

Assistive Technology Resources for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Article Contents

- ◆ [Assistive Technology Funding](#) (pg. 1)
- ◆ [Accessible Books – Braille, Large Print, and Digital](#) (pg. 5)
- ◆ [Vendors of Assistive Technology products for Blind and VI](#) (pg. 9)

Assistive Technology Funding

Association of Blind Citizens – Assistive Technology Fund (National program)

Phone: (781) 961-1023

Website: blindcitizens.org

Email: atf@blindcitizens.org

The Assistive Technology Fund (ATF) will provide funds to cover 50% of the retail price of adaptive devices or software. The ABC board of directors believes that this program will allow blind and visually impaired individual's access to technology products that will have a significant impact on improving employment opportunities, increase the level of independence and enhance their overall quality of life. Applications will be reviewed by the Assistive Technology Committee (ATC) and recommendations will be submitted for board approval.

Applicants must be legally blind and a resident of the United States to qualify for this program. Applications must be submitted by June 30th and December 31st for each grant period (two per year). Applicants will be notified if their request for a grant is approved.

All applications must be submitted via e-mail.

The application form is available online at blindcitizens.org

Computers for the Blind (National Program)

Phone: (214) 340-6328

Website: computersfortheblind.net

Computers for the Blind is a non-profit 501(c) 3 volunteer organization located in Richardson, TX which provides accessible computers to persons who are blind and visually impaired. This program collects donated laptop and desktop computers from businesses and individuals. Skilled volunteer computer technicians wipe them clean and install screen reader software (NVDA). Larger monitors and/or a trial version of Zoomtext can be provided upon request. Full versions are available for a reduced price. E-mail and word processor software are part of the software library along with simple accessible tutorials on how to operate the accessible software. There is a low cost for each computer.

George Weeks Foundation (for residents of Fayette or Bourbon Co)

Morgan Chase

2200 Ross Avenue 5th Floor

Dallas, TX 75201

Contact: Bryan Griffin (214) 965-2904

Email: bryan.griffin@jpmorgan.com

Stephanie Huges (214) 965-2910 (application information)

George Weeks created a perpetual charitable Trust Foundation under his will in the 1930s, which provides assistance to persons who are blind or who have visual impairments and who live in Bourbon and Fayette Counties. Applicants must demonstrate an economic need for assistance. This assistance can include the purchase of assistive devices. Application for assistance can be obtained from the address/phone/email above.

Holloran Trust Fund

(For residents of Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby and Hardin Counties in Kentucky and Floyd and Clark County Indiana.)

c/o Kentucky Lions Eye Foundation
301 East Muhammad Ali Blvd
Louisville, KY 40202
Phone: (800) 232-5308 or (502) 583-0564

The Holloran Trust Fund, established in 1967, provides assistance to persons who are legally blind in both eyes, have a financial need and who live in Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby and Hardin Counties in Kentucky and Floyd and Clark County Indiana. The Fund pays for such things as medical bills, rent, clothing, house repairs, household appliances, but may also assist in purchasing assistive devices. Request an application by phone or mail.

I Can Connect - The National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program

Website: www.icanconnect.org
Contact Information for Kentucky
Tricia Davis
Email: Tricia.Davis@EKU.edu and
Phone: (859) 622-8156.
Videophone: (859) 353-6181

I Can Connect promotes the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), a federally funded program, made possible by the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010.

The goal is to get technology into the hands of Americans with combined hearing and vision loss so they can connect with family, friends, and community. For those who qualify, technology equipment used for distance communication is provided free. Installation, training and technical support are also available at no charge.

To qualify an individual must have combined hearing and vision loss verified by a doctor or professional service provider, Be able to be trained to use adaptive technology that makes it possible to use telephone, computer or other communication equipment, and Meet the program's income guidelines. Assistive technology that can be provided includes Braille devices, Phones, Computers, Signallers, and Mobile devices. For an application or additional information, contact Tricia Davis.

Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Commonwealth of Kentucky
Phone: (877) 675-0195
Fax: (502) 564-6745
Website: katlc.ky.gov/
Email: EDU.katlc@ky.gov

The Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation provides low interest loans for the purchase of assistive technology equipment and services for Kentuckians with disabilities to pursue education obtain/maintain employment and improve their quality of life. Working with Fifth Third Bank of Kentucky, the Corporation provides loans from \$500 to \$25,000 to individuals at a low fixed rate.

Kentucky Deaf-Blind Services

Phone: (800) 321-6668
Website: blind.ky.gov
Contact: Chad Hunt

Chad.Hunt@ky.gov
270 746-7479

The Office for Vocational Rehabilitation and the office f/t blind provides vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals with disabilities to assist with entry into employment and productivity in the workplace and community. Vocational rehabilitation counselors in offices around the state determine eligibility, provide vocational guidance and counseling, and offer a variety of services to prepare individuals for employment. Services can include the purchase of assistive technology including hearing aids.

Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation

214 Haldeman Ave.
Louisville, KY 40206
Contact: Ricky Ricks (502) 897-3990
Email: rricks@ksbcf.org
Fax number (502) 897-3194

The purpose of the non-profit Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation (KSBCF) organization is to offer some financial support for blind and visually impaired individuals primarily in the areas of employment and education. The Foundation provides Braille Writers at no cost to an eligible applicant and it also considers grants for other types of assistive technology. These devices are considered a loan, and must be returned if no longer needed or if the individual is moving out of state. The Foundation meets quarterly to consider grants for assistive technology. Applicants must be residents of Kentucky who are legally blind.

Linda Nevell Trust Fund

J. P. Morgan Chase
2200 Ross Ave 5th Floor
Dallas, TX 75201
Contact Bryan Griffin (214) 965-2904
Email: bryan.griffin@jpmorgan.com
Stephanie Huges (214) 965-2910 (application information)

The Linda Nevell Trust Fund gives assistance to persons who are blind or visually impaired and reside in Kentucky. It provides for the care, maintenance, support, education and the medical, hospital and nursing care cost associated with the visually impaired individual. This assistance can include the purchase of assistive devices.

Note: Applications are reviewed once a year during the month of November.

Applicants must be blind or visually impaired and reside in Kentucky. In addition, applicants must demonstrate an economic need for assistance. Recipients are selected based on applications submitted from medical organizations and societies that assist the blind. Note: An individual cannot apply directly. The request must be made by an organization for the individual. This organization needs to be either medical or one that assist the blind. There is no formal application. The request should include the individual's residence, proof of their blindness, economic need, the device/service. Submit the request or questions using the contact information listed above.

Office for the Blind

Department for Workforce Investment
Education Cabinet
Phone: (800) 321-6668 or (502) 564-4754
Website: blind.ky.gov

The Office for the Blind, (OFB) provides services to individuals with visual disabilities so they may improve their opportunities for employment and become more independent and productive in the community and workplace. It is a combination state/federal program. Vocational rehabilitation counselors in offices around the state

determine eligibility, provide vocational guidance and counseling, and offer a variety of services such as job placement, purchase of assistive technology and the Bioptic Driving program in order to facilitate an individual in obtaining, regaining or maintaining employment.

Office for the Blind – Independent Living Program

Department for Workforce Investment Education Cabinet

Phone: (800) 321-6668 or (502) 564-4754

Website: blind.ky.gov

The Independent Living Services of the Office for the Blind are those services that primarily assist an individual with a severe visual disability to live independently and function within the family or community.

Unlike the regular program of the Office for the Blind, services provided by the Independent Living program are not specifically vocationally related. Instead, the services are intended to improve the ability of the individual to function independently in the community.

Services may include Information; Outreach & Referral; Counseling; Community Integration; purchase and Use of low-tech adaptive devices in the home, assessment and training in communication skills and activities of daily living, and use of remaining vision.

South Central KY Council for the Blind Grant Program

1441 Boulder Court

Bowling Green, Kentucky 42104

Phone: 270-782-9325

Email: sckcb@sckcb.org

Website: <http://www.sckcb.org/grant.php>

Provides grants for individuals who are Legally blind and live in Kentucky's Barron River Area Development District. All grants must be specifically for the acquisition of some type of accessible or blind-orientated product or service or a device that will make a blind person's life better as a blind person, as defined by the SCKCB Grant Committee.

SCKCB members who are blind or low-vision or a parent or guardian of such an individual who have been members in good standing for 9 months are eligible for an SCKCB Matching Grant. The grant can be up to 75% of the total purchase price for a qualified assistive service or product. Blind or low-vision individuals who are not members of the SCKCB or who, otherwise, do not qualify for a grant under the provisions in point #1 above, may still apply for a SCKCB Matching Grant, up to a maximum of 50%. All Individuals benefiting from a SCKCB Grant must be legally blind.

All recipients must be citizens of the United States and reside in one of the counties comprising the Barron River Area Development District, Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson, and Warren. Application information is available on line or by phone.

Accessible Books – braille, large print and digital

American Printing House (APH) - Accessible Media Producers Database

Phone: (800) 223-1839

Website: Louis.aph.org (click on AMP database)

E-mail: resource@aph.org

In addition to Louis, APH offers the Accessible Media Producers Database (AMP). AMP is a directory for locating accessible media producers of formats such as braille, tactile graphics, large print, e-files and audio. Producers provide information describing their certifications, expertise and contact information, and users can browse listings by options including state, format and language. Additional information is available on line or by phone.

American Printing House (APH) - LOUIS Database

Phone: (800) 223-1839, ext. 705

Website: Louis.aph.org

E-mail: resource@aph.org

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) maintains the Louis Database of Accessible Materials for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired. Named in honor of Louis Braille, the database assists educators, administrators and those who are visually impaired in locating accessible books and materials in an efficient manner.

Louis contains information on the availability of accessible formats produced and sold by over 160 organizations throughout the United States. More than 397,000 titles are listed in Louis, with an emphasis on K-12 educational materials. These materials include books in braille, large print, audio, and electronic file format. Louis also lists products developed by APH, such as accessible educational aids.

The APH File Repository is part of the Louis database and includes over 7,700 textbooks files that are available for download in a variety of formats, including braille-ready files, text files for braille production, and large print files suitable for use on a tablet.

Louis also has a search option called Louis Plus that enables the user to search Louis, the NIMAC database and Bookshare with one search. From within the search results, the user can go to the full Louis record to see all available formats, go to the NIMAC record to download the file or assign it to an accessible media producer, or go to the Bookshare record to download the file.

If you have problems or questions, APH Resource Services is happy to walk you through the search process and answer questions.

APH - Tactile Graphic Image Library

Phone: (800) 223-1839, ext. 705

Website: Louis.aph.org (click on TGIL)

Or imagelibrary.aph.org/aphb

E-mail: resource@aph.org

APH's Tactile Graphic Image Library (TGIL) contains a pool of well-designed templates to aid with the creation of tactile graphics. All you need to do is register to begin using the free Image Library to find tactile graphic templates that can be enhanced for your needs. The database will continue to be populated with new images regularly.

The images are presented in .pdf format that can be edited using a commercial drawing program such as CorelDraw or Adobe Illustrator. The .pdf files cannot be edited in the "Draw" features of programs such as Word, Paint or PowerPoint. They may need to be converted to another file format if you plan to send them to an embosser. Additional information is available on line or by phone.

Bookshare – Online Library of Digital Books

Phone: (650) 352-0198

Website: bookshare.org

Bookshare provides the world's largest online library of accessible reading materials for people with print disabilities. Individuals can sign up for membership and access the library on their own. Organizations that serve individuals with print disabilities (schools, libraries, community centers, etc.) can sign up and provide access to their students or clients.

A Bookshare membership offers unlimited access to accessible books, textbooks, newspapers and magazines. Bookshare offers free memberships to U.S. schools and qualifying U.S. students. Bookshare Download Formats include: DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) and BRF (Braille Refreshable Format).

There are 3 types of membership options: individual, organizational and gift. Individual membership is free to qualifying U. S. students: K-12, home schooled, post-secondary, and adult education. All other individuals will need to pay \$75.00 for the first year and \$50.00 annually. Organizations that serve people with print disabilities may become Bookshare members. Bookshare memberships for U. S. educational institutions are free because it is funded by OSEP (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs). Other organizations will pay by the number of books downloaded. A gift membership is when a Bookshare membership is purchased for someone with a qualifying disability. You can also order a Braille book as a gift.

Bookshare membership is available to people who provide proof of their print disability, such as blindness or low vision, a learning disability or a physical disability that makes it difficult or impossible to read standard print. This certification may come from a doctor, rehabilitation counselor or other authorized professional. To apply for a Bookshare membership or if you want additional information, visit their website.

KAMD - KY Accessible Materials Database

Phone: (502) 852-3597

Phone: (502) 564-4970 (KDE –for a exceptional children consultant)

Website: louisville.edu/education/abri/kamd

Email: kdekamd@louisville.edu (database operators Marlene Parish)

The primary function of the Kentucky Accessible Materials Database (KAMD) is to provide K-12 Kentucky public schools a way to discover what instructional materials are available in digital format, and to provide a method for schools to acquire these digital materials for use by qualified students with disabilities while at the same time protecting the publishers' intellectual property rights (i.e., copyright).

KAMD downloads text books from the National Instructional Materials Access Center's website and then converts the files to an accessible format such as Microsoft Word or ePUB. There needs to be a request for a specific book by an eligible student before KAMD can download the book.

In order to receive KAMD books the student must include the need for digital books in their IEP and also fit into a specific disability category: Blind or visually impaired; Reading disability; Physical disability that prohibits the student from accessing standard printed material

Each School in the state of Kentucky can appoint a digital rights manager. The DRM submits the book request to KAMD. The DRM is also responsible for making sure the request comes from a qualified student and that copyright rules are explained to the student. Additional information is available online or by phone.

Kentucky Talking Book Library

Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives

Phone: (800) 372-2968 or (502) 564-8300 x276

Fax: (502) 564-5773

Website: <http://kdla.ky.gov/librarians/talkingbook/Pages/default.aspx>

Email: KTBL.Mail@ky.gov

The Kentucky Talking Book Library (KTBL) provides free library service to Kentuckians with a visual or physical disability which prevents them from reading standard print. Dyslexia or other reading disabilities may also qualify an individual for service as long as the condition is the result of an organic dysfunction and is severe enough to prevent reading conventional printed material. KTBL has a wide variety of Braille and digital audio books available for all ages, both fiction and non-fiction. Books may be sent through the US mail or downloaded from the Internet. The Kentucky Talking Book Library is part of a nationwide network of cooperative libraries headed by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

KIMRC - KY Instructional Materials Resource Center

A Statewide Resource for Blindness/Visual Impairments

Phone: (502) 897-1583 ext 7117

Email: paula.penrod@ksb.kyschools.us

Website: ksb.kyschools.us

The Kentucky Instructional Materials Resource Center (KIMRC) provides textbooks in braille and large print and other educational materials needed by students who are blind and visually impaired for use in local school programs. The resource center also conducts an annual registration of students who are blind and visually impaired in Kentucky.

Two programs are administered by KIMRC. The state textbook program for children with impaired vision who are attending public school (grades K-12) provides funding for textbooks. The federal quota program provides supplies, textbooks, and other material for students (preschool through less than college level) who are legally blind attending a public or private, nonprofit school. Blind infants are eligible from birth if enrolled in an early intervention program. All orders for materials must be sent to the KIMRC. Additional information is available online or by phone.

Learning Ally

Phone: (800) 221-4792

Website: Learningally.org

Learning Ally provides textbooks professionally recorded, over 75,000 titles are currently available; other titles maybe recorded upon request. All textbooks from kindergarten to college are included in Learning Ally's collection. Books can be downloaded or cd copies can be mailed. There is an annual membership fee of \$119. You may request a fee waiver form this could reduce or wave the membership fee.

Individuals who are blind/visually impaired, learning disabled, or physically disabled to the extent that they are unable to effectively use standard printed material are eligible. The application does include a disability verification section.

For schools and other institutions that serve individuals with print disabilities, simply complete Learning Ally's Annual Institutional Membership application and return it with the appropriate fees for the level of service needed. Membership information is available on line or by phone.

NIMAC – National Instructional Materials Access Center

Phone: (502) 899-2230 or (877) 526-4622

Website: www.nimac.us

Email: nimac@aph.org

The NIMAC is a federally-funded, national file repository that makes NIMAS (National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard) files available to states for the production of accessible formats for students with print disabilities. Created by IDEA 2004, NIMAS and the NIMAC help ensure that accessible K-12 instructional materials can be produced and distributed to students as quickly as possible, by providing a national standard source file format (NIMAS), and a central digital file repository (NIMAC).

NIMAC opened in December of 2006, and SEAs and LEAs could begin requesting NIMAS as a part of their print book adoption contracts and purchase agreements in the summer of 2006. These contracts with publishers are

the only mechanism for customers to require that NIMAS be submitted to the NIMAC. (IDEA 2004 did not include any blanket requirement for publishers to provide NIMAS, so it is essential that SEAs and LEAs remember to include NIMAS language in their contracts when they purchase new books.)

The NIMAC currently receives NIMAS files from over one hundred K-12 textbook publishers. These files are available for download to Authorized Users in the United States and its territories through an online database. Once downloaded, files are used to create a variety of specialized formats, such as braille, audio, or digital text, on behalf of qualifying K-12 students who are blind, visually impaired, or print disabled. (The NIMAC is not able to serve students in higher education.)

NIMAS is the only format the NIMAC receives, and it is an XML-based source file format. "Source file" means that files are not student-ready and are not intended for distribution directly to students for use in the classroom. In most all cases, some type of conversion process is required before NIMAS can be used by the student.

Because NIMAS files are not student-ready, direct access to the NIMAC is provided to a small number of Authorized Users in each state who are responsible for converting and/or distributing the accessible versions to eligible students. These Authorized Users can also assign files for direct download by Accessible Media Producers who are registered with the NIMAC.

Most teachers, parents or students seeking student-ready formats will obtain these by working directly with agencies and organizations that provide those formats, such as Learning Ally, Bookshare, APH, and state instructional resource centers.

In Kentucky, NIMAC-sourced books can be obtained through The Kentucky Accessible Materials Database (KAMD). For more information on KAMD visit their website at louisville.edu/education/abri/kamd or call the KY department of Education Division of learning Services at (502) 564-4970. Additional information on NIMAC is available online or by phone.

Vendors of Assistive Technology products for Blind and VI

Maxi Aids

(800) 522-6294

Website: maxiaids.com

Independent Living Aids

(800) 537-2118

Website: independentliving.com

LS&S

(800) 468-4789

Website: lssproducts.com

Vision Aid Systems, Inc.

(800) 765-7483

Website: visionaidssystem.com

Freedom Scientific

(800) 444-4443

Website: freedomscientific.com

Humanware

(800) 722-3393

Website: humanware.com

Optelec

(800) 826-4200

Website: optelec.com

Applevis

Website: applevis.com

community-powered website for blind and low-vision users of Apple's range of Mac computers, the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Apple TV and Apple Watch.

Plantronics

(800) 544-4660 (V)

800 241 8517

www.plantronics.com

note: Plantronics has a 2 jack head phone for phone on one ear and screen reader/computer in the other ear.