

WVATS

West Virginia Assistive Technology Newsletter

Making the Holidays Accessible

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Holiday Visitors: Temporary Assistive Technology Solutions

During the holiday season many people welcome family and friends into their homes for food, fun and festivities. Preparing for visitors may involve more than planning a menu. To make everyone as welcome and comfortable as possible, consider the accessibility needs of the guests. Do they have difficulty getting around? Does arthritis (or other barriers) limit their grip strength? Assistive technology can make a home more accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

Temporary ramps can be placed when needed and stored when not in use. Ramps vary in length. They can range from a threshold ramp to one that accommodates several stairs. Many can be used inside or outside. Keep in mind the height and slope of the ramp so it is not too steep for a person to use.

Light switch extenders can be placed over traditional switches. These allow shorter users or those using a wheelchair to reach the lights more easily. Grips or lever doorknob turners can go over traditional doorknobs for guests who do not have the strength or ability to grip a doorknob. Offset hinges can add inches to a door frame. This makes the door wider for guests to enter.



Using a lazy susan on the dinner table may allow individuals to more easily access food choices.

Pitchers that squeeze from the bottom might help with pouring drinks. Adding non-slip material under platters and plates may help keep dishes from shifting on the table.

Temporary grab bars can be used in the bathroom. A steady stander toilet rail may help someone who needs assistance getting up and down themselves. Handheld showerheads, transfer benches and shower chairs may be used for guests staying overnight.

The West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) has many devices you can borrow to help accommodate guests. Free loans are available for 30 days. The loans can provide assistance in temporary situations or may help users see if devices work for their situation. For more information about assistive technology and temporary accommodations call WVATS at **800-841-8436**.





Client Assistance Program

Disability Rights of West Virginia (DRWV) is the federally mandated protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities in West Virginia. One of DRWV's federally funded programs is the Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP helps people who want to receive services from a Center for Independent Living (CIL) or the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services (WVDRS). CAP is part of the CIL and WVDRS appeal process. DRWV wants you to know that you have the following rights as a participant of independent living services (IL):

- To make meaningful and informed choices.
- Confidentiality of your case service record.
- To direct the planning of your IL Services.
- To receive services regardless of race, language, sex, age or disability.
- To appeal any decision about your IL services if you do not agree with the decision .
- To be informed of the availability of CAP.

If you would like assistance with issues related to services from a CIL, please contact DRWV at **800-950-5250**, or visit us online at **drofwv.org**.

Fair Housing Discrimination and Sexual Orientation

The Fair Housing Act (Act) prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and familial status. But there is growing concern that people are also facing discrimination in housing because of their sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation is not a protected class under the Act. But there are times when discrimination because of sexual orientation can be covered under an existing protected class.

For instance, HIV/AIDS is considered a disability by the Act. A gay man may be evicted because the landlord believes he will infect other tenants with HIV/AIDS. This can be discrimination covered by the Act as the man is perceived to have a disability.

In another situation, a property manager may refuse to rent to someone who is transgender. This may be discrimination on the basis of sex under the Act.

There are other protections besides what might be covered by the Fair Housing Act. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has rules that insure equal access to the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) community.

If you believe you have been denied housing because of a personal trait, contact the West Virginia Fair Housing Action Network (WVFNH) at **844-212-3464** or **info@wvfnh.org**.



Available for Loan

WVATS offers many assistive technology solutions that can be temporary supports for when loved ones and friends come to visit. Below are a few items available for loan. WVATS has many additional items and staff to assist you with your needs. Call WVATS to find out more about accommodating individuals in your home.

EZ-Access suitcase wheelchair ramps

The EZ-Access suitcase wheelchair ramp provides access for vehicles, stairs and curbs. The portable suitcase design gives quick accessibility on the go. The ramps also have ergonomic carrying handles. The bottom transition plates adjust to accommodate uneven terrains. The ramps also have a non-skid surface. Ramps support up to 800 pounds and are available to borrow from WVATS in lengths up to 8 feet.



Wall switch extension handle

Light switches may be out of reach for children, wheelchair users and people with limited reach. A wall switch extender may solve that problem. These handles attach easily to a standard light switch. The 12 inch switch extenders put light switches within a comfortable reach.



PowerLink 4



The PowerLink 4 allows users to turn on and off two separate appliances. Each appliance is controlled with one wired switch or up to eight separate wireless switches. The six modes of operation (direct, latch, timed, seconds, timed minutes, two-switch and count) provide a variety of control options.

Call WVATS Toll Free 800-841-8436

Doorknob grippers



Doorknob grippers provide extra gripping power for people with arthritis or other hand conditions that cause grip weakness. The soft material stretches to fit the doorknob. The doorknob grippers feature two small levers that can make turning a round doorknob easier. Users can open a door with the touch of a finger, a closed fist or an elbow. They are anti-bacterial, durable and can be cleaned in a dishwasher.

Raised toilet seat with handles and lock

Raised toilet seats can be used for people who have difficulty sitting down or getting up from the toilet. The seat adds 5 inches to the height of the toilet seat. Some seats have arms that can be added or removed as needed to provide extra assistance. The lock helps keep the seat safely in place.



Seat Assist

The Uplift Seat Assist is self-powered and uses no electricity or batteries. Weighing just 9 pounds, this lifting seat is highly portable with a built-in carrying handle. Seat Assist provides a gentle lift without pushing the user forward. It activates automatically as the user stands, lifting up to 70 percent of their weight. The standard Seat Assist lifts up to 230 pounds. It can be used for most armchairs or sofas at home or away and has a waterproof cover and memory foam cushion.



These tools are available for short-term loan and/or demonstration through the WVATS Loan Library. For more information, or to borrow these items, visit vll.cedwvu.org or call 800-841-8436.



Winter Gardening Indoors

If shorter days and changes in weather reduce your energy and make you feel blue, you may have symptoms of a seasonal mood disorder or “winter blues.” Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of seasonal depression. It is triggered by the change in seasons that occurs primarily in winter. Gardening is one way to ease stress and boost moods. Tending to a garden can reduce stress levels and promote relaxation. This form of activity has helped many elderly people stay independent later in life.

There are other benefits to winter gardening. Produce usually costs more during the winter, especially organic produce. You can save money by growing your own vegetables. This also means your produce is always fresh.

Container gardening is one way to have a small garden if you have limited space. T-5 light bulbs can be used to provide light to plants and help with SAD.

Call **WV AgrAbility** to learn more about indoor gardening tips, **800-841-8436**.

Tabletop SunLite Garden

This light garden is useful for starting seeds and keeping houseplants healthy throughout the year. The complete SunLite Garden includes the frame and light fixture, T-5 light bulbs and a watertight tray. The T-5 light bulbs produce full-spectrum light. The fixture has pull chains to adjust the height of the light.

For more information, visit **gardeners.com** or call **800-876-5520**.



WV Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture

The West Virginia Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture Project allows veterans to work with other veterans to learn about agriculture. They learn about practices that will help them harvest crops and grow food. The project also assists farmer-veterans by:

- Identifying veterans who want to get involved in farming.
- Marketing farm products of veterans already involved in agriculture.
- Building a brand for farmer-veteran products.
- Seeking property that can be used for farmer-veteran projects.
- Working to develop rehabilitation sites and technical assistance resources.
- Creating an environment for long-term growth of veteran-owned and operated agribusinesses.
- Cooperating with Veterans Administration – certified agriculture education program.

For more information, visit Veterans and Warriors to Agriculture on the West Virginia Department of Agriculture webpage at agriculture.wv.gov or call **304-558-3200**.

14th Annual West Virginia Small Farm Conference



The 14th Annual West Virginia Small Farm Conference takes place on February 22 – 24, 2018, at the Morgantown

Event Center and Morgantown Marriott at Waterfront Place hotel in Morgantown, West Virginia. The conference supports West Virginia's 22,000 small farm families by providing skills and the latest information. The goals for the conference include unlocking the potential of small farms and helping small farms transition from commodity production to food production for community and local consumption.

For more information, visit extension.wvu.edu/conferences or call **304-293-4221**.

Plant Inn Raised Garden Bed Greenhouse

The Plant Inn Raised Garden Bed Greenhouse can be used for growing in small spaces. Raised beds make gardening accessible to more people. The Plant Inn has built-in storage space for gardening tools and accessories. The unbreakable polycarbonate panels help protect plants from pests and cold. The sides hinge open for easy access and temperature control. Plant Inn includes two deep planting trays, an internal water drainage and plant hangers.

For more information, visit poly-tex.com or call **800-852-3443**.



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The project described was supported by Grant Number 90AG0011 from the Administration for Community Living. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

All printed materials are available in braille, electronic format, CD and large print. WVU is an EEO/Affirmative Action Employer – Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran.

The Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) is designated as the State's lead agency for assistive technology services.

WVU CED/WVATS/9/2017

wvats.cedwvu.org



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Emergency Planning: Are you ready?

Recently there have been many floods and other disasters in our area. It is important to have a plan for emergencies. An emergency plan could help keep you and your family safe in an unexpected situation. This becomes even more important if you have a disability and need accommodations.

Assistive technology loan and exchange programs can provide assistance if you find yourself in need. Wheelchairs, communication devices, assistive listening devices, magnifiers and more are available for loan at no cost. It is important to know what is available to you ahead of time and know whom to call if an emergency comes up. Do not wait until you are in an emergency. Call WVATS today to see what is available and how we can help you plan for your needs.