

National Disability Institute
Accessibility - Accommodation
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LOAN
PROGRAM

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Submitting Questions or Technical Difficulties

For Q&A: Please use the Q&A box to send any questions you have during the webinar to Laurie Schaller.

If you are listening by phone and not logged in to the webinar, you may also ask questions by emailing lschaller@ndi-inc.org.

National Disability Institute (NDI)

- We envision a society in which people with disabilities have the same opportunities to achieve financial stability and independence as people without disabilities.
- Our Mission is to collaborate and innovate to build a better financial future for people with disabilities and their families.
- [Reliable source of COVID-19 and resilience information and resources](#)
- [LifeCents Financial Education Tool](#)
- [Free Financial Counseling / Coaching](#)

Orientation Welcome

Many people are interested in learning more about managing their money effectively, improving their credit and qualifying for affordable loans.

- NDI has prepared this presentation to help you understand what assistive technology is, how to select assistive technology, options for purchasing assistive technology (AT) and how to prepare a spending plan to reach your goals.
- We invite each of you to think of a goal that will take money to obtain or purchase. This presentation will help you reach your goal.
- Participants are not required to apply for a loan.

NDI's AT Loan Program

- NDI received grant funding through the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration;
- NDI partners with Spring Bank and Bryn Mawr Bank to issue and service pre-qualified AT loans from \$500 to \$30,000 in New Jersey and New York to help people purchase the AT they need;
- NDI buys down the interest rate to 6% and 4% interest;
- NDI has deposited funds with these banks to guarantee defaults;

Our services include: outreach and promotional webinars, financial education and guidance on spending plan development, referrals to financial counseling or programs that can help people get assistive technology.

- NDI's repayment rate is 100%

The contents of this orientation were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology (AT) is any technology, accommodation or accessible feature that can help a person perform an action that a person who does not have a disability, can typically do.

- AT ranges from hearing and vision aids, smart home systems, smart phones, stair climbers, standing wheelchairs, home or vehicle modifications, adaptive recreational equipment, accessible housing pods and business equipment.
- [Our site spotlights new AT equipment and products](#)

NDI AT Resource Guides

- The NDI AT Resource Guides list grants, lending programs and other service providers who can help you select the best and most cost-effective AT to meet your needs;
- There are AT Demonstration programs listed where you can try out or borrow AT, sometimes - indefinitely;
- There are AT assessment services that can help you evaluate AT to meet your needs, abilities and activity levels and environment.

[Assistive Technology Guide for New York](#)

[Assistive Technology Guide for New Jersey](#)

Sources of AT Funding - Grants

School districts may be responsible for providing AT devices for students with disabilities.

- Such devices must be part of a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Health Insurance: Generally speaking, a health insurer will only pay for a device that's medically necessary.

Employment and AT Funding

State Vocational Rehabilitation Service Agencies, the Commission for the Blind and the Department of Labor and an employer may pay for AT devices for people who have education and/or employment goals.

Department of Labor

- New Jersey
 - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)
 - New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)
- New York
 - Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)
 - New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)

Drawback: Like a lot of other funders, they look for the least expensive alternative.

SSI & Medicaid Savings Limits

SSI and many types of Medicaid have resource limits of \$2,000 for an individual, \$3,000 for a couple; may be more for larger households.

However, there are protected savings opportunities available that allow SSI beneficiaries to save more and continue to receive SSI benefits and Medicaid.

- Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) through HUD;
- Individual Development Accounts (IDA) for home purchase, business start-up or education;
- Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) to save income towards employment goal expenses; and
- Achieve a Better Life Experience: (ABLE Act)

[SSA information on protected savings.](#)

ABLE Act

A person who has a disability since before age 26, may open an ABLE savings / investment account at any age.

New Jersey and New York offer ABLE savings accounts; other ABLE plans are available to choose from too.

- Savings up to \$100,000 does not count towards the **SSI resource limit of \$2,000.**
- Any amount of Savings does not impact any type of **Medicaid** eligibility.

An ABLE account owner, friends and family, Special Needs or Pooled Trust or a 529 college savings plan may **contribute** up to \$16,000 into ABLE annually.

An ABLE account owner who works and does not have contributions deposited into a retirement account may contribute up to an additional \$12,880 from their employment **earnings** into their ABLE account.

This can total **\$28,880 for 2022!**

[The ABLE National Resource Center Provides Free Information](#)

Practice Spending Plan

- You may complete a spending plan even if you do not want to apply for a loan;
- People who have completed the spending say this has helped them to understand how much of a loan they can afford and/or how much they can regularly save.

Spending Plan

Generally the spending plan list is arranged in terms of priorities. So, the first thing to pay each month is rent or mortgage.

- We all have choices regarding priorities but paying rent and utilities on time helps a person to stay in their home.

Each Spending Plan line item will need an entry.

- For example: If you paid your mortgage and do not have a home equity loan, trailer or lot rent, enter \$0.
- If you have a monthly housing expense as listed above, enter that monthly amount that you pay.

Example Spending Plan

Rent / Mortgage	\$500	Child Support / Alimony paid	\$0
Household Repairs \$100 - \$300	\$50	Personal Care (haircuts, salon, nails, tattoos)	\$35
Property / School Taxes	\$200	Entertainment	\$40
Heat / Air Conditioning	\$100	Laundry	\$0
Electricity	\$124	Newspapers / Magazines / Books	\$2
Water	\$13	Pet Food and Veterinary	\$40
Groceries (\$338 per adult)	\$338	Gifts	\$20
Insurance (auto / homeowners / life)	\$63	Tobacco / Alcohol / Lottery	\$10
Medical (premium & co-payments)	\$40	Church / Charities	\$40
Telephone / Cell	\$74	Rent To Own	\$0
Cable / internet	\$0	Banking / Money Order fees	\$0
Auto loan	\$303	Emergency Savings	\$20
Auto repairs (\$80)	\$80	Other: lessons	\$30
Transportation Costs (parking, fare, gas)	\$90	Other	\$0
Clothing (\$50 - \$100 per person)	\$50	Total Monthly Expenses	\$2,222
Day Care / baby sitter	\$0		
Tuition / after school activities	\$0		

Rent

- If your rent is more than 30 percent of your income, you may want to see if you are eligible for rental assistance;
 - A county may have a long waiting list, but a nearby county may have a shorter waiting list for services.
- Some housing options are specifically designed to accommodate persons with disabilities and their family members; rent may be reduced based on your income.

[U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)
Rental Assistance](#)

Mortgage Concerns?

- Is your interest rate high?
- Is your house worth less than the mortgage?
- Have you lost your job and are worried about making your monthly payments?

[Free help is available](#)

AT / Accessible Home Modification

- You may be able to find home modification funding through a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant, your County Department of Health and Human Services or Rural Housing Development.
- There are also grants for weatherization if you need insulation, a new heater or an air conditioner.
- With this help, you may be able to reduce your loan amount and/or save money.
- These resources are listed in the [NDI AT Resource Guides](#).

Household Repairs

It is important to perform regular maintenance on a house.

- If your home is new, you can start saving to replace your roof or heating unit in the future.
- How much do you spend and need to save each month for future repairs?

Savings Tip:

You may want to check with your tax preparer to learn what expenses may be tax-qualified such as insulation, window replacement or replacement of more energy efficient appliances like heating and cooling units or home modifications.

Property and School Taxes

If you own a home, total up your property, school, and local taxes and then divide by 12.

- Enter that amount into your budget.
- If taxes are already included in your mortgage payment enter \$0.

Savings Tip:

Does your state offer a school tax reduction program? You can ask your town assessor. Also, if you think your property taxes are too high, you can ask the assessor what steps you can take to try reduce them.

Utilities

Enter the monthly average for your heat and or electric bills.

Savings Tips:

Utility companies offer budget balance billing programs that allow billing to be averaged so that the bill stays about the same each month. This can make it easier to pay bills timely.

[You may also be eligible for LI-HEAP, which can help to pay utility bills.](#)

Your utility company may have special programs for people with disabilities. Ask your local utility company or reach out to:

[New Jersey Public Utilities Board](#)

[New York Public Service Commission](#)

Groceries

The USDA suggests that a household spends \$338 on food for one adult per month.

- There are extra costs such as toilet tissue and shampoo.
- Many people make purchases at vending machines, convenience stores and other places.
 - This spending needs to be included somewhere in the spending plan.

You may want to track your receipts for one month to know what your average grocery costs are.

[SNAP NJ](#)

[SNAP NY](#)

Insurance

Insurance is another area where you may need to add up all the different types of insurance premiums you have. Then divide that total by 12.

- Remember to get an insurance quote for your new AT.

Savings tips:

When a person gets rental / homeowner's and auto insurance at the same insurance company, they may save money with multiple policy discounts.

By taking a defensive driving class, a person can save up to 10 percent on auto insurance for three years.

Medical Expenses

Add up any out-of-pocket costs for medical co-pays and prescription costs and again, divide by 12 to get an average cost per month.

- If you do not have medical insurance, you can learn of your options, including free or low-cost plans, available in your state through [Healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov).
- Individuals who have a disability and are employed and are eligible for SSI and/or SSDI may be eligible for Medicaid and Medicaid Buy In which allows for increased earnings, savings and may even pay for Medicare Part B Premium each month:
 - [NJ WorkAbility](#)
 - [NY Medicaid Buy-in Program for Working People with Disabilities](#)

Telephone/ Cell / Cable / Internet

Bundling your cell, internet and cable plans may be a great way to save on your overall cost. Households that have a person who has a disability may be eligible for telephone or cell phone assistance.

Contact your local company or go to:

- [SafeLink Wireless](#)

With internet access, everyone has access to a wealth of information. You may want to explore available services in your area which may include access to a free computer.

- [PocketSense:
Where to Get Free Computers for Low-Income Families](#)

Auto Loan

If you have a vehicle lease or loan please enter your monthly payment amount.

- This AT loan program can provide a loan to purchase a modified vehicle, to modify a vehicle or perhaps to re-finance a vehicle that is less than five years old; this can be negotiated on an individual basis.
- Call 211 to find local transportation services; 311 for NYC.

Auto Repairs

The average cost of auto repairs can be difficult to predict.

- If you are purchasing a vehicle to modify, purchasing a reliable vehicle can save you money in repairs and replacement costs. [Consumer Reports](#) lists the most reliable and unreliable vehicles for each year.
- [AAA posts information about the cost of owning a vehicle.](#)

Child or Adult Day Care

If you have out of pocket expenses to pay for a babysitter or to provide care or supervision for a family member, enter the average cost per month.

- These expenses may be tax-qualified. Share this expense total with your tax preparer; you may be eligible for a tax credit.
- If there are no costs, enter \$0.

Tuition, After School Activities & Education

Pursuing recreation and education can help you to develop skills that can lead to employment in the future and enrich your life.

- On average, how much do you spend for recreation or education per month?

[Click the Christopher Reeves site to learn more about recreational ideas for people who have disabilities](#)

Child Support / Alimony

If you pay child support or alimony directly, please enter that out of pocket expense.

- If you do not have a payment or it is taken from your pay, enter \$0.

Personal Care and Entertainment

Do you have expenses for things like haircuts, salon, tanning and tattoos?

- Average those expenses per month and enter.

What does your family do for entertainment?

- Do you have membership fees?
- Do you go to the movies or have a hobby that has some costs?
- Enter the monthly average cost for your entertainment.

Pets

If you have a pet, add up expenses for vet bills, food, lodging and equipment and enter the average monthly expense.

- If your pet is a service animal, some of those expenses may be tax-qualified. Let your tax preparer know of these expenses;
- Your local county department of health and human services may offer food assistance for service animals.

Bank or Credit Union Fees

How much do you pay in bank or credit union fees each month?

- Most banks and credit unions offer free checking and savings accounts. Ask if a free account is available.
- Often there are incentives for opening a new account. There are special offers for youth savings accounts as well.
- If you had concerns with an account in the past, you can request a “second chance account.”

Emergency Savings

Everyone needs to save for emergencies.

- Having savings of three to four months worth of take-home pay can help if you are out of work due to injury, illness or job loss.
- How much can you save each month for the unexpected?
- [Free financial counseling / coaching services are available by telephone.](#)

Spending Plan Income

Monthly \$ Totals	Monthly Income:	Monthly \$ Totals	Monthly Income:
	Alimony / child support or separate maintenance income do not need to be listed if you do not want it considered as a basis for repaying the requested loan.		Unemployment Worker's Compensation
	Take Home Pay Applicant		Stipend
	Take Home Pay Co-Applicant		TANF
	Part Time Job	\$100	SNAP (food stamps)
	Support / Alimony		Child Care Subsidy
	Pension	\$500	HEAP
	Property Income		Rental Assistance (HUD)
	Self-Employment Net Income	\$2,400	Retirement Income
	Dividends		Other
	Veteran's Income	\$3,000	Total Net Income
	SSI	\$2,222	(-) Total Monthly Expenses
	SSDI		(-) Payments to Credit
<p>Disposable: The total of take home income minus monthly expenses is your disposable income; how much you can afford to borrow and pay back monthly: +\$778</p>			

Take Home Income

Alimony / child support or separate maintenance income do not need to be listed if you do not want it considered as a basis for repaying the requested loan.

- Most people find that they need to include this income in order to pay their monthly bills and afford the monthly loan repayments.
- If that is the case, submit proof of child support or maintenance for the last year with your loan application.
- When entering your pay, please enter what you deposit or take home on a monthly basis.

Withholdings

If you receive more than a \$500 refund when you file your taxes, you may want to ask your tax preparer if you could change your State and Federal withholdings with an employer or Social Security so you have more take home pay for the upcoming year.

- Your refund would be smaller, but having more take home pay may make it possible for you to pay all your bills on time and regularly save for emergencies and retirement.
- These changes can be done on a W-4 or by notifying your SSA or retirement fund representative;
- [Please see the IRS provides a detailed instruction guide to assist in calculating tax withholdings.](#)

Free Tax Preparation

Please keep in mind that there are free tax preparation sites that can help you to qualify for EITC and other credits that help you to have a larger refund.

- There are many expenses that are tax-qualified for a household with a person with a disability. If something was missed, corrections can be made up to three years back: [IRS.gov: Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](https://www.irs.gov/efile/efile-credits-credits-earned-income-tax-credit-eitc)
- For the nearest free tax site, call 211;
- Call 311 if you live in NYC.

Co-Applicant

If you rely on someone else to pay some or all of your expenses, that person will need to be on your loan application as a co-applicant.

- Enter their name, social security number, date of birth and income information as well.
- **Contact Laurie Schaller with questions: 202.449.9521**

Loan Application

If applying for a loan, please gather and **FAX** the following:

- Completed and signed Application;
- Copies of Photo ID(s);
- Copy of Social Security Card(s) or TIN(s);
- Proof of Income: 30 days of Pay Vouchers; Pension Distribution; Retirement Distribution; Social Security Award Letters; 2 years of W2s (as appropriate) If current employment is less than 2 years, please provide previous employer information for loan applicants (as appropriate);
- Proof of Monthly Expenses (Rent/Mortgage, Heat, Electric, etc.);
- If a Homeowner/ Property Owner: Proof of current School, Township and County Tax Bills if not Escrowed with Mortgage Payment;
- AT Vendor Quote that lists Vendor business name, address and telephone number, and item to be purchased.

Credit Report

- Each adult, age 18 or older, can get a free copy of their credit report every year: AnnualCreditReport.com.
- If you are interested in knowing your credit score, you can order your free credit report and score at: CreditKarma.com.
- NJ and NY have statute of limitations of six years on all types of loans, including those from written contracts and credit cards. If a consumer's debt is more than six years overdue, the lender can no longer take action in order to collect the debt in some cases.
- If applying for an NDI AT loan, the loan program will soft-pull your credit report(s) and set up an appointment to review items when your application is submitted to NDI.

Bankruptcy

People who have filed Bankruptcy need to wait 3 years, from the date of bankruptcy discharge before applying for a loan with NDI.

Contact Laurie to discuss other options:
202.449.9521

Wise Use of Credit

Opening a checking or savings account is a first step towards building a potential credit relationship and it can save you money over using predatory services such as check cashing or pay day loan services.

- Having a loan for college is a way to develop a credit history and advance one's education and career.
- Sometimes purchasing an energy efficient appliance with a line of credit can save money.

For those who pay rent and/or utilities, you can ask that your timely payments be posted to a credit bureau to help you develop a credit history without borrowing money.

- Is there a store that you make purchases at that also offers credit? Perhaps saving to make another purchase, using the store's credit card and paying the bill in full within 30 days will be an easy way for you to develop credit, without paying extra, for 30 days of borrowing.

Improving Credit

It is best to pay all accounts in full, as agreed.

- It is great when the amount borrowed can be paid in full in 30 days. Otherwise, interest adds more costs for the item.
- If several accounts are owed, by paying the minimum to the lowest interest accounts and paying more than the minimum requirement to the highest interest account, you can save money.
- When that account is paid in full, you can move on to the next highest interest account.
- Bring child support payments current.
- Save some money for a down payment towards purchasing AT.
- During the loan application process and repayment term, it is important to take steps to limit additional borrowing.

Settlements

Sometimes a creditor is willing to take a payment of a percentage of the balance owed.

- Before making the payment, request the offer in writing, and make your payment with a copy of the creditor's acceptance of the offer.
- If you save more than \$600 on an account, there may be income tax implications.
- Your credit report will show lenders that when you borrow money, you do not pay it in full. New credit may be offered, but at higher interest rates.

Student Loan Discharge

- [Click here to learn about the new guidelines for total and permanent disability student loan discharge.](#)

Loan Review Process

NDI AT Loan Program has a Loan Committee comprised of people who work within the field of disability, health care and employment. More than 50 percent, are people with disabilities.

- Your personally identifiable information is not shared with the loan committee members.
- Decisions are made by consensus. Everyone on the loan committee must agree that the application is either pre-qualified or denied.

Nationally, Alternative Finance Programs (AFP) have secured and maintained repayment rates of 94 percent to 98 percent.

Comparison

Loan	Cost / Term	Interest	Monthly Payment	Payment Total
AT Vendor	\$10,000 / 5 years	16%	\$243.18	\$14,590.83
Credit Card	\$10,000 / 5 years	24%	\$287.68	\$17,268.78
AFP AT loan	\$10,000 / 5 years	6%	\$193.00	\$11,580.00

An AFP AT loan could save **\$3,010 or more** while helping the loan recipient(s) to develop positive credit.

Loan Application Timeline (Averaging 2 days)

Activity	Time
Review AT Fact Sheet	5 minutes
Review Loan Application Instructions & Check List	20 minutes
Research the AT Resource Guide for New Jersey or New York to find the right AT and funding for you.	Your timeline
Complete Orientation and Spending Plan	1 hour to view and complete spending plan
Complete on-line NDI Loan Application, Upload Spending Plan, Verifying Documents	1 hour
Participate in Intake Appointment; review credit report and pre-application	1 hour
Loan Committee Review	Within 2 weeks; 2 day average
Pre-Qualified Loan Packet to Financial Institution, Loan Document Signatures, Loan Provided	Within 10 days

Contact

Laurie Schaller

lschaller@ndi-inc.org

Manager, Financial Empowerment

assistivetechloans.com

Phone and FAX: **(202) 449-9521**

[Webinars are recorded](#)

Community presentations available

Post webinar survey:

- What information was most helpful?
- Have you completed your spending plan?
- Do you need help finding a job?
- Do you want to schedule a presentation for your agency or community organization?
- What additional questions do you have?