

TECHNOLOGY TODAY

ODP Technology Taskforce Newsletter



Take a break from spring-cleaning and kick back with our latest edition of the ODP Tech Taskforce's newsletter: *Technology Today*. Technology promotes inclusion, diversity, and participation and offers better support for individuals with disabilities, family members, and providers. We're dedicated to sharing resources, events, and important updates in the supportive technology world.



Call for Personal Stories



Our Taskforce is always looking for more individuals with disabilities to provide personal stories. We want to know how supportive technology has made a positive impact on people's lives. These personal stories can be in the form of videos, blogs, or written essays. They will be highlighted in our future newsletters.

If you're interested or want to know more, reach out to: ra-PWODP_Outreach@pa.gov

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Adaptations for Enjoying the Outdoors

As the weather is getting warmer, you may be looking to spend more time outdoors. For some, this may feel daunting or intimidating due to limitations around accessible activities. However, there are several ways to enjoy the outdoors and make it a successful experience for all abilities.

If you or a loved one is interested in playing sports, there are several things to do to increase access. Some [sports balls](#) come with rattling disks inside them to support individuals with low vision. There are also adaptations that can be made to someone's equipment to allow for greater access to sports like biking, golf, swimming, and other water sports. Similarly, adaptations can be made to equipment like [fishing rods](#) to allow for push-button reels. And regardless of the activity, using protective gear like elbow or knee pads can make anyone, and particularly individuals with stability concerns, feel more comfortable participating in activities.

Leisurely outdoor activities can also pose barriers for individuals with disabilities, however like sports, there are several things to do to make participation more accessible. For birdwatching or those looking to take in natural scenery, [image stabilization binoculars](#) can be used to help steady images regardless of any involuntarily movements or shaking. [Bite switches](#) can also be used to take pictures and limit the need for someone to use their hands.

If you're interested in taking a walk in a park but are unsure if it's accessible, use this [interactive map](#) from Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to find ADA amenities at parks across the state.

As the days get longer, don't let different abilities limit your opportunity for outdoor fun. With adaptation and accessibility, there are fun activities suited for all. [Click here for more.](#)

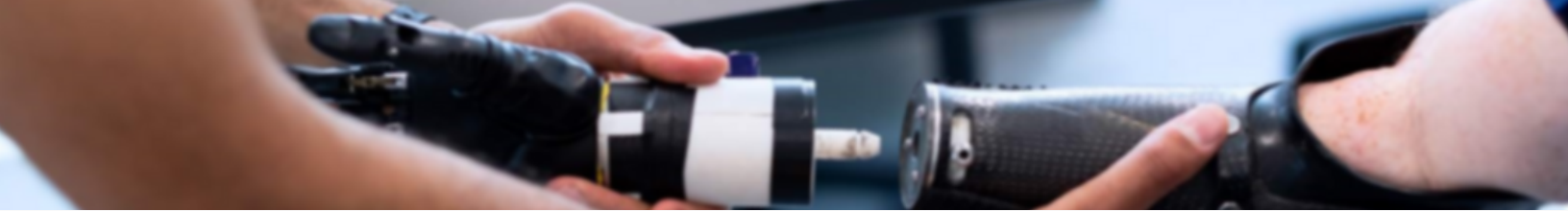
Mobile Application Resources



Action Blocks: *Simplifying Digital Tasks for IDD Individuals.*

Google Action Blocks is a user-friendly app that offers customized shortcuts for daily tasks on Android devices. Designed with individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) in mind, it replaces complex menus with easy-to-recognize images linked to specific actions. This simplifies digital interaction, empowering IDD individuals to navigate their smartphones independently and with ease. [Click here](#) to learn more.

InnoCaption: This free app allows users to make calls with confidence. This serves the deaf and hard of hearing community as it provides real-time captioning during phone calls, making communication easier and more accessible. [Click here](#) to learn more.



Accessibility is Key!



- **LAMP:**
 - The Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians: Check out books in print, braille, audio, digital, and more accessible media types.
- **Changing Spaces Campaign:**
 - Find a universal changing table anywhere in the United States using this interactive map.

TECH CORNER: Spring into Enabled Gardening!

It's that time of year when the sun is out, and everyone is ready to start spending time outdoors cultivating their green thumb. Gardening provides many benefits to all who partake!

Gardening is a great way to enable growth in mind, body, and spirit. Just as homes and vehicles can be remodeled to accommodate people with various disabilities, so can a garden. An enabled garden uses concepts such as raised garden beds, modified tools, and wider pathways to achieve both accessibility and functionality.

- **Raised Garden Bed:** Can be built at heights and widths to provide ample space for wheelchairs and stationary chairs.
- **Sensory Gardens:** Contain scented or tactile plants, fountains with running water, and wind chimes, which can all serve as landmarks to help an individual navigate and distinguish different areas of the garden.
- **Audible Feedback Tools:** Pruners or shears with a built-in click or snap sound when cutting through branches or stems lets users hear the progress of their actions. Watering devices with audible clicks or changes in sound as the flow adjusts can help regulate watering. A talking tape measure can be used to figure out how far apart to plant seeds.
- **Modified Tools:** Textured handles can help individuals with low vision differentiate between tools by touch, and tools with high-contrast colors can make tools easier to locate. Foam tubes can be placed over handles to assist with hand grip, and cords attached to handles can be used to slip around the wrist to prevent dropping.

[Click here for more ways to make your garden accessible.](#)





Personal Story

Known by his friends as “Butch”, Garvin grew up on Schaffer Farms and began farming at a young age alongside his father. After his father passed, he inherited the farm and eventually transitioned it from dairy and crops to beef cattle and grain. “Farming just isn’t the same without him there. I miss having him with me,” Garvin said. He loves to farm; he loves the outdoors, the diversity of each day, the time alone to think, and the hope that comes each spring for a good year.

[Click here to read Garvin’s story written by the PA Assistive Technology Foundation.](#)

Upcoming Events

ATECH Conference 2024

- **What:** Meet, network, learn & share with people advancing independent living through assistive technology.
- **When:** May 6 - 7, 2024.
- **Where:** The Omni, New Haven CT.
 - [Registration](#)



Living With Low Vision

- **What:** If you are living with macular degeneration or other visual impairments, this group offers conversation, support, and the latest information on resources and assistive technology. [More information here.](#)
- **When:** May 16, 2024, 1:30 PM-3:00 PM. Meets the 2nd Thursday each month.
- **Where:** Myerberg Center, Baltimore MD. Virtual option available.
- **Register:** Jewish Community Services
 - Contact: [Rozi Rice. rrice@jcsbaltimore.org](mailto:rrice@jcsbaltimore.org). 410-843-7325

Did you know it was recently National AT Awareness Day?

If you or someone you know uses AAC, consider completing this [5-question survey](#) to help inform peer-to-peer support for people using AAC.