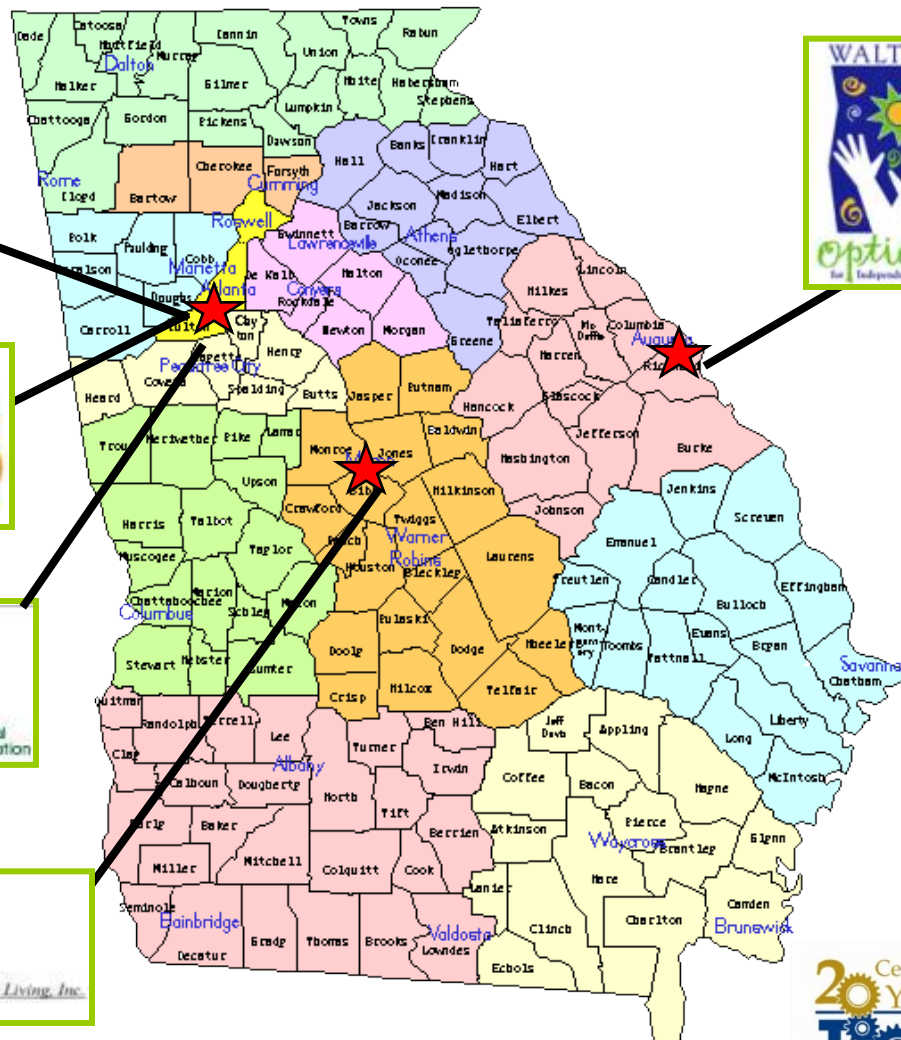
- Developed Georgia's Plan for AT
- Serve individuals of all ages & all disabilities in Georgia
  - Over 45,000+ thru various activities throughout the year
- TFL Network
  - Assistive Technology Resource Centers
  - Lending Libraries
  - Training and Demonstrations
  - AT Reuse
  - AT Funding Education/Assistance and Resources





# Tools for Life Network

- AT Lending Library (try before you buy)
- AT Evaluations & Training
- AT Demos – Promote Choice
- Resource and Referral )
- AT Funding Assistance (CFII)
- DME Reuse (FODAC)



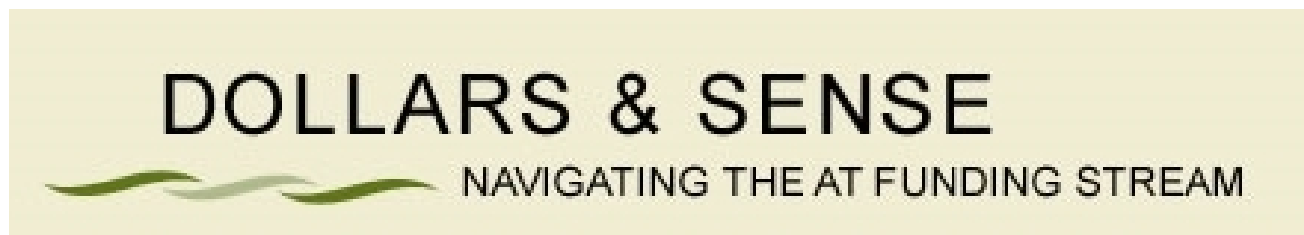
# The Need for Alternative Funding

- Funding is the greatest barrier for individuals with disabilities to acquire assistive technology
- Third party funding sources are not increasing and their eligibility criteria are narrowing
- Traditional credit financing for assistive technology has not been available for individuals with disabilities

# What to do when someone needs AT?

- Many agencies are “payers of last resort”
- Develop an AT Funding Plan
- Determine which equipment is needed as a medical necessity, which is needed for educational purposes, which is needed to reach vocational goals.
- There is no agency that can pay for all AT - Leverage and toggle all resources!

# Direct AT Service Activities



- Web-based Funding Guide
- A resource for locating funding sources for AT devices and services. This guide was developed to make the funding process easier and to assist consumers in getting the assistive technology they need.
- New resources added frequently!

# DOLLARS & SENSE

NAVIGATING THE AT FUNDING STREAM

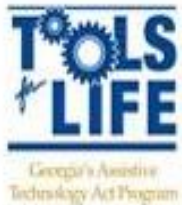
[HOME](#)

[GETTING  
STARTED](#)

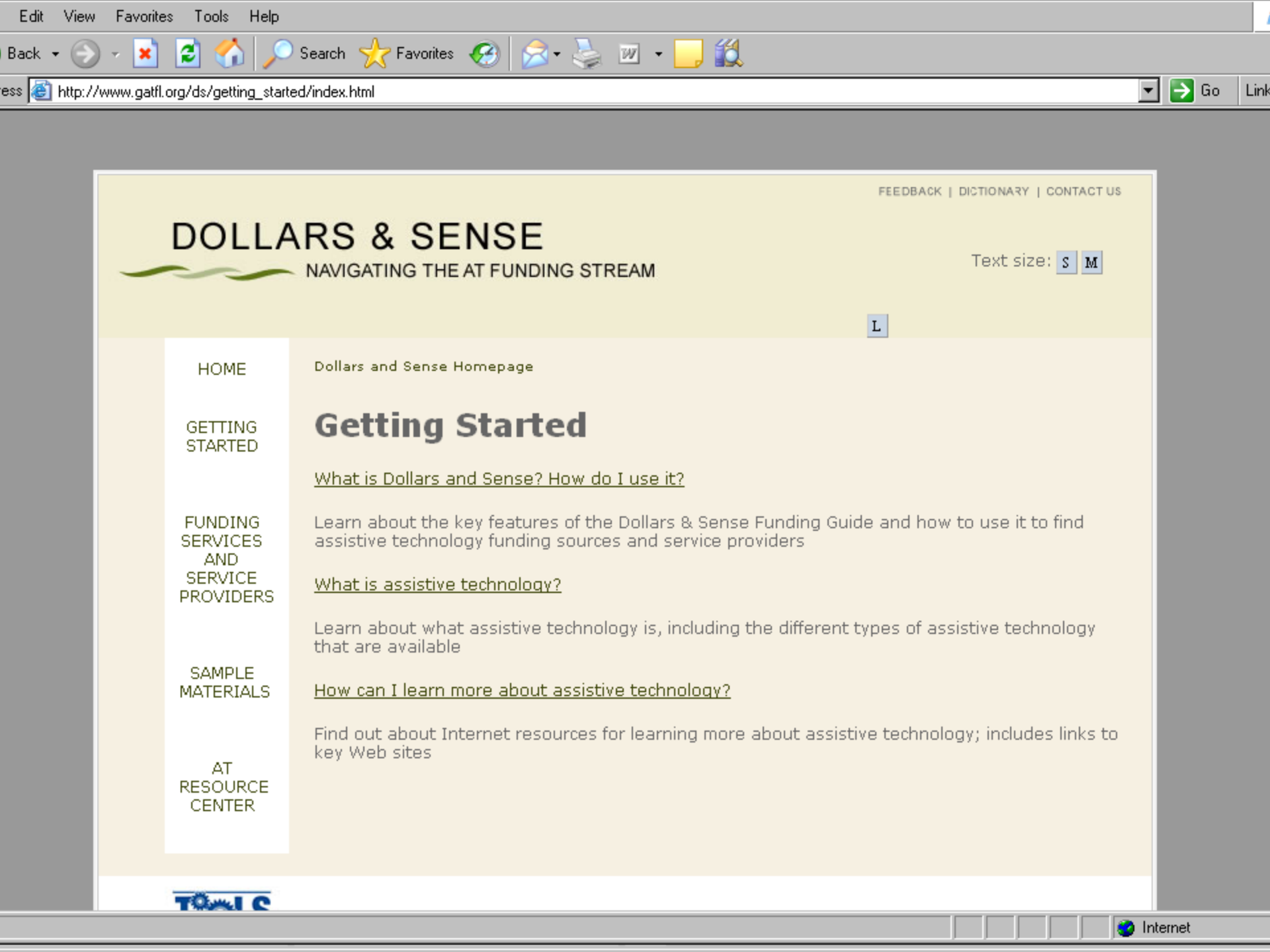
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SERVICES  
AND SERVICE  
PROVIDERS](#)

[SAMPLE  
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[CLICK HERE](#) TO GET STARTED  
OR CALL 800-497-8665



# DOLLARS & SENSE



NAVIGATING THE AT FUNDING STREAM

Text size: [S](#) [M](#)

[L](#)

HOME

Dollars and Sense Homepage

GETTING  
STARTED

## Getting Started

### [What is Dollars and Sense? How do I use it?](#)

Learn about the key features of the Dollars & Sense Funding Guide and how to use it to find assistive technology funding sources and service providers

### [What is assistive technology?](#)

Learn about what assistive technology is, including the different types of assistive technology that are available

### [How can I learn more about assistive technology?](#)

Find out about Internet resources for learning more about assistive technology; includes links to key Web sites

FUNDING  
SERVICES  
AND  
SERVICE  
PROVIDERS

SAMPLE  
MATERIALS

AT  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

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# DOLLARS & SENSE



NAVIGATING THE AT FUNDING STREAM

Text size: [S](#) [M](#)[L](#)[HOME](#)[GETTING  
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Please use the drop-down lists below to search...

Age Groups Served

Show all ages

Geographic Areas Served

Show all geographies

[FUNDING  
SERVICES  
AND  
SERVICE  
PROVIDERS](#)Serves People with the Following  
Disabilities

Show all disabilities

Type of Funding Provided

Show all funding sources

[SAMPLE  
MATERIALS](#)

Types of Services Provided

Show all services provided

[AT  
RESOURCE  
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Dollars and Sense - Search Results - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address <http://www.gatfl.org/ds/Search/SearchResults.aspx> Go Links >>

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# DOLLARS & SENSE

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- HOME
- GETTING STARTED
- FUNDING SERVICES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS
- SAMPLE MATERIALS
- AT RESOURCE CENTER

[Search again...](#)

227 records were found.

	DollarsID	Organization	City	State
<a href="#">View Details</a>	350	Babies Can't Wait - Valdosta, Health District 8-1	Valdosta	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	351	Babies Can't Wait - Albany, Health District 8-2	Albany	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	352	Babies Can't Wait - Savannah, Health District 9-1	Savannah	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	353	Babies Can't Wait - Waycross, Health District 9-2	Waycross	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	354	Babies Can't Wait - Dublin, Health District 5-1	Dublin	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	355	Babies Can't Wait - Macon, Health District 5-2	Macon	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	356	Access of the Chattahoochee Valley, Inc.	Columbus	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	357	American Cancer Society - Georgia (Southeast) Division	Atlanta	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	358	American Parkinson Disease Association - Atlanta Chapter	Atlanta	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	359	American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.	Louisville	KY
<a href="#">View Details</a>	360	Arthritis Foundation - Georgia Chapter	Atlanta	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	361	Atlanta Alliance on Developmental Disabilities - Georgia Family Support	Atlanta	GA
<a href="#">View Details</a>	362	Atlanta Champions - Atlanta Chapter of	Atlanta	GA

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# DOLLARS & SENSE



NAVIGATING THE AT FUNDING STREAM

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HOME

Dollars and Sense Homepage | Resource Center

GETTING  
STARTED

## AT Resource Center

FUNDING  
SERVICES  
AND  
SERVICE  
PROVIDERS

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

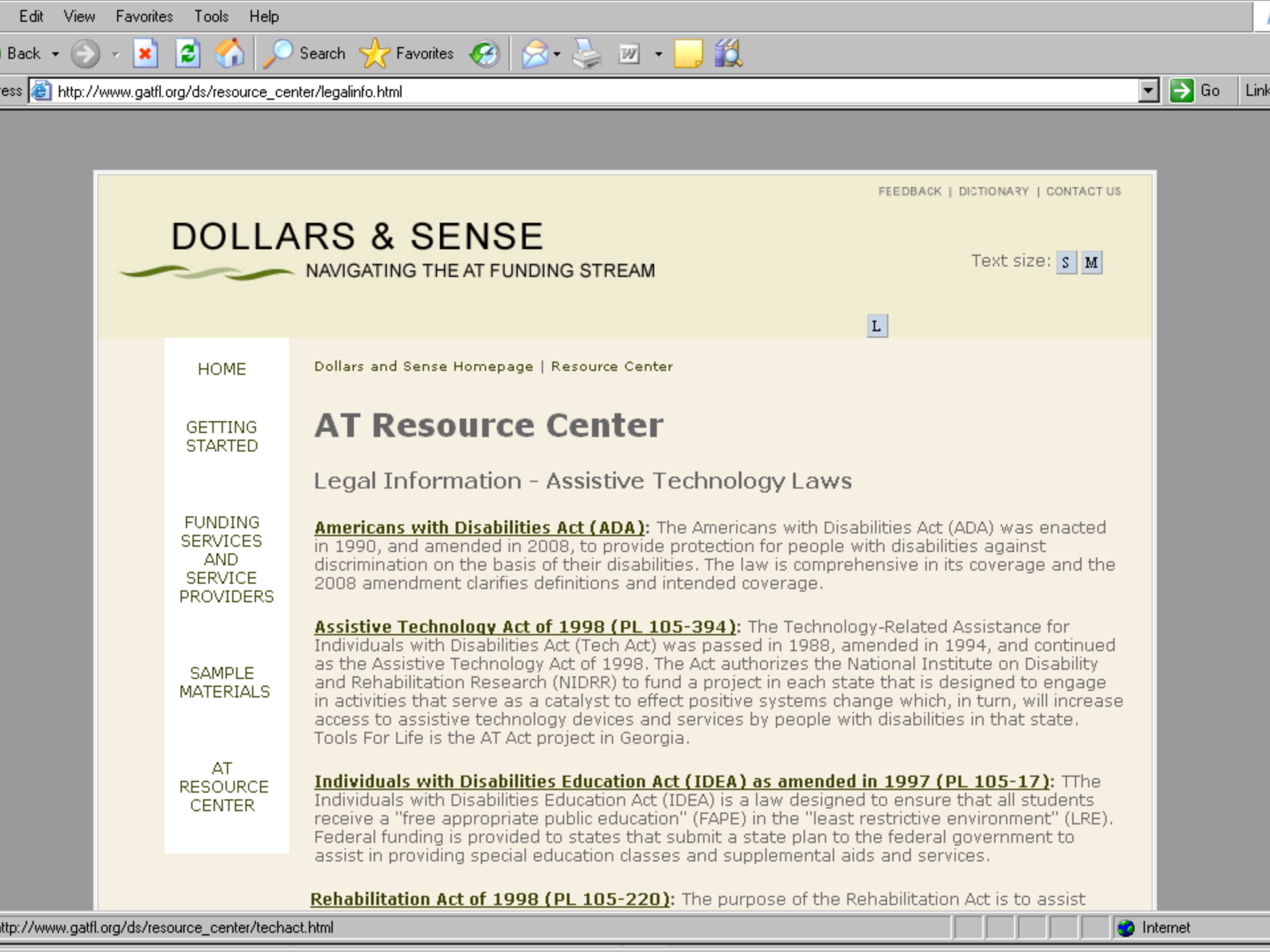
#### 1. How can I get funding to pay for home modifications?

There are a variety of different funding opportunities for home modifications. Listed below are a few:

- [Georgia Dream Homeownership Program](#)
- [Credit-Able](#) – Georgia's Alternative Loan Program for Georgian's with disabilities
- [Social Security PASS Plan](#), allows for individuals to save money for a specific purchase
- [211](#)- United Way telephone number to find human service answers
- [Aldergate](#), homes for developmental disabilities
- [Brain and Spinal Cord Trust Fund](#)
- [Joni Foundation](#)
- [USDA Rural Development Section 502 Rural Housing Loan Guarantee](#)-The purpose of this loan program is to enable eligible low- and moderate-income rural residents to acquire modestly priced housing for their own use as a primary residence. The program is available for the purchase and repair of existing and newly constructed dwelling. There is no required down payment, but families must be able to afford the mortgage payments, including taxes and insurance. In addition, applicants must be without adequate housing and be unable to obtain credit elsewhere, yet have acceptable credit histories.

SAMPLE  
MATERIALS

AT  
RESOURCE  
CENTER



# DOLLARS & SENSE

NAVIGATING THE AT FUNDING STREAM

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HOME

Dollars and Sense Homepage | Resource Center

GETTING  
STARTED

## AT Resource Center

### Legal Information - Assistive Technology Laws

FUNDING  
SERVICES  
AND  
SERVICE  
PROVIDERS

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1990, and amended in 2008, to provide protection for people with disabilities against discrimination on the basis of their disabilities. The law is comprehensive in its coverage and the 2008 amendment clarifies definitions and intended coverage.

SAMPLE  
MATERIALS

**Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (PL 105-394):** The Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (Tech Act) was passed in 1988, amended in 1994, and continued as the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. The Act authorizes the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) to fund a project in each state that is designed to engage in activities that serve as a catalyst to effect positive systems change which, in turn, will increase access to assistive technology devices and services by people with disabilities in that state. Tools For Life is the AT Act project in Georgia.

AT  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as amended in 1997 (PL 105-17):** TThe Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law designed to ensure that all students receive a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). Federal funding is provided to states that submit a state plan to the federal government to assist in providing special education classes and supplemental aids and services.

**Rehabilitation Act of 1998 (PL 105-220):** The purpose of the Rehabilitation Act is to assist

# Direct AT Service Activities



- FREE resource for finding and exchanging assistive technology (AT) devices online
- Place an ad requesting items for sale, donation, or needed
- gTRADE and Tools for Life encourages members to offer AT devices and information for sale or by donation to others who may benefit from using technology and equipment no longer in need by others
- This online equipment exchange program was developed to make to make AT devices and services available and accessible to Georgians with disAbilities
- [www.gtradeonline.org](http://www.gtradeonline.org)



- [Home](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Register](#)
- [Login](#)
- [View Items](#)
- [On Your Mind](#)

## Items Listed as Available on Gtrade

Filter list by:

Category:

All Categories

Posted:

All Postings

Type:

All Type

All Categories

Computers & Related

Daily Living Aids

Environmental Adaptations

Hearing

Learning, Cognitive, & Developmental

Mobility/ Seating & Positioning

Other

Recreation, Sports, & Leisure

Speech Communication

Vehicle Modification & Transportation

Vision

Display records per page:

5

Go

Click on the

Display 1 -

Previous Page

ID

Category

Item Name

Price

Location

42 Vision

[PACMate](#)

\$ 300

Albany, GA

46 Vision

[MeastroTrekker GPS](#)

Albany, GA

47 Vision

[ZoomText 9.0 Magnifier/reader](#)

\$ 400

Albany, GA

48 Vision

[AMIGO](#)

\$ 600

Ellijay, GA

56 Daily Living Aids

[Accessible sink with chrome faucet](#)

\$ 250

Marietta, GA

Display 1 - 5 of 10

[Previous Page](#)

[Next Page](#)

# ReBoot



- ReBoot is a nonprofit, statewide, collaborative effort dedicated to actively promoting independence for people with disabilities through Assistive Technology & computer reuse.
- ReBoot has placed over 10,000 reused computer systems with people throughout Georgia, the Southeast, and the United States.
- ReBoot acquires the equipment, evaluates it, repairs it (if needed), loads licensed software, distributes the equipment to people with disabilities, and trains the person on the equipment.



# Friends of Disabled Adults and Children

- FODAC is a statewide provider of Durable medical equipment
- Distributed 20,000 wheelchairs and thousands of other pieces of DME since 1986
- Internationally, 65 countries have received some equipment over those years.
- FODAC's programs include:
  - Durable medical equipment - wheelchairs and mobility aids
  - Ramps for Champs – home access ramps and modifications
  - ReMount – wheelchair and scooter lifts for vehicles
  - Disposable medical equipment – catheters, braces, liquid nutrition, etc.



[www.fodac.org](http://www.fodac.org)



# Goal of the Georgia AT Depot



- AT Depot endeavors to break down the barriers which prevent individuals with disabilities, their families, and service providers from acquiring and effectively using Assistive Technologies to gain greater independence.
- To insure that AT products are available to Georgians with disabilities at lower prices
- Eliminate Funding Barriers
- [www.ATDepot.org](http://www.ATDepot.org)





# Georgia AT Depot



- GA AT Depot's mission relates to filling orders & providing product at discounts.
- AT services are referred to and provided by the TFL Network and participating ATRCs. They will assist with:
  - Purchase consulting
  - Training
  - Product implementation





Search:  [Go](#)

## The Georgia AT Depot

PO Box 465171  
Lawrenceville, GA 30042

800-497-8665 Toll Free

404-638-0390 Local

888-890-6011 Fax

[info@ATDepot.org](mailto:info@ATDepot.org) Email

[www.ATDepot.org](http://www.ATDepot.org)



You are here > [Home](#)

## WELCOME

### Your Source for Assistive Technology Discounts in Georgia

AT Depot endeavors to break down the barriers which prevent individuals with disabilities, their families, and service providers from acquiring and effectively using Assistive Technologies to gain greater independence.

The Georgia AT Depot is a state-wide buying Cooperative for Assistive Technology for customers in the state of Georgia. The Georgia AT Depot is modeled after the Maryland AT Co-op, which has operated a successful cooperative buying program since 1998. The Georgia AT Depot is a collaborating partner with the Maryland Co-op. In this way we can provide Georgia customers the best discounts possible.

AT Depot, the Georgia Assistive Technology Cooperative, is based in the Georgia [Tools for Life Network](#). This provides Georgians with several immediate advantages:

A network of local [Assistive Technology Resources Centers \(ATRCs\)](#) to serve AT Depot Customers with:

- Training & Professional Development
- Product demonstrations
- Implementation services
- Product Support

[Credit-able](#) is Georgia's Alternative Financing Program for Assistive Technology

- Providing low-interest loans
- Working through participating credit unions
- Enabling Georgians with disabilities access to affordable financing
- Used for Assistive Technology and Home & Vehicle Modifications

[The Center for Financial Independence & Innovation](#)

- A nonprofit organization dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities and their family members advance their financial independence and security.

### Computer and AT Device Reuse programs

[The Southeastern Technology Access and Reuse \(STAR\) Network](#) is the distribution model that provides reused assistive technology (AT), computers, durable medical equipment, and home care equipment to centers that are members of the Network in Georgia and the Southeastern United States.



# Private Grants

- Friends Of Man, is a 100% charity, providing food, clothing, medicine, DME, AT, eyeglasses, hearing aids and prosthetics. No dental coverage outside of Colorado per residency requirements. *Referrals must come through a professional.* [applications@friendsofman.org](mailto:applications@friendsofman.org); [www.friendsofman.org](http://www.friendsofman.org)
- Joni and Friends, Christian Fund for the Disabled: Funds for AT, rehabilitation, special treatment, educational opportunities. CFD up to \$2,500 [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)
- Texas Center for the Visually Challenged, is a computer refurbishing program averaging of 350-400 pc's per year with grand total of 3500 distributed to date. Individuals can apply from the US and Canada; [www.handicapability.org](http://www.handicapability.org)

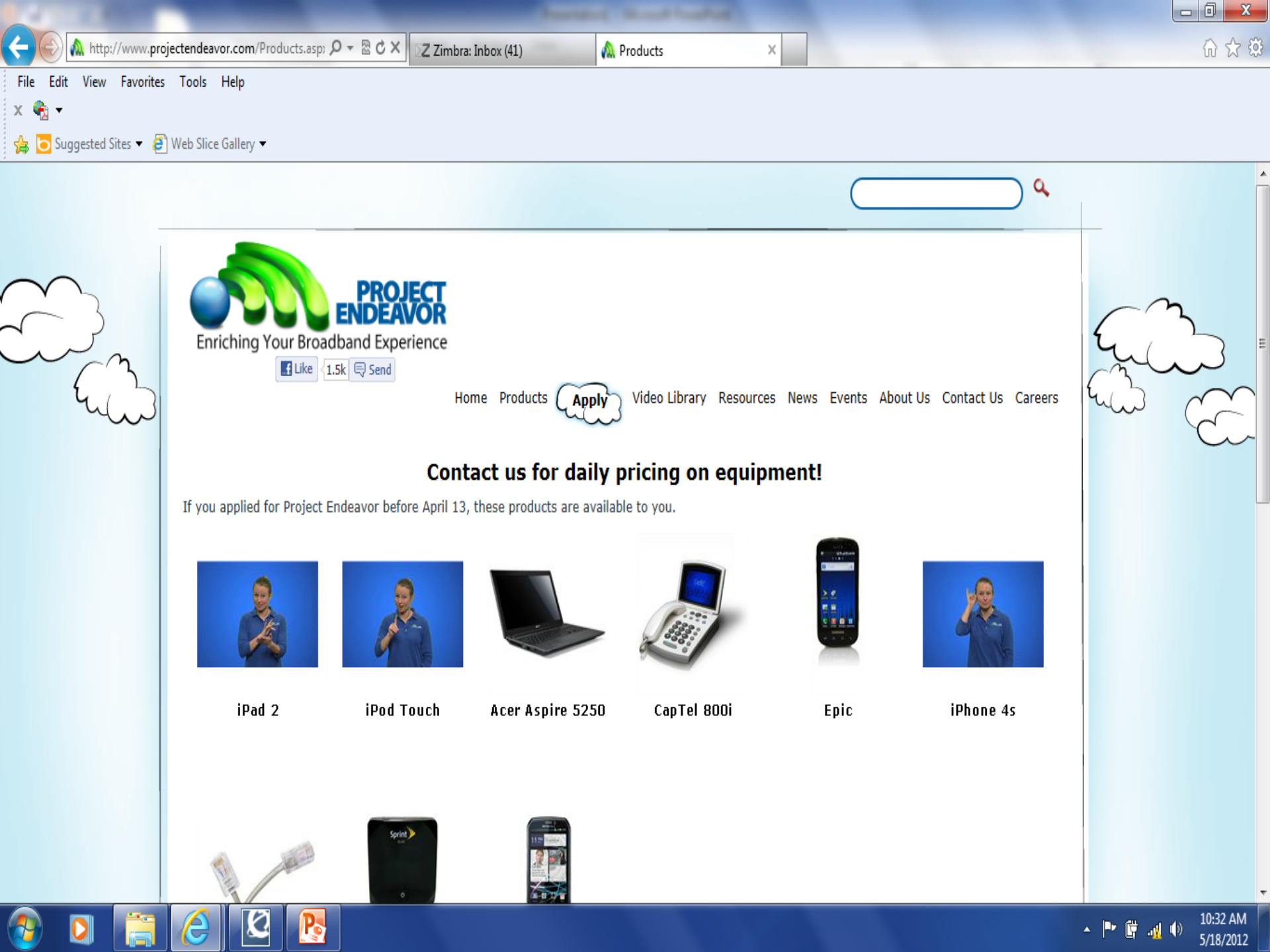
# Private Grants

- The Ideal Group , Inc. specializes in online conference calls, accessible math resources, and real time closed captioning. <http://ideal-group.org/at/>
- GiveTech is a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, CA that gives computer input devices to individuals who can not input in traditional ways on computers. [www.givetech.org](http://www.givetech.org)

# Project Endeavor



- Provide deaf and hard of hearing Americans with access to high-speed internet
- Affordable devices including touch tablets and phones
- Link to see if eligible
- [www.projectendeavor.com](http://www.projectendeavor.com)



# Bridging Apps

- Previously SNAApps4Kids
- Easter Seals' guide to explore ways to find funding for iPads and similar devices.
- Many funding resources listed
- Bridging Apps has an IEP and iPad Pilot program that can apply
- [www.bridgingapps.org](http://www.bridgingapps.org)



**BridgingApps**<sup>TM</sup>

*Bridging the gap between technology and people with disabilities*





You asked, and we listened. We have received many questions from the BridgingApps community about how to get a device funded. We have begun to compile a list of organizations that grant iPads and similar devices to families who have children with special needs. Please use this list as a guide to explore ways to find such funding.



SEARCH

Link to the Program Page or Application	Program Description	Specify Scope of Funding Source
tx.us	<p>This program is through DARS (Texas Department of Rehabilitation Services). Here is the official website: <a href="http://www.dars.state.tx.us/dhhs/stap.shtml">www.dars.state.tx.us/dhhs/stap.shtml</a></p> <p>This program uses the need to be able to access the p</p>	<p>Texas, devices specifically for speech-generation</p>
washingtonaccessfund.org	<p>The Washington Access Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) established by and for people with disabilities in Washington state. Washington Access Fund provi</p>	<p>United States</p>

# First Hand Foundation



- Not-for-profit - First Hand assists individual children with health-related needs when insurance and other financial resources have been exhausted
- First Hand accepts applications worldwide
- Treatment: Clinical procedures, medicine, therapy, prosthesis, etc.
- Equipment: Wheelchairs, assistive technology equipment, care devices, hearing aids, etc.
- Displacement: Lodging, food, gas, parking and transportation for families of seriously ill children who must travel during treatment
- Vehicle modifications: Lifts, ramps and transfer boards







our story

our outreach

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## Golf Tournament

Register now for our annual golf tournament, held on May 8<sup>th</sup> at The National Golf Club of Kansas City.

Apply for funding

Donate to First Hand

The First Hand Foundation is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that provides funding so individual children may have access to health care that would otherwise be impossible. Our mission is to directly impact the health status of a young life. Since our inception in 1995, First Hand has distributed more than \$16 million to impact 146,000 lives in 76 countries.

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# Challenged Athlete Foundation

- [www.challengedathletes.org](http://www.challengedathletes.org)
- Recognizes the athletic greatness inherent in all people with physical challenges and supports their athletic endeavors by providing unparalleled sports opportunities that lead to success in sports — and in life.
- Grants
  - Access for Athletes
  - Operation Rebound







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THE CAUSE

OUR EVENTS

# Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program Application

- Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP) was established for two primary purposes, to assist victims with debt incurred as a result of violent crime, and to encourage victims to participate in the criminal justice system.
- Eligible program applicants can receive compensation for up to \$25,000 to help with medical and dental care, mental health counseling, economic support, crime scene clean-up, and funeral expenses when the costs are not covered by other sources
- [http://cjcc.ga.gov/00/channel\\_title/0,2094,43676881\\_169285446,00.html](http://cjcc.ga.gov/00/channel_title/0,2094,43676881_169285446,00.html)



**CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
COORDINATING COUNCIL**  
State of Georgia



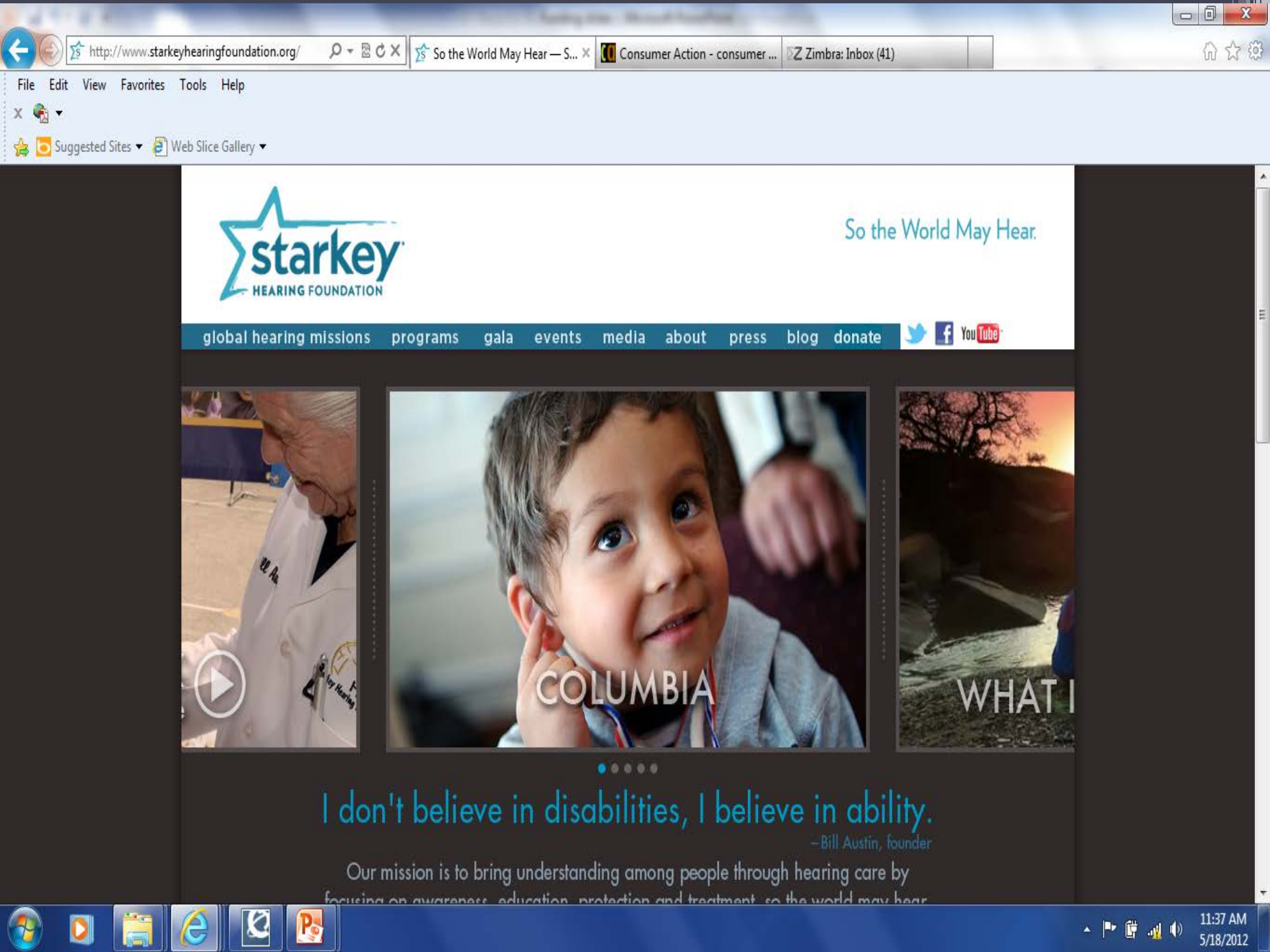
# Starkey Hearing Foundation



- Hear Now is Starkey Hearing Foundation's domestic, application-based program committed to assisting those permanently residing in the U.S. who are deaf or hard of hearing and have no other resources to acquire hearing aids.

[www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org](http://www.starkeyhearingfoundation.org)





So the World May Hear.

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I don't believe in disabilities, I believe in ability.

— Bill Austin, founder

Our mission is to bring understanding among people through hearing care by focusing on awareness, education, protection and treatment, so the world may hear.



At the end, please evaluate us:

Please fill out this brief survey on today's  
webinar:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L6FBG2N>

# Contact Us

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*Presented by:*

Jackie Wilks, Executive Director



## Core Services:

- Credit-Able
- Financial Education
- Asset Alliance of Georgia
- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance



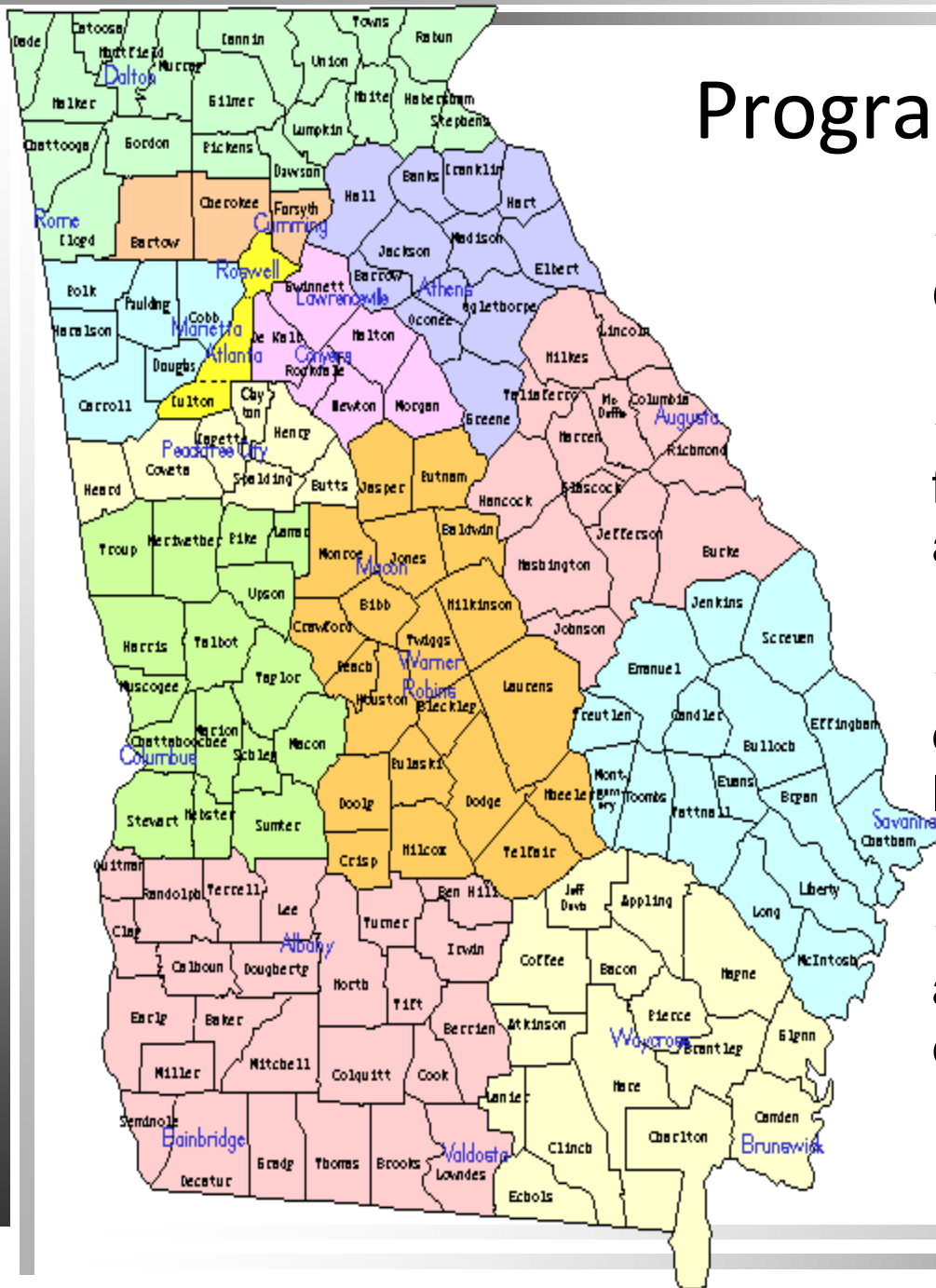
- Financial Education Workshops:
  - Managing Your Money
  - Basics of Banking
  - Financing Assistive Technology
  - Understanding Your Credit
    - Including how to receive your free accessible credit report (coming this fall)
  - First Time Home Buyers



- Asset Alliance of Georgia
  - Core Areas of Interest:
    - Asset accumulation (home ownership, micro enterprise)
    - Asset preservation (keeping the assets you have)
    - Financial education
  - *Funded by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities*

# Program Eligibility

- ✓ Individuals must be a resident of Georgia
- ✓ Individuals with disabilities, their family members or legal guardians are eligible to apply
- ✓ Individuals / employers must demonstrate the ability to repay the loan
- ✓ Loan guarantees are only available for assistive technology equipment and services





## Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

- Free tax return preparation and e-file for low-income Georgians and those with disabilities
- Partnership with the CA\$H Prosperity Campaign – primarily serving 55 rural counties in south Georgia; referral network available statewide

# Georgia's Alternative Financing Program for Assistive Technology



# Assistive Technology



## Defined as:

“Any item, piece of equipment, product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.”

- Public Law 108-364



# Assistive technology service



## Defined as:

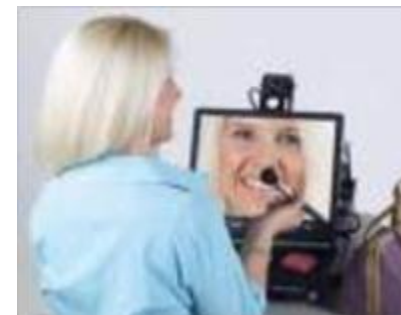
“Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.”

- Public Law 108-364

# Examples of Assistive Technology

## Vision Equipment

- GPS Navigation Equipment
- Portable video magnifiers
- Note takers
- Braille machines/displays
- Glasses



# Examples of Assistive Technology



## Home Modifications

- Environmental Controls
- Voice activated phone dialing
- Tactile surfacing

## Computers and Adaptive Software

- CCTV's
- Screen reading software
- Voice controlled software
- Magnification software



# Credit-Able Program Criteria



*To receive a Credit-Able Loan you must be:*

- A resident of Georgia

AND

- An **individual** with a disability

OR

- A **family member** or legal guardian of an individual with a disability

OR

- An **employer** of an individual with a disability
- Able to pay back the loan
- Using the loan to buy assistive technology equipment and services

# Range of Loans, Terms, and Interest Rates



- Range of Loans Approved:  
**\$250 to \$50,000**
- Length of Loans Approved:  
**6 months to 8 years**
- Interest Rates:  
**5.0 % - 9.0 %**

# YOU Save Money!

## Traditional Financing

- \$2,000
- 22% (rate of average credit card)
- 3 year term
- Monthly payment = \$76.38
- Total interest paid = \$749.71

## Credit-Able Financing

- \$2,000
- 5.4%
- 3 year term
- Monthly payment = \$60.30
- Total interest paid = \$170.86

**Total interest saved: \$578.85**



# The Bottom Line – Consumers Save Money and Build Credit!

## **Traditional Financing**

- \$25,000
- 12.9% interest
- 6 year term
- Monthly payment = \$500.53
- Interest Paid = \$11,038.46

## **Credit-Able Financing**

- \$25,000
- 5% interest
- 6 year term
- Monthly payment = \$402.62
- Interest Paid = \$3,988.88

**Interest SAVED over the life of the loan: \$7,049.58**



# How Can I Prepare for a Credit-Able Loan?



# Know Your Price Range



## ***Determine Your Income and Your Expenses***

### **Income**

- Earned Income
  - \$ Received for work
- Unearned Income
  - \$ From pensions, SSI, etc.
- Gross Earnings
  - Income **before** taxes
- Net Earnings
  - Income **after** taxes

### **Expenses**

- Fixed Expenses
  - Necessities that do not change from month to month  
(i.e. rent, mortgage, insurance)
- Flexible Expenses
  - Necessities that may change from month to month  
(i.e. groceries, electric/heat/water bills)
- Discretionary Expenses
  - Not necessary  
(i.e. eating out, movies, cable bills)

# *How much can I afford to pay?*

- Determine how much you need to cover all necessary expenses
- Subtract this from your NET (post-taxes) income

In other words...

Total #1

-Total #2

-Total #3

***\$ available for loan payment***

<b>My <u>Net</u> Income</b>	
Source	Amount
1	
2	
3	
4	
<b>TOTAL #1</b>	
<b>My Expenses</b>	
Fixed Expenses	Amount
1. Rent/Mortgage	
2. Insurance Payment	
3. Other Loan Payments	
ETC.	
<b>TOTAL #2</b>	
Flexible Expenses	Amount
1. Groceries	
2. Heating Bill	
3. Electric Bill	
4. Savings Deposit	
ETC.	
<b>TOTAL #3</b>	

# Other Loan Readiness Tips



- **Explore Funding/Grant Options**
  - Funds/Grants may be available to help supplement your loan
- **Report all Available Income**
  - Including income of significant others, PASS income, etc.
- **Borrowing vs. Buying**
  - Be sure the product you wish to purchase is what you are looking for
- **Ask a Co-Signer**



# For more information:



## ***Contact:***

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# **Advocating for Assistive Technology (AT)**

**What can I do to get AT funded?**

Naomi Walker  
Georgia Advocacy Office



# The Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO)

- Georgia's Protection and Advocacy system
- Federally mandated to advocate with and on behalf of people who have disabilities or mental illness
- Statewide





# GAO's Vision Statement

“GAO envisions a Georgia where all people have value, visibility and voice; where even the most difficult and long-lasting challenges are addressed by ordinary citizens acting voluntarily on behalf of each other; and where the perception of disability is replaced by the recognition of ability.”

- Assistive Technology's (AT's) role; PAAT



# GAO's Priorities

- Protect people with disabilities or mental illness from abuse, neglect, and death
- Redress discrimination and advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities or mental illness
- Encourage self advocacy and advocacy by ordinary citizens



# Advocacy Tips

- Educating yourself
- Documenting your need
- Maintaining a written record



# Example: Private Health Insurance

- Educating yourself
- Summary Plan Document
- Benefit categories and definitions
- Exclusions



## Example: Medicaid

- Educating yourself
- Federal and State program
- State Medicaid agency: the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH)

# Provider Manuals

- Categories of Services
- List of Manuals created by the DCH:  
<https://www.mmis.georgia.gov/portal/PubAccess.Provider%20Information/Provider%20Manuals/tabId/54/Default.aspx>

# Two Important Manuals

- Part II Policies and Procedures for Durable Medical Equipment Services (DME)
  - Coverage
  - Federal guidance regarding “approved” list of items
  - DME vendors
- Part I Policies and Procedures for Medicaid/ PeachCare for Kids
  - Definitions (43)
  - Medical Necessity (for Adults)



# EPSDT - Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment

- Mandatory Medicaid program
- Requires provision of comprehensive preventive, acute and chronic care services to children and youth under 21 who are eligible for Medicaid
- Emphasizes the early discovery and treatment of conditions and illness through screenings

# Treatment Under EPSDT

- Screening finds condition or illness
- Prescribes a service as “necessary to correct or ameliorate” a child’s condition or illness
  - Medical Necessity (for Kids)
- Treatment must be provided if it falls within federally authorized categories of service



# Advocacy Strategies

- Documenting the need
  - Evaluation
  - Prescription
- Maintaining a written record
  - Keep a timeline
  - Keep a log of communication
  - Write follow-up letters