



The Assistive Technology Act (AT Act), originally enacted by the United States Congress in 1998 and reauthorized in 2004, was further updated in 2022 as the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act. This legislation provides funding for 56 AT Act Programs, one for each state and U.S. territory. In South Dakota, the Department of Human Services serves as the lead agency, with DakotaLink, established in 1992, acting as the implementing organization.

DakotaLink oversees a comprehensive array of services designed to enhance access to assistive technology (AT) for individuals with disabilities. These services include:

Supporting alternative financing programs

Facilitating AT device reutilization

Offering short-term AT device loans

Conducting AT device demonstrations

Delivering training and technical assistance

Promoting public awareness initiatives

This report highlights DakotaLink's achievements, challenges, and future strategies under the framework of the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act.

DakotaLink Offices Throughout South Dakota

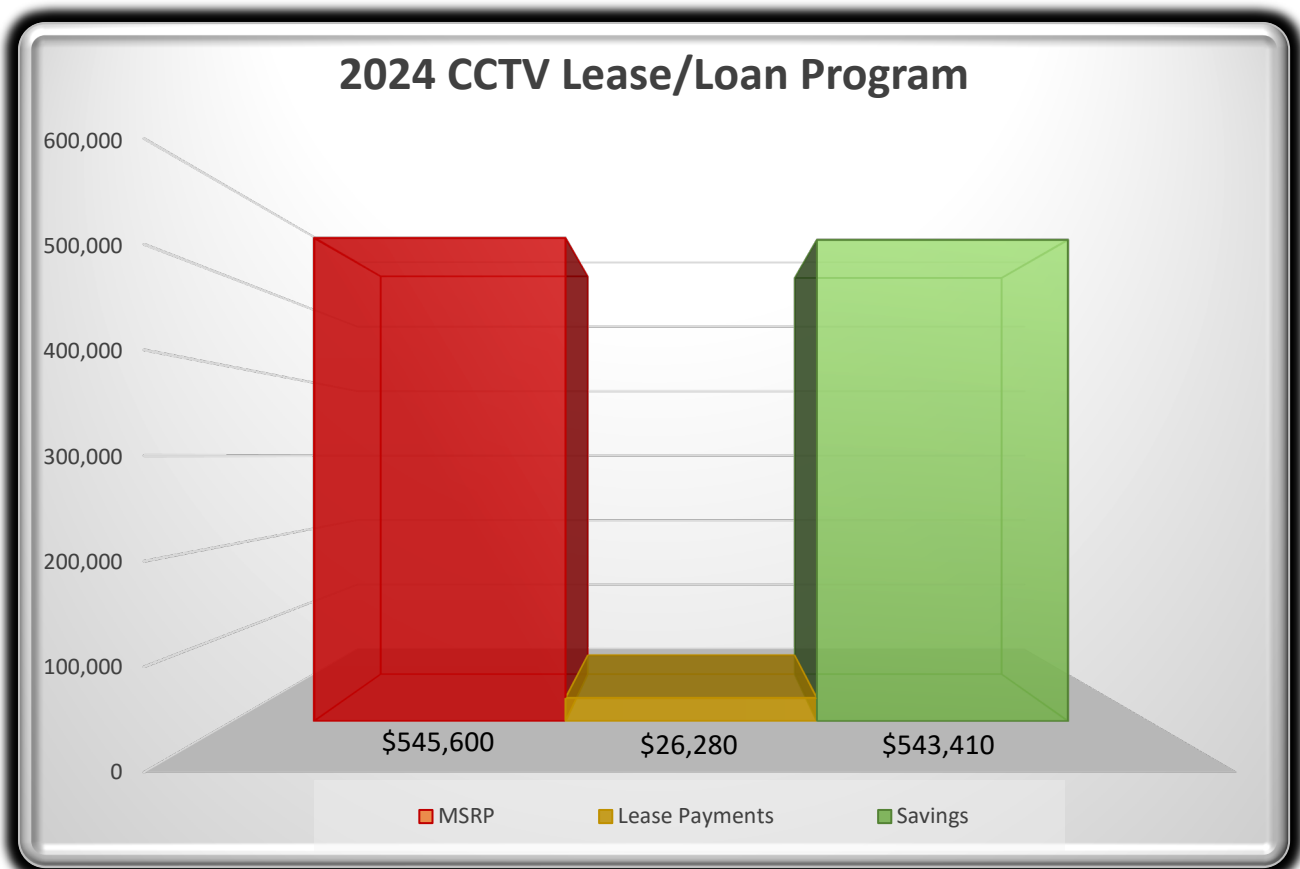


DakotaLink operates from offices in Sioux Falls, Brookings, Aberdeen, and maintains a storefront in Rapid City.

2024 Activities

DakotaLink's Long-Term Lease/Loan Program

In partnership with the South Dakota Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired, DakotaLink administers a long-term lease and loan program designed to increase access to assistive technology for South Dakotans. For 2024, the program facilitated access to closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs), serving a total of 176 participants. Through the program's income-based leasing model, 73 participants leased equipment at a subsidized rate of \$30 per month, generating a total of \$26,280 in lease revenue. Notably, the program delivered significant financial relief to participants, with total savings reaching an impressive \$543,410 in 2024.



176 Participants in the CCTV Program

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Lease Payment and Equipment Management

All leased units require a \$50 deposit, which is fully refundable upon the unit's return in good condition. Monthly lease payments are set at \$30, with an option for participants to make advance payments for up to one year.

To ensure efficient program management, a centralized database is utilized to track leases and payments. In cases of non-payment, units are repossessed after three consecutive missed payments. The average cost of a closed-circuit television (CCTV) has risen to approximately \$3,100 MSRP in 2024, highlighting the program's value in providing affordable access to essential assistive technology.

ANECDOTE

A Life-Changing Impact: The CloverBook Experience

When the student first tried the CloverBook, recommended by DakotaLink, it was clear that this assistive device would transform not only their educational experience but also the classroom environment as a whole. Before receiving the CloverBook, the student relied on an outdated vision board—bulky, heavy, and difficult to move between classes. Both the student and the staff found the old device frustrating, and its limited functionality increasingly failed to meet the demands of a growing teen with expanding academic expectations.

Recognizing these challenges, DakotaLink conducted an assessment and suggested the CloverBook as a potential solution. The school requested a trial, and within a week, DakotaLink delivered the device and provided thorough training for both the student and staff. The positive impact was immediate and profound.

From day one, the student became noticeably more engaged in the classroom. On-task behaviors improved significantly, and their independence and confidence soared. Unlike the old device, the CloverBook enabled the student to simultaneously view the front of the classroom while completing paper assignments—a capability they had never experienced before. The student could also seamlessly work with two different types of media and even track the teacher as they moved around the room.

As an educator, I've witnessed firsthand the barriers faced by individuals with low vision in a classroom setting. While I can't fully imagine the challenges they endure, I've seen how those limitations can impact confidence and participation. The CloverBook has completely redefined this student's educational experience, empowering them to

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overcome these obstacles and thrive. It's not just a device—it's a lifeline that has changed this student's life for the better.



The CloverBook

Reutilization – NATADS



National Assistive Technology Act Data System (NATADS)

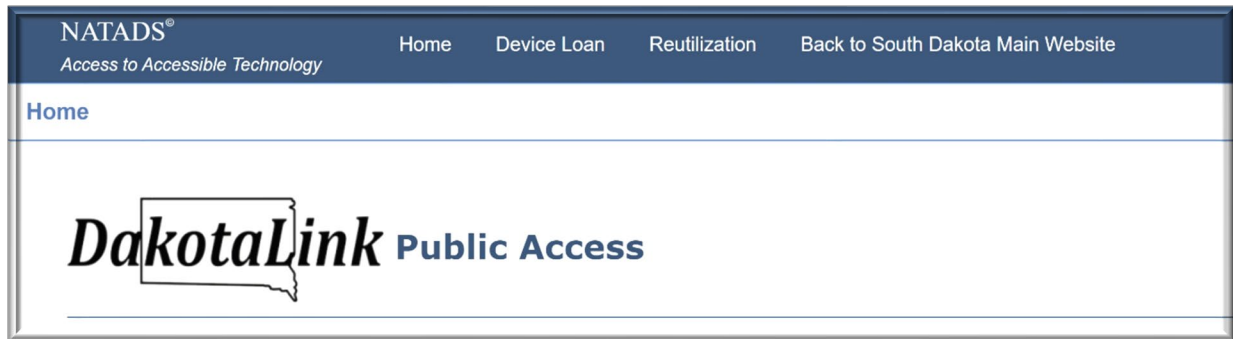
NATADS is a robust, web-based platform designed to document and manage the activities mandated under Assistive Technology (AT) Act grants. This system is instrumental in ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to the tools and technologies necessary for living, working, learning, and fully participating in their communities.

Key features of NATADS include its support for programs facilitating the borrowing, recycling, donation, and exchange of Assistive Technology (AT) devices

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and Durable Medical Equipment (DME). By streamlining these essential activities, NATADS enables service providers to optimize resource allocation and enhance program efficiency, ultimately improving outcomes for individuals and families. The end-user interface can be accessed at the following link:

[NATADS User Interface](#)



Advancing Sustainability Through Device Reutilization

In 2024, South Dakotans successfully exchanged or recycled 60 assistive technology devices, generating \$112,517 in savings for consumers. This achievement highlights our ongoing commitment to promoting both sustainability and affordability through effective device reutilization efforts.

Previously, a comprehensive program concluded in May 2023, during which all remaining equipment was thoughtfully liquidated through donations to a local non-profit organization. This approach extended the lifecycle of these devices while addressing community needs and supporting broader accessibility goals.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our dedication to reutilization initiatives, now focusing on a more targeted scale. These efforts will be directly supported and facilitated through Assistive Technology Act funding, ensuring that we continue to provide impactful, accessible technology solutions to those who need them most.

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ANECDOTE

Adapting to Meet Client Needs: KJ's Story

KJ, a client of South Dakota Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), was recently approved for an Amigo HD 8 along with accompanying accessories. However, due to the device being on backorder with no estimated delivery date, DakotaLink provided a repossessed Amigo HD 7 as a temporary solution.

KJ expressed satisfaction with this interim arrangement, noting that the Amigo HD 7 will adequately meet her needs until the new device becomes available. This swift and adaptable response highlights our commitment to ensuring uninterrupted access to assistive technology for clients, even in the face of supply chain challenges.



The Amigo HD

AT Device Loans

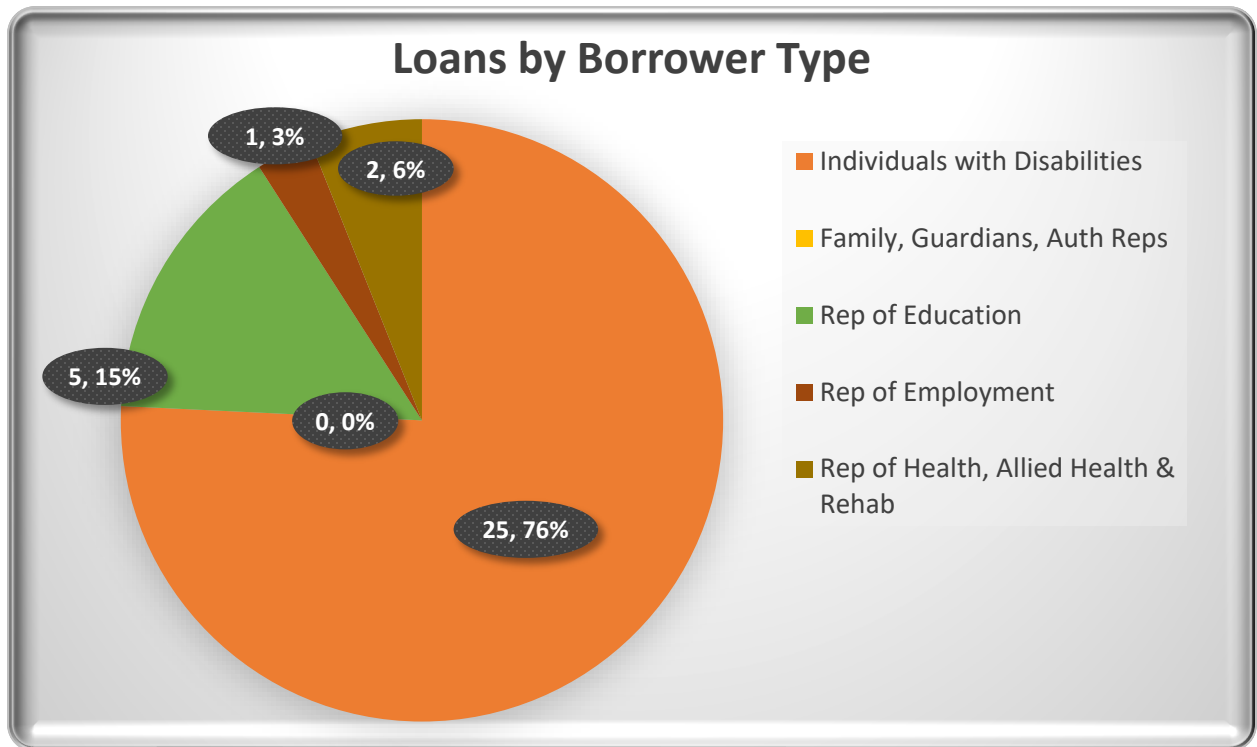
Empowering Through Short-Term Device Loans

DakotaLink serves as a vital resource by offering short-term loans of assistive technology (AT) devices to address diverse needs. These loans support decision-making, device repairs, short-term accommodations, training, and professional endeavors. By enabling individuals to evaluate technology solutions or maintain continuity in their activities, the program helps minimize disruption and maximize productivity.

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In 2024, DakotaLink issued 33 short-term loans, demonstrating a continued commitment to meeting individual and professional requirements. This represents a slight decrease from 2023, when 42 loans were provided. The year-over-year change highlights the dynamic nature of community needs and the evolving demand for assistive technology.

Despite fluctuations in demand, DakotaLink remains steadfast in its mission to enhance accessibility. Through its lending services, the program continues to provide tailored, impactful solutions that empower individuals and organizations alike.



Total 33 Loans

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Ensuring Connectivity: Loaner Device Support

When delays occurred in the shipment or repair of a client's Telecommunications Assistive Device (TAD) unit, DakotaLink provided an iPhone as a loaner device to ensure uninterrupted access to essential communication tools. Using Apple's Transfer Assist, we successfully migrated data from the client's original phone, including applications, iCloud data, and accessibility settings, ensuring the loaner device was fully functional and tailored to her needs. The SIM card transfer was also completed, and service activation was confirmed with a successful test call.

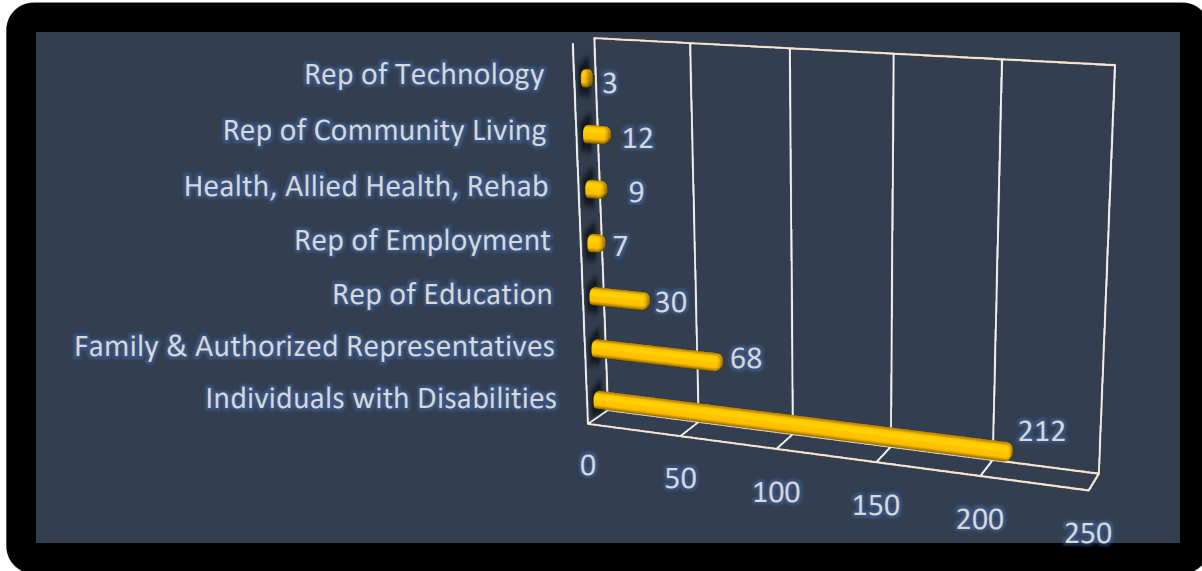
Due to delays in obtaining a shipping label for the original device, the loan period was extended to 28 days to accommodate the repair and return process. This proactive adjustment ensured the client retained seamless communication capabilities while awaiting the resolution of the TAD issue. DakotaLink's responsive and adaptive approach highlights our commitment to providing timely, effective solutions to support our clients' needs.



iPhones

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AT Device Demonstrations



341 Total Participants by Type

Expanding Awareness Through Assistive Technology Demonstrations

In 2024, DakotaLink conducted 341 demonstrations of assistive technology (AT) devices, a slight decrease from 377 demonstrations in 2023. These sessions showcased a diverse array of devices, including iPad applications, computer software, low vision aids, and personal body lift systems. Demonstrations were hosted at four dedicated Demonstration Centers, as well as in homes, schools, workplaces, and outreach events, collectively reaching thousands of individuals across South Dakota.

DakotaLink also played a key role in community and educational events, such as **Let's Talk Work** and **Catch the Wave**, where demonstrations were tailored to students, adults, and parents. With the easing of pandemic restrictions, participation in these events increased, allowing DakotaLink to engage more effectively with diverse audiences. Positive feedback underscored the program's impact on raising awareness and enhancing accessibility through hands-on, personalized demonstrations.

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It is our mission to seek out the underserved in South Dakota, ensuring that individuals in rural or otherwise marginalized communities have access to the life-changing benefits of assistive technology. Through these ongoing efforts, DakotaLink continues to break barriers and promote inclusivity across the state.

ANECDOTE

Harnessing Technology for Versatility and Independence: AB's Journey

AB is a seasoned Apple user whose proficiency with his MacBook Pro demonstrates advanced skills far exceeding those typically observed during assessments. During our evaluation, AB showcased his exceptional expertise, including efficient use of finger gestures for zooming and adept utilization of the magnifier for visual support. His deep knowledge of Apple's accessibility features allows him to leverage his MacBook Pro as a central tool for both work and education.

To further refine his capabilities, we explored the integration of Morpic, an application designed to simplify access to accessibility features by bringing them to the forefront and eliminating the need for shortcut keys. AB expressed interest in Morpic's built-in screen reader, identifying it as a potentially useful addition to his existing toolkit. He also discussed his workstations, which include a television monitor in his home office and a 27-inch monitor at work, soon to be replaced with a 32- to 36-inch display, highlighting his adaptability to evolving technologies.

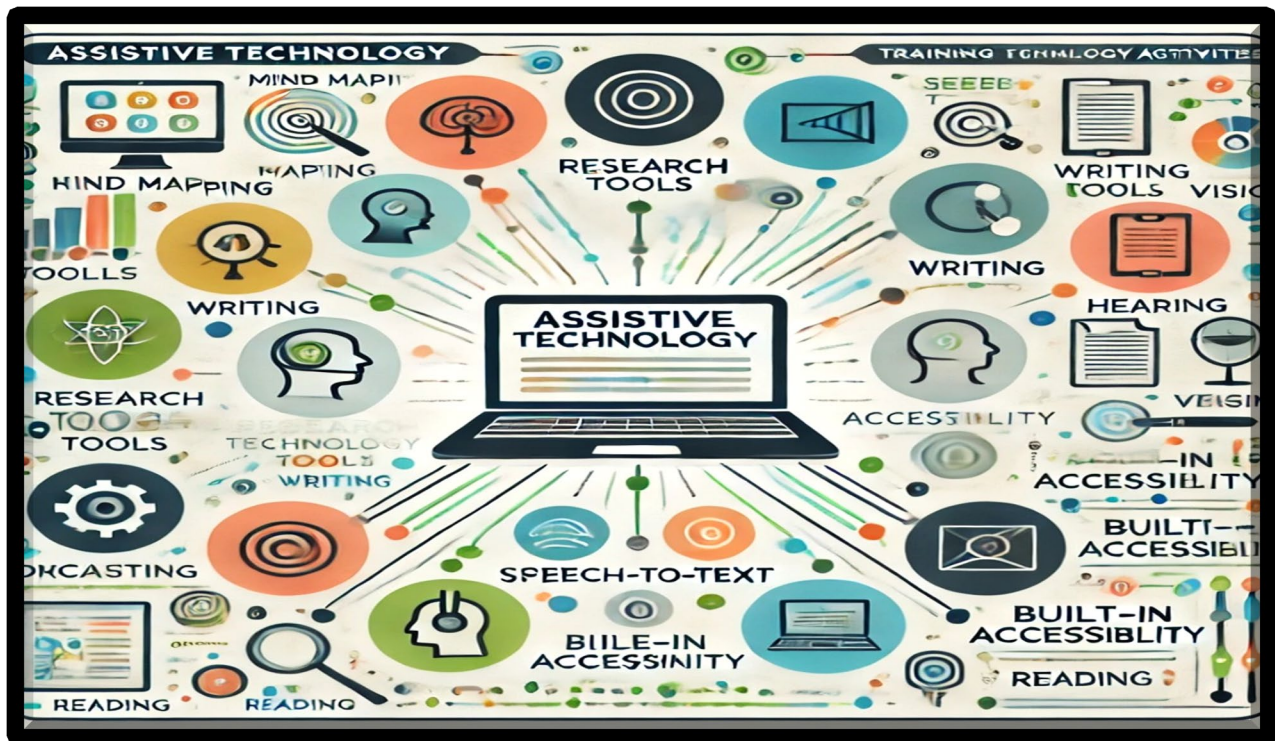
During discussions of additional assistive technologies, AB expressed enthusiasm for the OrCam My Eye, citing its compact size, discreet design, and versatility. He appreciated its ability to function as both a portable device and a connected tool, transforming his computer into a CCTV with AI capabilities. This multipurpose functionality aligns with his needs for efficiency and accessibility.

While AB indicated that his current setup, enhanced by Morpic and zooming features, is sufficient for screen reader needs, he also inquired about assistive technologies that could enhance his music-related activities. Specifically, he expressed interest in exploring switch control options to support his passion for music. This curiosity reflects AB's proactive approach to leveraging technology to enrich both his professional and personal pursuits.



OrCam My Eye

Training Activities



Empowering Through Assistive Technology Training

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In 2024, DakotaLink Technicians provided comprehensive training on assistive technology (AT) devices to 424 individuals, emphasizing personalized and targeted engagement. While this marks a decrease from the 599 participants trained in 2023, it reflects a strategic shift toward deeper, more customized interactions to address individual needs effectively.

These training sessions were delivered through a variety of formats, including classes, workshops, conference sessions, and presentations, all designed to enhance participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence in using assistive technology. By focusing on tailored approaches, DakotaLink continues to empower individuals and organizations to make the most of the tools and technologies that support independence and accessibility.

Tailored Training for Diverse Needs

DakotaLink's training sessions are carefully tailored to meet the unique needs of individuals across diverse demographics. Topics covered a broad spectrum, ranging from foundational use of assistive devices to advanced customization of technology to address specific disabilities. Practical application was a central focus, enabling participants to seamlessly integrate assistive tools into their daily lives, enhancing both independence and productivity.

This individualized approach ensures that participants not only learn about assistive technology but also gain the confidence and capability to apply it in ways that transform their personal and professional lives.

Referral Sources: Connecting Individuals to Solutions

DakotaLink receives referrals from a diverse array of sources, underscoring the organization's broad reach and significant impact in South Dakota. These referral channels are critical in connecting individuals with the assistive technology and resources they need to lead more independent and fulfilling lives. Key referral sources include:

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TV Campaigns: Public awareness initiatives amplify the availability and benefits of assistive technology (AT), showcasing its life-changing potential. These campaigns effectively reach wide audiences, encouraging individuals, families, and professionals to seek support and solutions through DakotaLink.

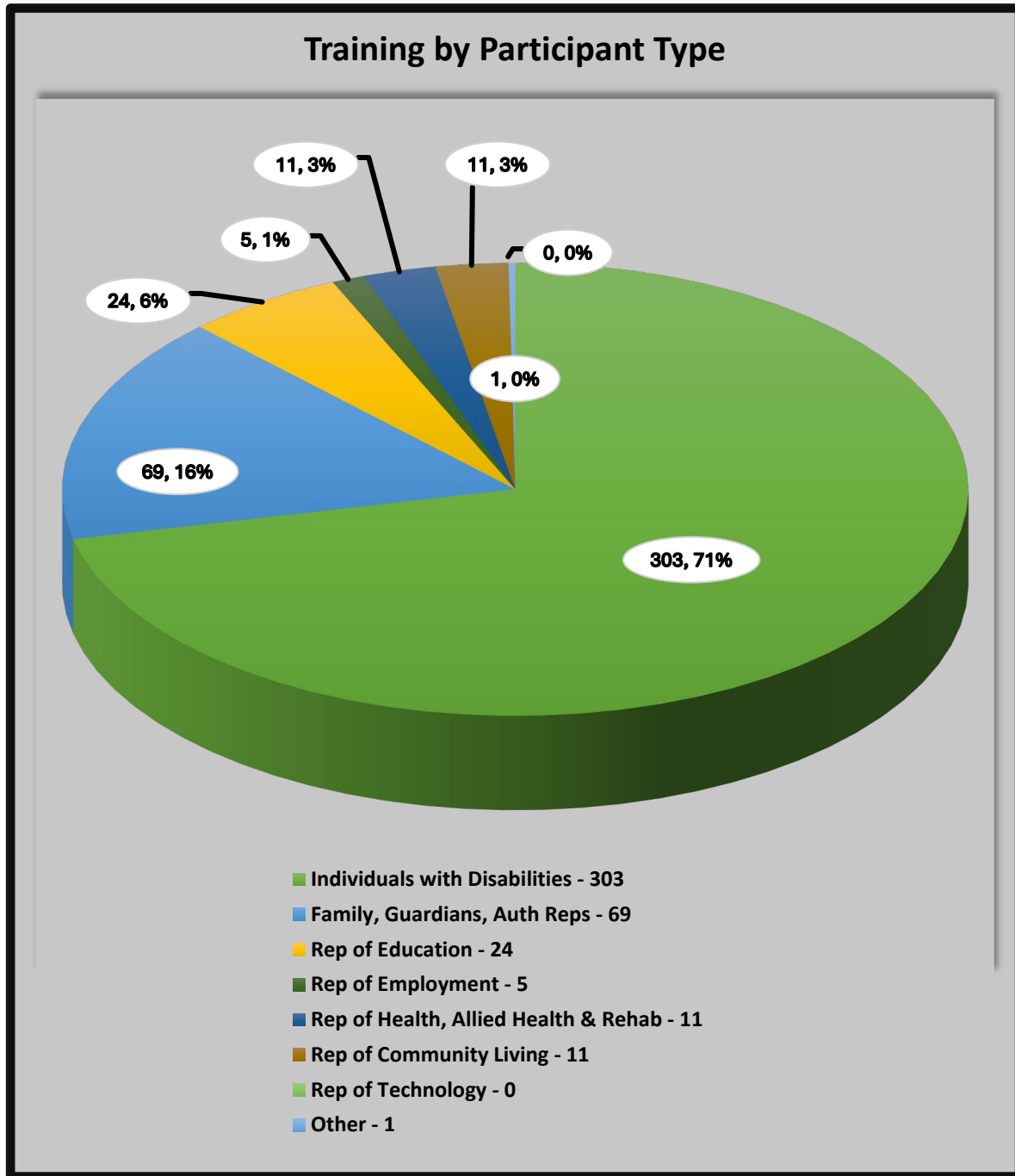
Dakota at Home Program: As a key partner, this program connects individuals to resources that address aging and disability needs. Through close collaboration, DakotaLink and Dakota at Home ensure South Dakotans are informed about AT options that improve quality of life, particularly for seniors and those with mobility challenges.

State Departments: Collaborative relationships with government agencies expand access to AT for eligible individuals. By working with departments such as vocational rehabilitation and human services, DakotaLink ensures that those who qualify receive the tools and training necessary to enhance their independence and productivity.

Programs for the Blind and Visually Impaired: Specialized referrals focus on addressing the unique needs of individuals with visual impairments. These partnerships help ensure that targeted solutions, such as screen readers, magnification devices, and Braille displays, are effectively matched with those who need them.

In 2024, these referral sources and others facilitated training for 424 participants, reflecting DakotaLink's robust network of support and outreach. This comprehensive approach not only increases awareness but also helps build a more inclusive community where assistive technology empowers individuals to overcome barriers.

By fostering strong partnerships and maintaining a wide referral base, DakotaLink continues to advance its mission of enhancing accessibility, promoting independence, and transforming lives across South Dakota through assistive technology solutions.



Total of 424 Participants

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Technical Assistance & Collaboration

Enhancing Accessibility, Education, and Engagement

DakotaLink works with the South Dakota Bureau of Information and Technology to maintain and update an annual Standard Assistive Technology List. This list supports state employees by providing software to access Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools such as email and web browsing. Through a formal agreement, DakotaLink delivers training to ensure effective use of these tools and supports the Department of Human Services in utilizing and evaluating a web-based file management system.

DakotaLink actively participates in **Catch the Wave**, an initiative to assist high school students with disabilities transitioning to college. By demonstrating assistive technology, discussing accommodations, and teaching self-advocacy, DakotaLink empowers students to navigate post-secondary education with confidence and independence.

A longstanding partnership with the Bureau of Information and Technology and the Department of Human Services ensures website accessibility compliance with Section 508 and W3C standards. The Bureau's Accessibility Policy, supported by dedicated resources, promotes inclusivity across state operations.

To improve service delivery, DakotaLink uses Survey Monkey to gather feedback, achieving a 60% response rate with 82% positive responses. Direct engagement with referral sources has proven more effective than other methods, and annual training addresses staff turnover to maintain process efficiency.

Public Awareness

Promoting the Benefits of Assistive Technology

DakotaLink actively engages in a variety of outreach initiatives, including presentations, expos, and conferences, to educate individuals, families, educators, and professionals about the transformative benefits of Assistive Technology (AT). These efforts are designed to raise awareness and empower communities by showcasing AT's potential to enhance independence and inclusivity.

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Key Elements of DakotaLink's Public Awareness Strategy

Local and Statewide Expos

DakotaLink regularly participates in expos, offering hands-on demonstrations of the latest AT advancements. These events cater to diverse audiences, including students, parents, healthcare providers, and vocational rehabilitation professionals, with customized presentations to meet their specific needs.

Regional and National Conferences

DakotaLink plays an active role in conferences focused on disability services, vocational rehabilitation, and special education. These events allow DakotaLink experts to share best practices, discuss emerging AT developments, and collaborate with professionals to promote broader access to AT solutions.

Targeted Community Outreach

DakotaLink organizes workshops and presentations to highlight technologies like screen readers, communication devices, mobility aids, and learning technologies (e.g., speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and grammar support). These sessions educate attendees on practical applications tailored to various disabilities.

Digital Awareness Campaigns

Leveraging platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram, DakotaLink shares stories, educational videos, and resources demonstrating how AT empowers individuals. These campaigns foster greater understanding by highlighting real-life examples of independence achieved through AT.

Through these comprehensive efforts, DakotaLink ensures information about Assistive Technology reaches a wide audience, inspiring individuals and communities to embrace solutions that promote independence, inclusivity, and improved quality of life.

DakotaLink has a resource directory that is on our website:

<https://www.dakotalink.net/at-partners>

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DakotaLink is dedicated to empowering individuals with functional limitations stemming from disability, illness, injury, or aging. Through the innovative use of Assistive Technology, we strive to help each person maximize their potential and achieve greater independence.

For more information, contact DakotaLink at:

Phone: 605-394-6742 (V/TD)

Toll-Free: 1-800-645-0673

Email: atinfo@dakotalink.net

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=dakotalink>

Website: <https://www.dakotalink.net/>

It is an honor and privilege to serve the people of South Dakota. Together, we continue to break barriers, foster inclusivity, and transform lives through the power of Assistive Technology.