Ashley: Hello, everyone. My name is Ashley Price. And with me is Laurie Schaller. We both work for the National Disability Institute, specifically with the Assistive Technology Loan Program. We're going to answer a couple of questions that we often get about the Assistive Technology Loan Program to give you a brief overview. First of all, Laurie, what is the Assistive Technology Loan Program?

Laurie: National Disability Institute, NDI is one of more than 40 assistive technology loan programs available across the United States. And we provide referrals, helping people to find grants and other lines of funding for the purchase of assistive technology. And that can include, for example, something like a ramp or a lift so that a person can more easily get in and out of their home. And I help people who live in New Jersey or New York State.

Ashley: Thank you. The program is called the Assistive Technology Loan Program. Do you often help people find other resources?

Laurie: Yes. Everyone who gives me a call or emails me, they let me know what their need is. And we can go to the Assistive Technology Resource Guides that we have posted on our website. Or I may know of something specific to that community or be able to find that, and I can let people know about those resources. I often inform people who are still working and maybe receive SSI and/or SSDI about the work supports that they may be eligible for, that can help them to afford the purchase of assistive technology.

Ashley: What if other funding is not found?

Laurie: Sometimes we can't find funding. A good example is someone who may need a modified vehicle. Often, I can find a grant or a line of funding that will cover the actual cost of the modification, but the person still needs a loan to be able to purchase the car that either is modified or will be made accessible for them. So then the person is invited to apply for a loan with us. And our interest rate is less than is often offered by conventional lending or directly from an assistive technology vendor, for example. So in New Jersey, our interest rate is 4% and our interest rate for New York residents is 6% interest.

Ashley: Is there an income limit to be eligible for the program?

Laurie: That's a great question. There is no income limit and we don't require that a person have a credit score either. So for that person who is age 18 or older, who needs to purchase assistive technology and wants to develop or improve their credit history by paying this loan on time each month, they're able to do that.

Ashley: Great. How much may be borrowed for the loan?

Laurie: Up to $30,000. Sometimes a person may need more, so we can have dialogue around that need, and that could be considered as well.

Ashley: What if someone has already purchased assistive technology through another loan?

Laurie: Often, people they maybe applied directly online with an assistive technology vendor, and they get the line of credit or a loan, and they're not exactly certain what rate of interest they're paying on that loan. But they're finding it difficult to repay the loan, so they often give me a call. We talk about those numbers, how much longer they need to pay on that loan. And sometimes we're finding that the person has a loan at 15 or 30% interest. And sometimes that's for 15 years. So by refinancing that loan, we can save that person often thousands of dollars. So many people reapply with our loan program. When they are approved, they receive a check written directly to the first AT vendor, and then they continue to make payments through our loan program. And that again, can help a person to develop or improve their credit history.

Ashley: Okay. So you've mentioned that people who may not have a credit history can apply for the loan, and those who have already purchased assistive technology can apply for the loan. What are the other requirements, and who can apply for the assistive technology loan?

Laurie: The person who needs the assistive technology needs to be age 18 or older. Sometimes a parent will apply for the loan for their child who needs the assistive technology, or perhaps another family member who has enough money to afford their monthly expenses in addition to the loan payment each month, will apply for the loan. And this has worked out well. We have a 100% repayment rate to date.

Ashley: Great. Thank you. Well, we hope this has been helpful to cover some brief information about the loan program. Laurie, if people want to get in contact with you after they watch this or after they learn more, how can they get a hold of you?

Laurie: Great. So people can call me directly. My phone number is 202-449-9521. They can go to our website, National Disability Institute and search for assistive technology, and they'll find our assistive technology loan web page. And there we have recorded webinars, really spotlighting cutting edge assistive technology, so people can learn about wheelchairs that can go through snow or on a sandy beach, wheelchairs where they can get some exercise when they're using them, new vision aid devices. There's information about an accessible unit that can be rolled up to a home so that the person has an accessible bathroom and bedroom on their first level. We invite everyone to take a look at our website. There's all kinds of information there, and feel free to give me a call. And my direct line again is 202-449-9521.

Ashley: Great. Thank you so much, Laurie.

Laurie: Thank you, Ashley. Have a great day.