

NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Section:	A
Title:	Assistive Devices/Equipment
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Equipment is defined as a device, including telecommunication, sensory, or other assistive rehabilitation technology, required by the individual for employment or training.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Engineer and/or Assistive Technology Consultant must be involved if adaptive equipment is required when the home or workspace must be modified to accommodate the individual's disability for successful employment. The purchase of equipment must be part of the individual's Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) (On-Line DSB-4005b-VR Individual Plan for Employment with instructions).

All equipment remains the property of the Agency until such time as the Agency releases it.

Available equipment will be considered before buying new equipment.

The purchase of equipment is not subject to economic need. The individual must be working toward an employment goal that requires specific technology to attain, regain, or maintain employment and have the capacity to use the equipment.

For equipment that costs \$500.00 or more, Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors are required to check the Unassigned Equipment List to see if it is available for reassignment.

PURCHASE OF TRAINING AND PLACEMENT EQUIPMENT

Equipment may be purchased under the following conditions:

1. The equipment is required but not provided by the training program or the employer (Self-Employment Procedures) (includes self-employment/small business enterprises);
 - If the individual is a college student, the individual
 - must be enrolled in two or more courses (equal to 6 hours or more) which require the use of the equipment.
 - The individual must continue to be enrolled in two or more courses (equal to 6 hours or more) in subsequent training years to retain the equipment.
2. The individual has the knowledge to use or will be trained to use the equipment and the provision of training is part of an IPE; and
3. The equipment is usual and customary for the individual's vocational goal and will be used by the individual towards completion of the IPE.

PROCEDURES TO PURCHASE TRAINING AND PLACEMENT EQUIPMENT

Exception to State Purchasing and Contract rules for purchase of computers through the colleges and universities for eligible individuals

Purchases of computers through the colleges and universities is authorized under G.S. 143-53b, which is the special provision for the purchase of goods and services for persons with disabilities. This statute allows for purchases outside of certified sources of supply and competitive bidding when a single source can provide multiple pieces of equipment, permits priority consideration for vendors who have the expertise to provide appropriate and necessary training for the users equipment, permits priority consideration to suppliers offering the earliest possible delivery date of goods or services and allows consideration for the convenience of the provider's location for the individual with the disability.

Colleges and universities that provide an avenue to purchase computers are convenient to the eligible individual and the school will support the school purchased computer. In most cases the school will load or have loaded all of the software required by the college or university and will provide training, if needed. If the computer breaks, the college or university will repair the system or send it back to the company for repair and given the eligible individual a loaner. When a computer is purchased from another source, the eligible individual is on his own to load the needed software and find his own support.

Price comparison between State Contract and the colleges and universities is almost the same. With the service that the college or university will provide, it is better for the Agency and the eligible individual for the purchase to be made through the school. This purchase must be documented in the case record to include such criteria as cost-effectiveness, quality, provider's general reputation and performance capabilities, suitability of the goods or services for the intended use, Transportation (transportation) cost, or any other factors considered pertinent to the purchase.

The Agency will view the purchase of a computer through the college or university as a single source purchase. Follow the guidelines in this policy under "For equipment costing \$500 but less than \$2,000 # 2-b (1).

1. Evaluations

Evaluation will provide documentation of current skill levels (keyboarding, Braille, computer usage ability, etc.) and documentation for the adaptive equipment/software, etc.

If several alternatives are recommended in the evaluation, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must always consider the lowest cost options first. If the lower cost options are not selected, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must justify the reasons in the case file. For specific kinds of purchases, the following evaluations are needed:

- a. Video magnifiers/Closed-Circuit Television system (CCTV) (On-Line DSB-2007 Evaluation with Video Magnification/Closed Circuit Television with instructions): completed by the Nursing Eye Care Consultant (NECC), Low Vision Program Specialist (LVPS) or Assistive Technology Teacher at the Rehabilitation Center (RBC).

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Video magnifier/CCTV can be purchased for individuals who are not able to achieve their rehabilitation goals with the use of optical or non-optical low vision aids. The recommendation for a video magnifier or CCTV must include a justification that specifically identifies the training or the vocational tasks that the individual will be able to achieve with the use of a video magnifier or CCTV that he/she was unable to do using optical or non-optical low vision aids.

In some situations, after the individual has been seen by the NECC or LVPS for a Low Vision Evaluation and it is determined that a video magnifier/CCTV is required, the Rehabilitation Engineer or Assistive Technology Consultant (pending training) may conduct the Evaluation with Video Magnification (Closed Circuit Television) (DSB 2007). These situations are: (a) the NECC, AT Teacher at the RCB or LVPS are not available in a timely manner to meet the individual's training or employment need, or (b) the CCTV will be part of a dedicated computer system to meet the specific need (e.g. the CCTV will work in conjunction with an adapted computer and monitor). These situations need to be documented in the individual's case record and in the recommendations for equipment.

The monitor size should be carefully assessed. If the individual can perform the required tasks with a smaller unit, that should be the recommendation. The purchase of CCTV's must include the evaluation form which shows that an individual has tried three different units, and the one being requested is the one best suited for the individual. Reasonable effort must be made to demonstrate three different units, preferably from different vendors, which may meet the individual's needs. Where there are not three units which address the individual's specific needs, the most comparable units must be demonstrated.

- b. Computers, Adaptive Equipment, and Adaptive Software Packages: Vocational Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultant, or Assistive Technology Teacher at the RCB.
- c. Electronic Travel Aids: Orientation and Mobility Instructors
- d. Assistive Listening Devices: Deaf-Blind Specialists
- e. Adaptive Diabetic Aids and Equipment: Eye Care Provider, Local Health Department Staff, Diabetic Educators/Physicians, Nursing Eye Care Consultants.

The purchase of adaptive technology devices to assist individuals in managing their diabetes can be considered.

A prescription is required for all talking glucometer purchases. Comparable benefits should be applied as is the case with all purchases.

Individuals must have access to training that will enable them to use the equipment. The treating physician's staff should be asked if they can provide the training and follow-up prior to purchasing the equipment. If they cannot provide the training, contact should be made with the local health department/diabetic educators.

They must also be able to assume financial responsibility for the ongoing purchase of needed supplies.

2. District and Area Supervisor Approval

Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor determines equipment to be purchased and compiles the following support documentation for District/Area Supervisor review and approval

- a. Copy of the evaluation, if applicable (See 1.a.-f.).
- b. Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor's letter of justification and/or recommendations/specifications.
 - (1.) If a single source is being requested as a computer purchase through a college or university that provides an avenue for purchase, complete justification must be supplied to explain why the special package is needed, the needed interface required for this equipment, or any other special circumstances.
 - (2.) In approving equipment in employment situations, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the following information:
 - (a.) The status of the job (paid or volunteer), as DSB cannot purchase technology for volunteer placements.
 - (b.) Assessment of the individual's financial eligibility;
 - (c.) Any past technology purchases for the individual and how it will be used;
 - (d.) Participation of the employer in provision of the required equipment (DSB purchase to include entire package, only assistive devices, etc.)
 - (3.) In approving the equipment for training situations, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the following information:
 - (a.) Assessment of the individual's financial eligibility;
 - (b.) Any past technology purchases for the individual and how it will be used;
 - (c.) Participation of the training facility in provision of the required equipment (DSB purchase to include entire package, only assistive technology devices, etc.)

Individual purchases can be made from any vendor and are not governed by State Term Contract pricing. However, office supply purchases (i.e. printers, fax machines, floor lamps, scanners, etc.) should be made at one of the State Term Contract Vendors. All Vendors must be in the North Carolina Accounting Systems (NCAS).

In accordance with State Purchasing and Contract rules, the following purchasing procedures have been developed based on the cost of the equipment.

For equipment/supplies purchased from DSB Aids & Appliances:

1. An authorization is prepared and signed by the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor.
2. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will send the authorization directly to Aids & Appliances
3. Aids & Appliances will sign the authorization and the equipment/supplies will be shipped to the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor along with the authorization and invoice.
4. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor verifies receipt of the equipment/supplies by writing "Received" on the invoice, signing and dating.
5. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will send a copy of the signed authorization and signed and dated invoice to DSB Claims Processing for payment.
6. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will promptly deliver the equipment/supplies and obtain a DSB 0950 Verification of Items Received form from the applicant or eligible individual that must list the delivered items, be signed by the individual, dated at the time of delivery and placed in the individual's case record attached to the authorization.

For equipment/supplies, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LOW VISION AIDS AND AMBUTECH PURCHASES, costing less than \$100.00 for the total order (including shipping and handling):

1. Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors with client P-cards must use the client P-card for these purchases. Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors without client P-cards are to use client P-cards available in their offices assigned to other staff to make these purchases.
2. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor verifies that the vendor is established in the North Carolina Accounting System (NCAS). If not, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will obtain a completed IRS-W-9-ia Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification form from the vendor and make certain that the vendor is set up in the system prior to purchasing.
3. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor makes the purchase and obtains a receipt (no sales tax).
4. The receipt is signed by the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor and Supervisor.

5. A client P-card authorization is prepared and must be signed by the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor and approved by the Supervisor.

6. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor completes the P-card Receipt form and attaches the signed receipt to the P-card form and authorization and submits this documentation to DSB Purchasing within 3-4 days of the date of receipt. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor is responsible for ensuring that all coding is correct on the authorization and P-card Receipt form. DSB Purchasing reconciles the purchases in (NCAS) and a copy of the approved paperwork is sent to DSB Claims Processing to be paid.

7. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will promptly deliver the equipment/supplies and obtain a DSB-0950 Verification of Items Received form from the applicant or eligible individual that must list the delivered items, be signed by the individual, dated at the time of delivery and placed in the individual's case record with the authorization.

Low vision aid purchases can be made by authorization because the vendors often are not able to meet our required time-frame for shipment.

Ambutech purchases cannot be made with the Client P-card as the vendor is not able to meet our required time-frame for shipment. Ambutech purchases can be made by authorization.

Items available under State Term Contract (STC), such as printers and scanners, should be purchased on STC. If these items are not purchased from the STC, they must be purchased from one of the supply vendors on STC.

For equipment/supplies costing \$100 but less than \$500.00 (including shipping and handling):

1. An authorization is prepared and must be signed by the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor and approved by the Supervisor.

2. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will send the authorization to the vendor.

3. The vendor will ship the equipment/supplies to the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor along with the company's invoice.

4. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor verifies receipt of the equipment/supplies by writing "Received" on the invoice, signing and dating.

5. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will send a copy of the signed authorization and signed and dated invoice to DSB Claims Processing for payment.

6. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will promptly deliver the equipment/supplies and obtain a DSB-0950 Verification of Items Received form from the applicant or eligible individual that must list the delivered items, be signed by the individual, dated at the time of delivery and placed in the individual's case record attached to the authorization.

The client P-card can be also used for these purchases with adherence to the steps stated above.

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Low Vision aids and Ambutech purchases can be made by authorization.

Items available under State Term Contract (STC), such as printers and scanners, should be purchased on STC. If these items are not purchased from the STC, they must be purchased from one of the supply vendors on STC.

For equipment costing \$500.00 but less than \$2,000.00:

1. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will obtain written quotes for the equipment from the Rehabilitation Engineer/Assistive Technology Consultant/Rehabilitation Center f/t Blind (RCB) Assistive Technology Teacher/Nursing Eye Care Consultant/Low Vision Program Specialist.
2. An authorization is prepared and must be signed by the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor and approved by the Supervisor.
3. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will compose a justification memo for the purchase and a transmittal letter.
4. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will send the transmittal letter, justification memo, and a copy of written recommendations, vendor quote and the approved authorization to DVR Purchasing. No prior approval from DSB Purchasing is required. Purchase orders are not required for prescriptive items such as glasses, hearing aids and glucometers even when the cost is over \$500. Authorizations are issued to the vendor in these instances.
5. DVR Purchasing will prepare a purchase order and send it to the vendor and will send a copy to DSB Purchasing.
6. DSB Purchasing will forward a copy of the purchase order that includes the Material Received Report stamped on the purchase order, to the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor.
7. The equipment/supplies will be shipped to the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor. Upon receipt, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will complete the Material Received Report stamped on the purchase order.
8. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will submit the purchase order, serial number on the received item and electronic copy of the authorization to DSB Purchasing for equipment assignment.
9. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will promptly deliver the equipment/supplies and obtain a DSB 0950 Verification of Items Received form from the applicant or eligible individual that must list the delivered items, be signed by the individual, dated a the time of delivery and placed in the individual's case record attached to the authorization.

Items available under State Term Contract (STC), such as printers and scanners, lamps, fax machines should be purchased on STC. If these items are not purchased from STC, they must be purchased from one of the supply vendors on STC.

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For equipment costing \$2,000.00 or more but less than \$10,000.00:

1. Follow procedures outlined above.
2. Three (3) written quotes are required by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Purchasing.
3. If a single source, and then there must be a letter from vendor stating this fact.

For equipment costing \$10,000.00 or more:

1. Follow procedures outlined above.
2. DVR Purchasing will send materials and justification to DHHS Purchasing for processing.

Procedure for Partial Eligible Individual Payment for Purchases:

In some cases, individuals' financial resources nominally exceed the allowable income level to be eligible for agency assistance with the purchase of cost services. In these cases, individuals can make a partial payment for the service or purchase. Individuals must pay the amount of their calculated excess monthly resources and the agency will pay the balance.

The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must submit copies of the evaluation report and written justification for the purchase to the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor or his/her designee for review and approval. The approved packet is returned to the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor.

The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must negotiate with the vendor(s) to see if they will bill the individual directly for partial payment and bill the agency the balance.

If the vendor refuses, the individual must issue a check payable to DSB for his/her portion. The check should be mailed to the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor. The authorization is then made out to include the total cost of the item. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor must forward the check, authorization, and other documentation needed for making an individual purchase to the DSB Budget Officer. After the check has been deposited and clears the bank, the Budget Officer will transmit the purchasing packet to DVR/DSB Purchasing Officer for processing.

Equipment and Computer Use Agreement:

The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will prepare and distribute the agreement (On-Line DSB-4016-VR Equipment and Computer Use Agreement with instructions) for use of equipment.

Small items valued less than \$500.00 will not be inventoried and will not be included on the equipment loan agreement.

The equipment must be reviewed at the time of case closure. If at this time, the equipment is being used for the intended purpose and the employment is satisfactory and stable, the ownership of the equipment may be turned over to the individual.

Both the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor and individual will sign the transfer of ownership of equipment portion of the Equipment and Computer Use and Agreement and distribute following form instructions.

If there are questions as to the appropriate use of the equipment under the IPE, or if the equipment or any part ceases to be used by the individual in connection with the occupation or training, then the equipment or the part not used will be returned DSB.

Returned Client Equipment:

The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor will notify the District/Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor when equipment costing more than \$500.00 is returned to the Agency. The District/Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will notify DSB Purchasing to add the returned equipment to the Unassigned Equipment List. The District/Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor will designate staff to pick up and safety transport returned equipment.

Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors and supervisors will review the Unassigned Equipment List for returned items costing \$500.00 or more before purchasing new equipment.

When equipment over \$500.00 is being transferred from one eligible individual to another, you must include the same documentation as when purchasing new equipment except that the vendor on the authorization is DSB and in the comment section you will specify equipment transfer with the "To" and "From" information. Include a copy of the original authorization and PO from when equipment was originally purchased. The package is sent to the DSB Purchasing Officer along with the electronic authorization. Specify on the cover sheet that it is an equipment transfer. DSB Purchasing Officer approves the authorization in the system and transfers the equipment in the tracking system. The original package is then sent to DSB Claims Processing along with the authorization electronically for funds transfer.

When equipment is transferred from one Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor to another Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor, the **original cost** of the equipment is deducted from the receiving Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor's caseload budget and credit is then given to the transferring Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor's caseload budget.

If the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor transfers equipment from one eligible individual to another eligible individual on the same caseload, no deduction or credit is made in budgets.

Equipment Repairs:

Equipment repairs may be sponsored if such repairs are required in order to complete the rehabilitative program. Repairs are subject to the individual's financial eligibility.

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Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors should secure several quotes on repairs estimated to be under \$500.00 and may approve such repairs. Repairs estimated to exceed \$500.00 should be purchased through the bid process. Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors should be aware of the cost of the repairs in relation to the value of the equipment being repaired.

At the closure of the case, DSB will turn over the ownership of the equipment to the individual if the employment is satisfactory and it appears that the employment will continue.

Lost or Stolen Equipment:

The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation counselor who receives information or evidence of lost or stolen State owned equipment, shall as soon as possible, but not later than three days from receipt of the information, report such information to his/her immediate supervisor utilizing the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation Incident Report (SBI-78 State Property Incident Report). The Vocational Rehabilitation supervisor shall in turn forward the completed report to the agency director. The agency director shall, within a reasonable time but no later than 10 days, forward the report to the Director of the State Bureau of Investigation. (NCGS 114-15.1) The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation counselor should keep a copy of the report in the individual's case file. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation counselor may authorize replacement of the equipment if a written justification is in the case file and the purchase is approved by the Vocational Rehabilitation supervisor.

Once ownership of the equipment is transferred to the individual, the loss rests upon the individual. However, the Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation counselor may assist an individual who continues to receive DSB services in filing a written report with the local police department. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation counselor should keep a copy of the report in the individual's case file. The Vocational/Independent Living Rehabilitation counselor may authorize replacement of the equipment if a written justification is in the case file and the purchase is approved by the VR supervisor.