

# CTTAP News

Volume 7, Issue 1, Winter 2003

## TELEWORK – A REASONABLE ADA ACCOMMODATION



The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released a fact sheet to guide employers in allowing persons with disabilities to telework or telecommute (work at home) to fulfill job duties. This option would be a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The fact sheet marks the second anniversary of President George W. Bush's New Freedom Initiative to help integrate people with disabilities into a variety of activities. Telework is a main strategy to increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to work in this initiative.

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## BRS Supports Secondary Education

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN FUNDING OF POST – SECONDARY TRAINING AND EDUCATION UNDER THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR JULY 2003.

eligible individuals, the following changes are being made regarding the funding of post secondary training and education. These changes will be effective for all individuals starting post-secondary programs on or after July 1, 2003.

The Bureau of rehabilitation Services [BRS] can provide support for post-secondary education and training to individuals that:

- have a significant disability, and
- require post-secondary training as part of a plan to achieve employment.

In order to ensure that BRS can provide Vocational Rehabilitation services to the largest number of

1. For post-secondary certificate programs, associates degree programs, and for the first two years of a bachelor's degree program, funding offered by BRS will not exceed the annual cost of attending a Connecticut Community College (Gateway, Housatonic, Capitol etc).

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# Ficarro's Feedback

By John Ficarro, Ph. D. , Tech Act Project Director



*Emma, John  
& Molly*

It's been a while since our last newsletter. In fact, it's been long enough that I can now report that I'm not just Director of the Assistive Technology (AT) Project, I'm also a user of AT. I finally admitted to a hearing loss that has slowly but

steadily resulted in more situations where I've had problems understanding what people are saying. Road noise made conversation with the front seat passenger in my car impossible. Dinner in a noisy setting, and people with soft voices were also problematic. So, I decided to bite the bullet and get a full audiological evaluation. It showed that while my low and mid ranges were fine, the upper range dropped like a sharp cliff, showing a 90% loss. The test was done by audiologist Alan Dumaine. He had been highly recommended and his commitment to getting my hearing optimized made all the difference in the world.

If anything, he undersold the amount of help I would get from hearing aids, and he encouraged me to take some time to think about

what I wanted to do, given the cost, the time commitment for fine tuning, and some of the issues in getting used to hearing aids. He also was clear about what they could and could not do. Issues like amplification of background noise were spelled out very clearly. However, I knew I was ready. The type that would work best for me

was also among the most expensive. Like buying a new car, there is the initial sticker shock, but I felt that if the aids would help me at all, it would be worth it.

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*"...have realistic expectations.."*

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Suprisingly, I found the adjustment quite easy. The

best initial experience was hearing a songbird. I didn't realize how much of a songbird's music I had been missing. The one disappointment was that my rather expensive guitars sounded very tinny. Alan made some adjustments and all was well when I played music. But I did find that the price of compromise was that in some situations, intelligibility was lost. Alan said that I shouldn't have to live with that kind of compromise. The hearing aids went back to the factory and a new pair made for me with 2 programs. (There was no charge to me for this change.) Now at the push of a button

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## Ficarro

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I can switch between the speech optimized and music optimized programs. Since then I've returned for a little fine tuning and one repair (my fault).

I've also found a secondary use for the aids. When putting them in or out, there is a whistling noise until they are seated. This brings my dogs running to me. So no more need for a dog whistle!

I have heard from folks who have had difficulties in adjusting to hearing aids and in some cases just gave up on them. I think, however, with a good audiologist, you should know what to expect, what the aids can and can't do and some of the issues in adjusting to life with hearing aids. Knowing about these issues will help you have realistic expectations. In my case, the hearing aids exceeded my expectations, and with encouragement to come back with any problem, it's been an easy process to get them fine tuned and well fitted for me. So, the next time you see me, you don't have to shout. ■



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## Telework

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Companies may use existing telecommuting programs or may develop new telework options as a reasonable accommodation. According to EEOC Chair Cari M. Dominguez, "Advances in technology are making telework an increasingly important option for employers who want to attract and retain a productive workforce. For some people with disabilities, telework may actually be the difference between having the opportunity to be among an employer's best and brightest workers and not working at all."

Working at home may not be a solution for everyone who has a disability and all jobs may not be

conducive to the employee working at home. The employer and employee would review the job requirements along with the employee's disability needs to determine if there is a mutual fit. The fact sheet helps employers and employees to achieve this goal.

The full text of the fact sheet is available at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov). The EEOC enforces the following:

- ❖ Title I of the ADA, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector and state and local governments;
- ❖ the Rehabilitation Act's prohibitions against disability

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# Assessing Your Home's Safety

Remaining in your home as long as possible is an achievable goal. As we age or acquire certain conditions, however, the home we love may become a danger zone that threatens our own mobility and comfort. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has a brochure to help you assess the condition of your home to determine if it is safe. How does your home rate based on the following questions?



## Doors

Are doors wide enough for a walker or a wheelchair?



## Floors

Are there scatter rugs or door mats that may be dangerous?



## Steps

Are handrails on both sides of the stairway?



## Kitchen/Bath

Are stove controls easy to use?  
Is the hot water heater regulated to prevent scalding/burning?



## Storage

Can you easily reach closet items?



## Electrical Outlets/Switches/ Alarms

Are outlets properly grounded to prevent electrical shock?

Are extension cords in good condition and out of the path of traffic?



## Lighting

Is lighting bright enough for safety?

These questions are only a sample of the complete list. The brochure also offers suggestions to improve safety, comfort and independence. For example, eliminating the use of scatter rugs and using a non-skid surface for the bathtub and shower will increase your personal safety.

For the complete list of assessment questions and other information pertaining to home safety, write to AARP, 601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049 or [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org). ■

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## Telework

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- discrimination in the federal government;
- ❖ Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin;
- ❖ the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, which prohibits discrimination against individuals 40 years of age or older;
- ❖ the Equal Pay Act;
- ❖ and sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. ■

# NEW ADA SYMBOL

The new international symbol of accessibility depicts a person leaning forward in a wheelchair with arms poised to push the wheels. This design change is funded by the National Endowments for the Arts and developed by the Graphic Artists Guild. The new symbol is similar in design to the old symbol.

The Symbol of Accessibility is located at <<http://www.gag.org/res/das/whlchr-p.gif>>. You can download Tiff files or copy and paste off the Graphic Artists Guilds Web site <<http://www.gag.org/resources/das.html>> [www.gag.org/resources/das.html](http://www.gag.org/resources/das.html). ■

*Old ADA  
Symbol*



*New ADA  
Symbol*

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## *BRS Supports Secondary Education*

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2. The maximum financial contribution per school year from the BRS Vocational Rehabilitation program for the last two years of bachelors degree will not exceed the cost of the attending the State University System (Southern, Central, Eastern & Western).
3. Students may still choose other institutions that will meet their academic or training needs as long as they understand the funding limitations of BRS.
4. If a program of “required” training cannot be obtained through the Connecticut public higher education systems, then there is a process to waive these cost caps and provide these

required services in other institutions. Preference is given to public and in-state programs.

Individuals and their families will continue to be required to apply for and utilize financial aid including their own and family contributions for post secondary education.

Please share this information with students, families and appropriate staff who would be involved in referring individuals to BRS for the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

BRS will be happy to attend speaking engagements or provide any additional information upon request. Feel free to contact us at 1-800-537-2549. ■

## Disability 101 - Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

*To foster better understanding among disability types, we will periodically review details a condition that results in a disability.*

All spinal cord injuries are not identical. The location of the damage to the spine generally indicates the severity of the disability.

The spine is divided into four sections. The

**cervical area** is at the top and it contains eight cervical nerves and seven cervical vertebrae. The **thoracic area** is next as you move down the back. It includes the chest area and has twelve thoracic vertebrae. The lower back section is the **lumbar area** and has five lumbar vertebrae. The bottom section, the **sacral area** has five sacral vertebrae. The bones in the sacral section are actually fused together into one bone.

The section that is affected generally defines a person's abilities and functional goals. Various assistive technology devices may assist the person who has a spinal cord injury with daily activities.

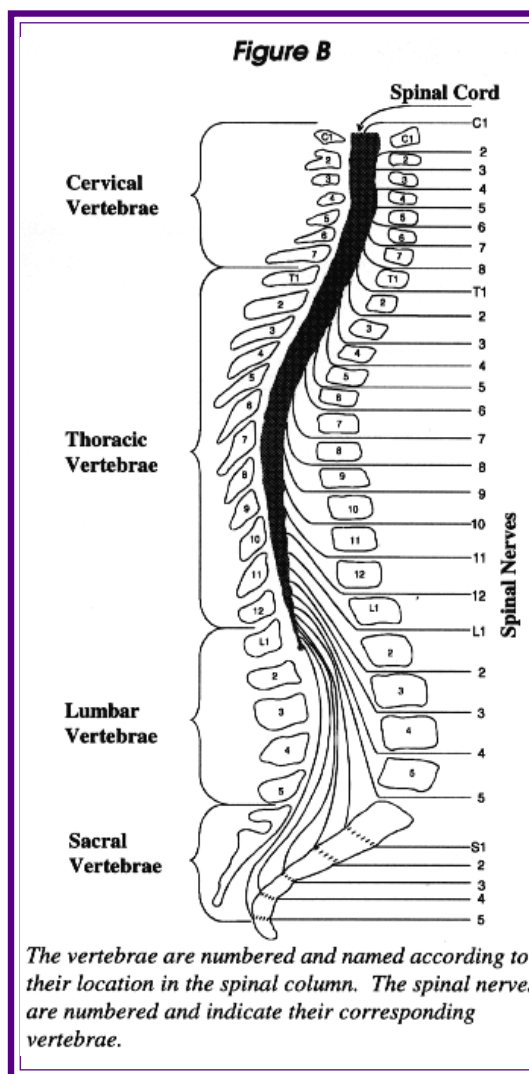
**C1-C3** Limited movement of head and neck.

**Breathing:** Depends on a ventilator for breathing.

**Communication:** Talking is sometimes difficult, very limited or impossible. If ability to talk is limited, communication can be accomplished independently with a mouth stick and assistive technologies like a computer for speech or typing. Effective verbal communication allows the individual with SCI to direct caregivers in the person's daily activities, like bathing,

clothing, personal hygiene, and transferring as well as bladder and bowel management.

**Daily tasks:** Assistive technology allows for independence in tasks such as turning pages, using a telephone and operating lights and



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# Spinal Cord Injury

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appliances.

**Mobility:** Can operate an electric wheelchair by using a head control, mouth stick, or chin control. A power tilt wheelchair helps with independent pressure relief.

**C3-C4** Usually has head and neck control. Individuals at C4 level may shrug their shoulders.

**Breathing:** May initially require a ventilator for breathing, usually adjusts to breathing full-time without the assistance of a ventilator.

**Communication:** Normal.

**Daily tasks:** With specialized equipment, some may have limited independence in feeding and independently operate an adjustable bed with an adapted controller.

**C5** Typically has head and neck control, can shrug shoulder and has shoulder control. Can bend his/her elbows and turn palms face up.

**Daily tasks:** Independence with eating, drinking, face washing, brushing of teeth, face shaving and hair care after assistance in setting up specialized equipment.

**Health care:** Can manage their own health care by doing self-assist coughs and pressure relief exercises by leaning forward or side-to-side.

**Mobility:** May have strength to push a manual wheelchair for short distances over smooth surfaces. A power wheelchair with hand controls is typically used for daily activities.

Driving may be possible after being evaluated by a qualified professional to determine special equipment needs.

**C6** Has movement in head, neck, shoulders, arms and wrists. Can shrug shoulders, bend elbows, turn palms up and down and extend wrists.

**Daily tasks:** With help of some specialized equipment, can perform with greater ease and independence, daily tasks of feeding, bathing, grooming, personal hygiene and dressing. May independently perform light housekeeping duties.

**Health care:** Can independently do pressure relief exercises, skin checks and turn in bed.

**Mobility:** Some individuals can independently do transfers but often require a sliding board. Can use a manual wheelchair for daily activities but may use power wheelchair for greater ease of independence.

**C7** Has similar movement as an individual with C6, with added ability to straighten his/her elbows.

**Daily tasks:** Able to perform household duties. Need fewer adaptive aids in independent living.

**Health care:** Able to do wheelchair pushups for pressure relief.

**Mobility:** Daily use of manual wheelchair. Can transfer with greater ease.

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FYI...

- ☐ 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Wheelchair & Mobility Expo, March 13, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Radisson in Cromwell. Free to the public. For info, call the Connecticut Rehab & Medical Products at 800-457-3422, ext. 301

FYI...

- ☐ Assistive Technology Conference, March 27, 2003 at the Institute for Technology & Business Development, CCSU Downtown Campus, New Britain, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Call 860-632-1485, ext. 233 to register.

FYI...

- ☐ BRS Website – Use [www.brs.state.ct.us](http://www.brs.state.ct.us) to access information about the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services programs.

FYI...

- ☐ Connecticut Minimum Wage is now \$6.90 per hour effective January 1, 2003.

FYI...

- ☐ Create & Adapt a Book, Carolann Cormier, at the NEAT Marketplace, May 3, 9:30 a.m. – noon. Registration Fee: \$30.00 (includes supplies, not book) or \$5.00 (provide your own supplies and book). Call 860-243-2869 or 866-526-4492 or check [www.neatmarketplace.org](http://www.neatmarketplace.org) for details.

FYI...

- ☐ CSUN's 18<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference – Technology and Persons with Disabilities, March 17-22, Los Angeles, CA.

FYI...

- ☐ Department of Justice new ADA Home Page – EEOC information to help small businesses participate in free workshops regarding Title I of the ADA and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Contact [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm).

FYI...

- ☐ Explore the World of Communication – AAC & Computer Access Fair, April 3, 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the NEAT Marketplace, Hartford. Call 860-243-2869 or e-mail [info@neatmarketplace.org](mailto:info@neatmarketplace.org) for more info.

- ☐ Home Options through Modifications and Equipment, March 8, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., at the NEAT Marketplace with the UCONN A.J. Pappanikou Center for Developmental Disabilities. Contact [www.neatmarketplace.org](http://www.neatmarketplace.org) or 860-243-2869 or 866-526-4492 for more details.

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- ❏ Instructional Technology and Education of the Deaf, June 23-27, at the Campus of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Rochester, NY. E-mail [ewncnp@rit.edu](mailto:ewncnp@rit.edu) or call 585-475-6894 (V/TTY) for more info.
- ❏ Job Links – Website: [www.dol.gov/dol/odep](http://www.dol.gov/dol/odep) allows prospective job applicants to link directly to employers who list job openings on this site. Employers may call the Office of Disability Employment Policy at 202-376-6200 to list jobs.
- ❏ Office of Protection and Advocacy Publications are available: "Disabilities Resource Directory" (a 32-page compendium of programs and services) & "Special Education is Not a Place" (an 80-page special education guide). Call 860-297-4300 or 1-800-842-7303 or fax 860-566-8714 to order these free publications.
- ❏ Public Forum - Vocational Rehabilitation Program - April 9, 2003, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. at the Metropolitan District Commission Training Center, 125 Maxim Road, Hartford. Call 800-537-2549 to submit testimony, request special accommodations or for more information.
- ❏ White House new Website – [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) is accessible to people with disabilities. ■



## Grants Available for Computers

The Beaumont Foundation is giving \$350 million over the next five years in computer equipment to underserved populations, including people with disabilities. There are three types of grant programs (education grants for schools, community grants for 501(c)(3)'s, and grants for individuals. Individuals may receive about \$2,000. People with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply for the individual grants. Contact online at <http://www.bmtfoundation.com/grants/> or call 1-866-505-comp(2667). Application deadline for 2003 grants is March 31, 2003. ■

FYI...

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# Independence in the Community

Since 1988, Co-op Initiatives, Inc. has advocated for people with disabilities to control their lives by controlling their living environment. The organization provides options to help consumers with disabilities find ways to live independently in the community.

Based on the individual's own abilities and support needs, a consumer may consider a number of alternatives provided by Co-op Initiatives, Inc. The agency's programs include Housing Cooperatives, Home of Your Own, Independent Living, Accessible Housing Registry and Alternative Housing Group.

**Housing Cooperatives** – Diverse families make a significant contribution to the design and construction phases of a cooperative living environment. After occupancy, they continue their involvement to help manage daily decisions that affect the complex. Four cooperatives are located in Farmington, Glastonbury and Manchester (2). Of the 85 combined units, 19 are reserved for people with disabilities.

**Home of Your Own Program** – Co-op Initiatives guides consumers through the process of buying a home, educated real estate agents and attorneys and connects consumers with mortgage and down

payment resources. The first mortgage is available at 6% financing for 30 years with one point; a second could be as low as 1%. Sources for down payments, closing costs and accessible modifications are provided. Buyers also receive information and assistance before and after the purchase.

**Independent Living Program** – People with disabilities are linked to service providers around the state to increase awareness about housing options and support services. Co-op Initiatives can help consumers develop personal plans for independent living.

**Accessible Housing Registry** – Search the Co-op Initiatives' database of accessible housing on the Internet or hard copies. Property owners can get help marketing accessible/adaptable property to people with disabilities.

**Alternative Housing Group** – The desire to develop new community options for independent living gave this group of people with disabilities its reason for being in 1997. Through this group, participants can be an integral part of the process to work with intermediaries to manage support services and live more independently.

To learn how Co-op Initiatives, Inc. can help with your independent living needs, call 860-742-4940. ■

# Spinal Cord Injury

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**C8-T1** Has added strength and precision of fingers that result in limited or natural hand function.

**Daily tasks:** Can live independently without assistive devices in feeding, bathing, grooming, oral and facial hygiene, dressing, bladder management and bowel management. **Mobility:** Uses manual wheelchair. Can transfer independently.

**T2-T6** Has normal motor function in head, neck, shoulders, arms, hands and fingers. Has increased use of rib and chest muscles, or trunk control.

**Daily tasks:** Should be totally independent with all activities.

**Mobility:** A few individuals are capable of limited walking with extensive bracing. This requires extremely high energy and puts stress on the upper body, offering no functional advantage. Can lead to damage of upper joints.

**T7-T12** Has added motor function from increased abdominal control.

**Daily tasks:** Able to perform unsupported seated activities.

**Mobility:** Same as above.

**Health care:** Has improved cough effectiveness.

**L1-L5** Has additional return of motor movement in the hips and knees.

**Mobility:** Walking can be a viable function, with the help of specialized leg and ankle braces. Lower levels walk with greater ease with the help of assistive devices.

**S1-S5** Depending on level of injury, there are various degrees of return of voluntary bladder, bowel and sexual functions.

*Reprinted by permission: Spinalcord Injury Information Network;  
www.spinalcord.uab.edu, UAB RRTC in SCI, Birmingham, AL. ■*



## Can You Hear Me Now?



Speech to Speech (STS) is a free telephone relay service for people who have difficulty being understood on the phone. STS provides Communication Assistants (CA) to help complete phone conversations. The CAs (familiar with speech patterns and language recognition skills) repeat the caller's conversation in a three-way calling environment.

STS helps people with Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy, ALS, multiple sclerosis, or muscular dystrophy; people who stutter or people who have had a laryngectomy. People who use speech synthesizers could also benefit from using STS. While STS is provided through the TTY relay system, it does not require typing which could also pose a problem for some

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Voice:

860-424-4871

### Toll Free:

1-800-537-2549

### TTY/TDD:

860-424-4839

### Fax:

860-424-4850

### E-mail:

cttap@aol.com

### Web page:

www.techact.uconn.edu



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## CTTAP News

The latest in technology for people with special needs. Published as part of the Connecticut Tech Act Project.

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Funded in part by the **National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research** **U.S. Department of Education** (under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, as amended)

Contact the **Connecticut Tech Act Project** to request this publication in an alternate format.

## The Puppy

One day an eight-year-old boy went to the pet store with his dad to buy a puppy. The store manager showed them five little furry puppies all huddled together. After a while the little boy noticed another puppy in a pen all by himself. The boy asked, "Why is that puppy all alone?" The manager explained that the puppy was born with a bad leg and they were going to have to put him to sleep. "You're going to kill this little puppy?" the boy said sadly while patting it. "You have to realize", the manager explained, "this puppy will never be able to run and play with a boy like you".

After a short conversation with his dad, the boy told the manager that he wanted the puppy with the bad leg. You sure you really want this puppy the manager asked, because for the same amount of money you can have a "healthy" one. To answer his question, the boy bent over and pulled up his right pants leg to expose the brace underneath. "Mister, I want this one because I understand what he's going through." ■

## Speech to Speech

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consumers who need the service.

The STS service is available 24 hours per day in the USA (including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) and in limited hours in Sweden and Australia. For more information, contact Dr. Bob Segalman, STS developer at 916-263-8689 or 800-854-7748. You may contact the STS web site at [www.stsnews](http://www.stsnews) or Katherine Keller at [stslistserv@stsnews.com](mailto:stslistserv@stsnews.com). ■