



Winter News 2021

Technology Solutions for Life's Limitations

Greetings!

DakotaLink hopes that you had a happy and safe Holiday Season!

Although we couldn't make it to the Christmas Party in Spearfish this year, I hope you all took advantage of using Assistive Technology to connect with your family and friends safely. Hopefully, we will have several vaccines and will not have to stay home next year.

COVID-19 Status:

DakotaLink strictly adheres to CDC guidelines for the cleaning of all equipment and technologies we house. Committed to supporting physical-distancing measures, we offer curbside service for scheduled pick-ups and drop-offs of equipment. No walk-ins please.

We offer in-person appointments in all our offices, but if a client is concerned about COVID-19 or unable to travel, we also provide appointments via Zoom. Don't know how to Zoom? We will walk clients through it.

We have safety protocols in place for in-person appointments. Please call ahead before you plan to meet at any of our offices.

Thank you for your understanding as we all work together to minimize the impact of COVID-19

For South Dakota: <https://covid.sd.gov/>

DRS/SBVI Computer Loans

As things have slowed some with COVID, we still are keeping busy with projects. One in particular is very exciting for DakotaLink.

DakotaLink Makes Request to The FCC to Allow Phones with LiDAR Technology in the NDBEDP

The National Deaf-Blind Program provides Telecommunications Equipment to Deaf-Blind individuals through State operated programs. Some States such as South Dakota have chosen to run their program through Perkins School for the Blind. Through an Assessment process one individual in South Dakota specifically requested an iPhone which uses LiDAR Technology. The iPhone 12 Pro model which is the only phone that provides that technology is currently not available through the iConnect Program run by Perkins School for the Blind. When DakotaLink inquired about this model Perkins referred DakotaLink directly to the FCC. DakotaLink has requested the FCC to consider this as an option available through the NDBEDP.

This 3-camera system allows the phone to utilize what is known as LiDAR Technology. LiDAR stands for Light Detection and Ranging. The wide-angle camera can help visually impaired people detect the presence of people around them and can guide them through and around other people. With the current situation when there is a pandemic going on and people are advised to maintain a distance of 6 feet at least from each other this technology can help them a great deal by alerting them when they are too close to other people. The visually impaired user will get alerted if someone moves in the surrounding, whether they are moving closer or away. The other person's movement will be detected by the camera and the direction of the person in relation to the camera's view will correspond with the sound in stereo.

Additionally, users can set specific tones for set distances. For example, if they set a tone for 6 feet and someone is detected to be outside the 6 feet radius, the user will hear the tone that will let them know that someone is 6 feet away from them. If that person moves in closer to them, they will hear another tone which will guide them that someone is less than 6 feet away from them. This will help them maintain social distancing. If someone has a hearing problem along with being visually impaired, which is the case for many people we deal with, there is a feature with a haptic pulse that gets faster if someone gets closer. And the frequency and beats of this haptic pulse will let the visual and hearing-impaired person know that someone is close by. For people who do not have a total loss of vision, there is an arrow that will help them detect the

presence and distance of other people on their iPhone's screen. All this is built into the iPhone 12 Pro. 3rd party developers are also developing and updating their apps to take advantage of this technology.

DakotaLink is awaiting a response from the FCC and Perkins as to whether this phone will be approved to use in the NDBEDP.

ATIA and Leadership Symposium

Due to COVID ATIA is offering free virtual sessions for the conference. I have provided the link under the description.

ATIA 2021: AT Connected Free Sessions: Education & Learning

Learn today, through free, recorded Assistive Technology sessions. ATIA members have sponsored a full range of content at no cost to you. All sessions have CEUs and you can access them anytime between now and June 2021.

If you would like to access to their full program, sign up for the full event, and use the discount code ATConnected to save 20%!

Regardless of what registration package you select one can gain valuable insight into AT with this offering.

https://www.atia.org/path-lms/?pathPage=%2Fatia%2Fproduct_bundles%2F1560

Regarding the Leadership Symposium, we will be doing our meetings via Zoom this year as well, so likely there will be little travel for Grant Managers until we get the COVID vaccines in place.

Audits, Reviews and Annual Progress Report

BHSSC Business Manager confirmed that the federal portion of our audit is complete and there were not any questions or concerns with the Dakotalink grant.

DakotaLink Review FY 19/20

Pat Czerny and Page Hudson provided documentation to the state for the fiscal years of 2019 and 2020. We were asked for documentation for review of the following activities:

Advisory Council, Expenditures and Budget, State Financing Activities, Device Reutilization Activities, Short-Term Device Loan, Device Demonstration, State Leadership Activities, Assurances and Measurable Goals, AT Device Inventory

Verification, Fee for Service Case File Documentation, Staff/Budget, Policies and Satisfaction Surveys, VR Client Data, Summary and Recommendations from 2018 Annual Review, COVID-19

Annual Progress Report 2020

The Annual Progress report is complete and approved at the State and Federal level!

These documents are public information which eventually gets posted on ACL's (Administration for Community Living) website. (The State Plan for AT is there as well). <https://acl.gov/>

However, if you would like to have the documents sent to you digitally, simply send an email with your request to: phudson@dakotalink.net

Letters to Congress AT Act

Again, letters have been written to Congress in Washington DC to support additional funding for the Assistive Technology Act in the next stimulus package. Specifically, Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson and Adam Schiff introduced H.R. 8523, The Supporting Children with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act. This bill would provide \$55 million for the Assistive Technology (AT) Act to fund efforts to support students and adults with disabilities during this challenging time. State and Territory AT Act Programs are working tirelessly to support students adapting to remote learning environments and assisting seniors and those socially isolated during this pandemic. The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs issued a report summarizing how State and Territory AT Programs rose to the challenges presented by COVID-19 to continue to provide direct services to consumers and share why additional funds are needed at this time.

On behalf of the Representatives State Assistive Technology Act Program, we asked for support of this bill and for the Dear Colleague being circulated about this piece of legislation.

DakotaLink AT Revolving Loan Fund

We finally procured a loan for an OrCam MyEye 2 for \$3,500 at a 5% interest rate. If you or you know of someone that could take advantage of this opportunity, please find the information and application on our website. Specifically at: <https://www.dakotalink.net/at-funding>

Staffing

We are still looking to fill the Assistive Technology Specialist position in Sioux Falls. Please feel free to pass along the job description below if you know of anyone that may be a good fit.

Black Hills Special Services Cooperative/ DakotaLink is seeking an Assistive Technology Specialist located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

This job involves assessing individual needs for assistive technology along with providing installation and training on all types of assistive technology with a major focus on computers with specialized hardware and software. The successful candidate will also install personal environmental control systems and other types of assistive technology. The consumers served will be individuals of all ages with a wide range of disabilities in southeastern South Dakota.

Occasional overnight travel is expected. A degree in a computer related science along with experience is required, however, field experience with AT may be substituted. A desire to work with individuals with disabilities is required. Starting Salary is \$35,500 with a \$10,000 benefit package that includes:

Health Insurance

State Retirement

Life Insurance

Health Savings Account

Dental

Eye Care

2 Weeks Vacation

Sick Leave

Holiday Pay

Send resume to DakotaLink: 1161 Deadwood Ave #5, Rapid City, SD 57702 or email: pczerny@dakotalink.net

Link to job description:

<https://www.facebook.com/DakotaLinkAT/posts/965786737225140>

Social Networking

We continue our efforts in social networking getting a great deal of traffic on Facebook and share posts with ATAP, AT3, ILC, DHS, DSS and MERR. We have also added more resource information on our website: <https://www.dakotalink.net/at-partners/sd-partners>

Staff Meeting

We had our staff meeting via Zoom in December and covered all our efforts and the results of those in bringing assistive technology to those in need in South Dakota. We continue to strive to educate ourselves on the latest technology and getting together helps a great deal with that.

DakotaLink strives to maintain its professionalism by earning a RESNA ATP certification. (ATP – Assistive Technology Professional). We currently have 5 staff with their ATP certification and will continue to help the newer employee's gain that status. To maintain these credentials, we must complete a specific amount of CEU's (Continuing Education Credits) on a biennial basis. We have been doing that mostly through webinars that ATAP provides through an agreement with ATIA.



Remember, we are on Facebook! So, be sure to “like” us to see what we are up to on a daily basis: <https://www.facebook.com/DakotaLinkAT/>

DakotaLink hopes you have a healthy and safe Winter!

Best,

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DakotaLink is the South Dakota Assistive Technology Program

www.dakotalink.net

Our mission is to assist individuals with functional limitations; due to a disability, illness, injury, or the effects of aging; maximize their potential whether at home or in the community, at school, at work, or at play through the use of Assistive Technology.

An assistive technology device is any equipment or tool that helps individual overcome limitations in daily activities.

Assistive technology services assist individuals to acquire, use, modify, or maintain an assistive technology device.