

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

---

**Section:** A  
**Title:** Assistive Listening Devices  
**Current Effective Date:** 12/11  
**Revision History:** Revised 01/96; 05/07; 02/08

---

**Formerly: Telecommunication Devices-Deaf and Hearing Impaired**

Assistive listening devices and other telecommunication devices included under the Scope of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Section 103 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended) indicate that Congress intended that the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program take full advantage of such advances that expand employment opportunities of individuals with a significantly disability.

The Deaf-Blind Specialist will evaluate the needs of all eligible individuals with hearing and vision loss and recommend appropriate technology to assist with successful employment outcomes and/or to improve overall quality of life.

The purchase of this equipment is not subject to economic need.

Please note that some individuals with hearing and vision loss may maximize their residual hearing by using assistive listening devices in conjunction with hearing aids. In order to achieve maximum amplification, it is recommended that all hearing aids purchased contain a telecoil. A telecoil is a special circuit inside the hearing aid designed to pick up a magnetic signal. Not only does the telecoil allow the hearing aid user access to the phone it also allows direct amplification via a variety of assisting listening devices. The use of FM systems can also be expanded to meet a variety of other needs. Consult the Deaf-Blind Specialist for tips on extending the use of FM systems to meet the diverse needs of individuals.

**Assistive Listening Devices for the deaf blind must follow purchasing requirements outlined in the Assistive Devices/Equipment Policy.**

Examples of assistive listening devices (not meant to be an all inclusive list) for individuals who are deaf-blind are:

- Pocket Talker – One-to-one hard wired amplification device used for small groups and television, radio listening. Relatively inexpensive, does not require telecoil (+) switch but can be used with one.
- FM Systems – One-to-one wireless amplification device. Can be used like the pocket talker as well as other ways. It is excellent for college lectures, theaters, lectures, family events, appointments and many employment settings. It can be used with or without a telecoil (+) switch. DSB should work with post-secondary educational programs in the purchase and training of FM systems for students. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor should

document that the needed accommodations are not available from the educational institution for the student before a DSB purchase can be initiated for a financially eligible individual.

- Direct Audio Input Hearing Aids – A hearing aid that can be purchased with a special socket which enables a microphone to be plugged directly into the aid. This is excellent for significantly hard-of-hearing persons who have trouble hearing in a quiet setting.
- Telephone Amplification Devices – Amplification devices which amplify speech on the telephone to enable the person with hearing loss to access the phone. Devices vary by manufacturer as some require telecoil switches and some do not.
- Signaling Devices – Devices that visually, tactually or auditorily notify a person with hearing loss when the doorbell rings, the smoke alarm sounds, the baby cries and the telephone rings.
- Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) – The “TDD” is an electric telecommunication device that allows deaf and some deaf-blind individuals to read telephone conversations. This device consists of a keyboard, a screen, and cups to hold the telephone receiver in place. It can be used directly to call individuals who also use a TDD or it may be used with Relay Services to call other places that do not have a TDD.
- Teletouch is a portable communication device that looks a lot like a TDD but cannot be used on the phone. This non-electric device is used to communicate on a one-to-one basis. It is designed with a keyboard on one side and a Braille cell on the other. As a letter is typed, the deaf-blind individual receives one letter at a time and forms words and sentences, responds back to the person with which he/she is are talking. This process is, however, much slower than the Telebraille.
- Telebraille/Braille Phone is a telecommunication device used by individuals with no residual hearing or vision. This device consists of two parts. The first is the TDD and the other is the Braille converting box, which converts the print from the TDD into Braille. The machine may be used on the phone or may be used in the face to face mode to allow an individual to receptively communicate with family and friends. This device is much quicker than the Teletouch because it has 20 Braille cells.
- Braille Screen Communicator is a device that makes it possible for deaf-blind people to communicate with people who can see. The communication works in both directions. The person who can see types a short text in, the deaf-blind person can read this text in Braille with 8 Braille cells) and can answer via the Braille keys or speech. Typed answers are shown on a LCD display. The screen Braille communicator is very easy to use and very simple to handle. The portable device small lightweight device uses a rechargeable battery.