



## **Info Brief: Adaptive Communication Devices**

This InfoBrief provides information about how to access communication devices.

**Adaptive Communication Device** refers to any product that helps a person with a disability to communicate. With development of digital and wireless technologies, more and more devices are now available to help people with hearing, voice, speech, and language disorders communicate more meaningfully and participate more fully in their daily lives.

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**Question: Are adaptive communication devices covered by my BHDDH benefit package?**

**Answer:** Self-Directed individuals can utilize their authorized funding for Goods & Services to purchase a communication device only if their health insurance does not cover communication devices.

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**Question: Are adaptive communication devices covered by my health insurance?**

**Answer:** Probably. Speech generating devices are covered for at least some members by almost all health insurance plans, including RI Medicaid, Medicaid managed care plans, and most commercial plans. But insurance plans can have different criteria to be eligible for devices, and can vary in the types of devices covered. Under some insurance plans, members may also have to pay a portion of the cost of the device.

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**Question: How do I access communication devices under my health insurance plan?**

**Answer:** It depends on the type of insurance coverage you have. The best place to start is by calling your insurance company. Another resource is the state-designated health insurance consumer assistance program, which can help you understand your covered benefits. It is operated by the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN), and can be reached at **401-270-0101** or email them at **callcenter@ripin.org**.

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**Question: What if my insurance company says it is not a covered benefit?**

**Answer:** Call the health insurance consumer assistance program at RIPIN at **401-270-0101** or email them at **callcenter@ripin.org** to check if the device or an alternative might be a covered benefit. They will likely need to review your insurance plan documents to help you, so it might help to have those documents available when you talk to them.

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**Question: What if my insurance company does cover the benefit, but denies my request for a communication device?**

**Answer:** Call the health insurance consumer assistance program at RIPIN at **401-270-0101** or email them at [callcenter@ripin.org](mailto:callcenter@ripin.org). They can assist you in filing an appeal or advocating through other channels.

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**Question: Where else can I access communication devices?**

**Answer:** The **Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)** supports rehabilitation technology necessary to achieve an individual's vocational objectives and goals. An individual's need for assistive technology is considered at each stage of the vocational rehabilitation process. In the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), technology services are considered to eliminate barriers to and/or enhance capacity for successful job performance.

ORS administers the RI **Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan (ATEL)** Program. ATEL provides landline home telephones and wireless devices on loan to qualified individuals. In order to qualify, you must be a RI resident who is Deaf, Hard of Hearing, has a speech disability, or has neuromuscular damage or disease that hinders use of a standard telephone, and meet the income criteria. See [www.atel.ri.gov](http://www.atel.ri.gov) for more information. Contact Denise Corson at **462-7857** or email [denise.corson@ors.ri.gov](mailto:denise.corson@ors.ri.gov) to find out more about available equipment, including relay phones, volume control phones, hands-free phones, wireless devices including iPhones and iPads, and emergency devices. ATEL also has information available about various communication apps, and has a **Hearing and Speech Lab** offering iPad/iPhone training and devices available for free demonstrations.

The **Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)**, also administered by ORS, offers the Device Exchange Website, a web-based clearinghouse for affordable assistive technology and daily living and accessibility devices. Visit [www.getATstuff.com](http://www.getATstuff.com) to buy, sell, exchange, or donate a variety of used assistive technology items.

The **TechAccess Device Lending Program** offers individuals the chance to borrow an assistive technology device to see what suits their needs before making a financial commitment or as a short-term accommodation if their device is being repaired or while waiting for the arrival of a purchased device. See [www.techaccess-ri.org/assistive-technology-loans](http://www.techaccess-ri.org/assistive-technology-loans).

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**Resources:**

- **Assistive Devices for People with Hearing, Voice, Speech, or Language Disorders**  
[www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/assistive-devices-people-hearing-voice-speech-or-language-disorders](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/assistive-devices-people-hearing-voice-speech-or-language-disorders)  
for information from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders