

DakotaLink

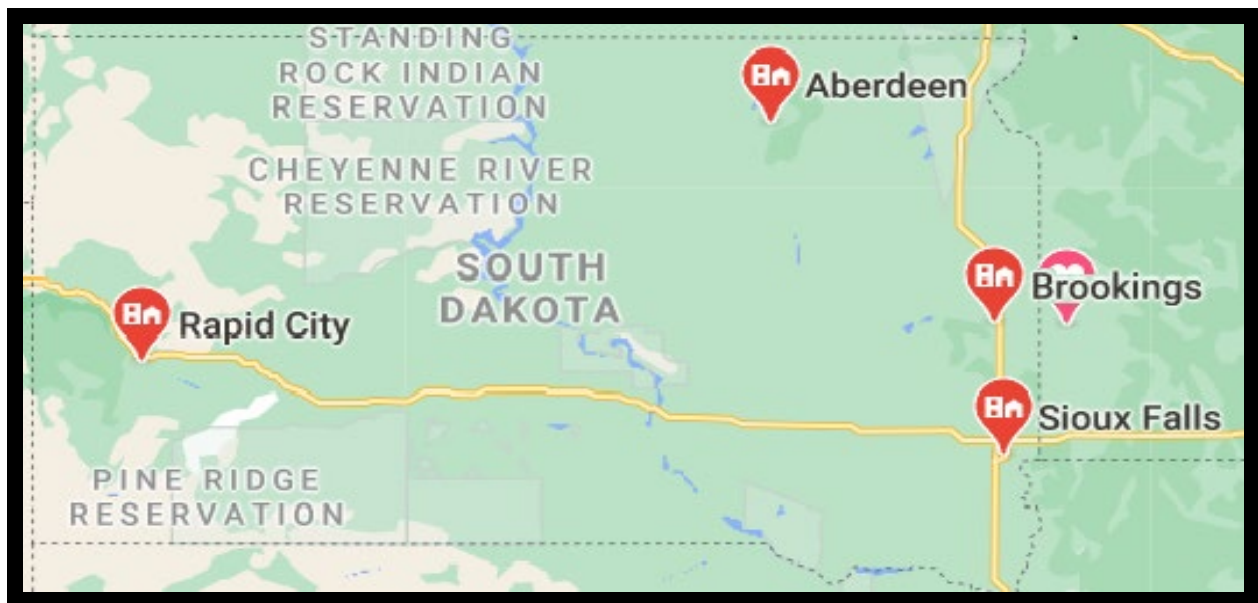
Technology Solutions for Life's Limitations



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The Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) was enacted by the United States Congress in 1998 and subsequently reauthorized in 2004. It was reauthorized again in 2022 and is now called The 21st Century Assistive Technology Act.

This legislation allocates funding to 56 AT Act Programs, with one program designated for each state and U.S. Territory. In South Dakota, the Department of Human Services is the lead agency and DakotaLink, established in 1992, serves as the implementing agency that carries out the Assistive Technology (A.T.) Program. DakotaLink's activities encompass a range of services, including supporting alternative financing programs, A.T. device reutilization, short-term A.T. device loans, A.T. device demonstrations, training, technical assistance, and public awareness efforts.

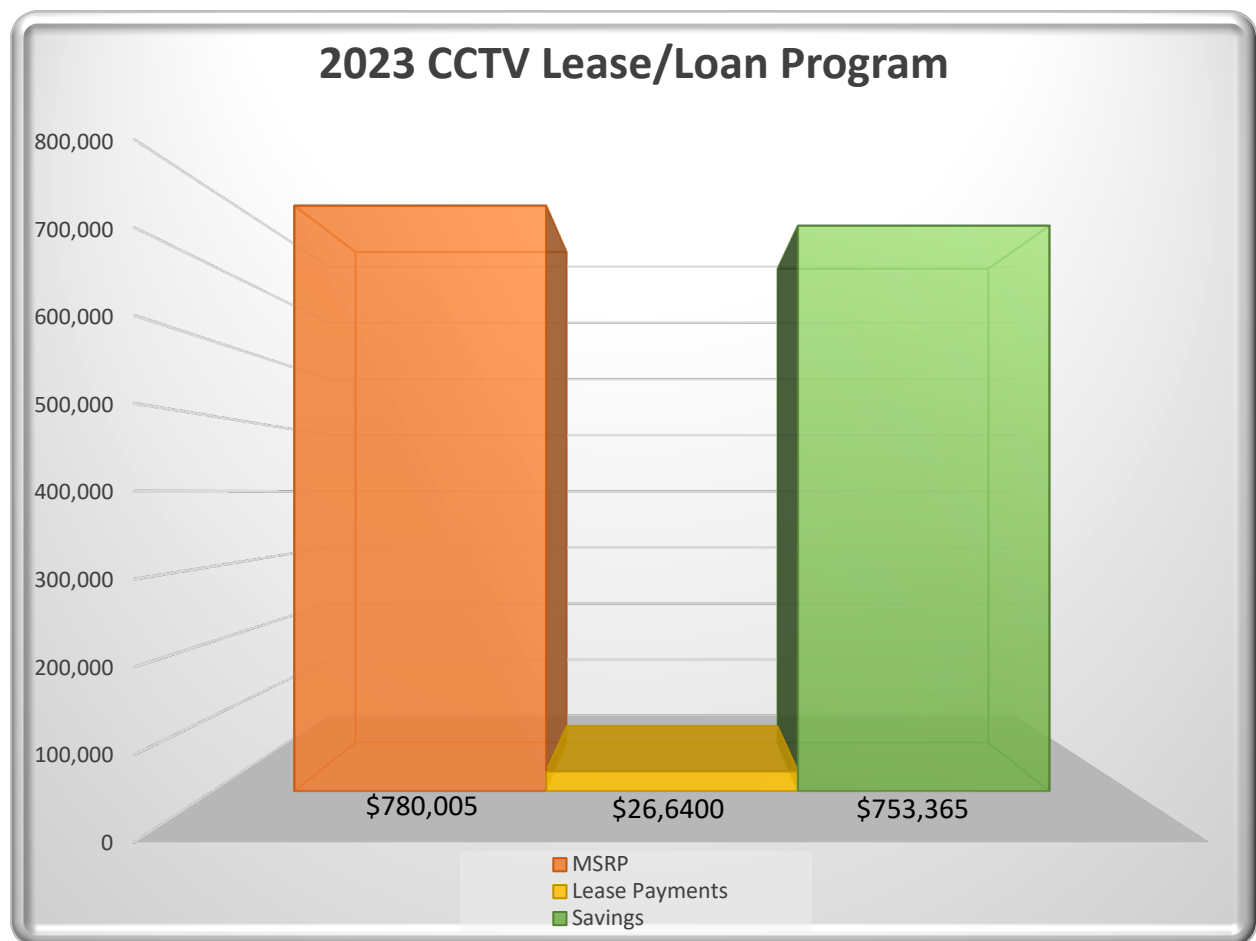


DakotaLink operates from offices in Sioux Falls, Brookings, Aberdeen, and maintains a storefront in Rapid City.

2023 Activities

Alternative Financing

DakotaLink administers a long-term lease/loan program in collaboration with the South Dakota Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired. In 2023, this program provided 208 South Dakotans with closed-circuit televisions (CCTV's). Last year we served 212. Through income-based programs, 74 participants leased equipment at \$30.00 per month. The leases totaled \$26,640. The total savings for participants reached \$753,365 in 2023.



208 Participants in the CCTV Program

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CCTV Lease Agreement

A \$50.00 deposit is required for all units, refundable upon the return of the unit in good condition. Monthly lease payments of \$30.00 are standard, with options for advance payments for up to one year. The database enables effective tracking, and CCTVs are repossessed after three consecutive months of missed payments.

ANECDOTE

A woman and her son visited, expressing interest in the Iris Vision. Despite demonstrating its features, she seemed uninterested in advanced technology. Subsequently, I showcased several video magnifiers, but she desired something simpler. Handheld magnifiers caught her interest, although she mentioned having some at home. I presented various handheld video magnifiers, and although she liked the pebble, she was uncertain about it. To address her concerns, I informed her about our loan program for a trial period. Before leaving, I demonstrated the Acrobat to her son, who found it to be a great option for her. Ultimately, the challenge was finding a device she would be comfortable using.



Acrobat HD CCTV

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ANECDOTE

DakotaLink met with RH to help increase his independence, particularly concerning reading. RH enjoys reading articles by Rush Limbaugh. The author demonstrated various assistive devices, including video magnifiers and the Davinci Pro. During the demonstration, it was mentioned that RH and his family did not find smaller video magnifiers suitable. Instead, they identified the compact 10 as a potentially effective solution due to its full-page and OCR (optical character recognition) modes. The author also attempted to demonstrate wearable glasses from Eschenbach, but RH struggled to read with them. Despite some difficulty with the Davinci Pro, the OCR feature received a positive response from RH. Ultimately, based on the opinions of RH and his family, the Davinci Pro with the OCR feature is considered the best fit for RH. It is suggested that with time and practice, RH may be able to reteach his eyes to focus and read again. RH's son expresses a commitment to work with him daily once the Davinci Pro arrives.



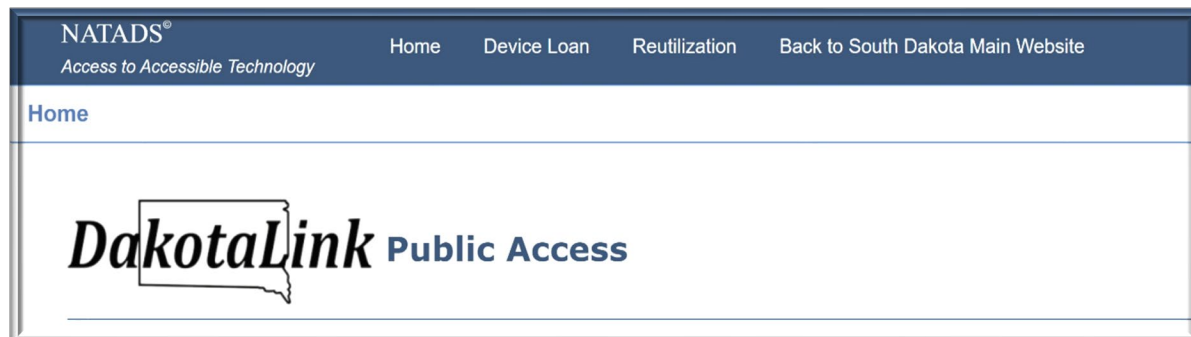
Davinci Pro CCTV

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Reutilization - SDAT4ALL now NATADS



SDAT4ALL is a web-based resource facilitating the borrowing, recycling, donation, and exchange of Assistive Technology Devices and Durable Medical Equipment. For the next fiscal year, we will be moving to a web-based resource for this activity called the National Assistive Technology Act Data System (NATADS). The new end user interface is at the following link: <https://myatprogram.org/home/46>.



In 2023, South Dakotans exchanged or recycled 19 devices, saving consumers \$39,997. In 2022, we exchanged or recycled 38 devices, saving consumers \$112,517. The Medical Equipment Recycle and Reuse (MERR) program offered recycled equipment to Medicaid recipients at no cost for 90 days, and afterward, at ¼ of the value, capped at \$5,000. Approximately \$235,000 worth of devices were available through sd.at4all.com. The Department of Social Services managed the funding for the MERR program, and it was not being utilized by Durable Medical Equipment (DME) providers as expected so we ended the program in May of 2023 and liquidated all the equipment via donation to a non-profit organization. We will continue reutilization but on a smaller scale directly through AT Act funding.

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ANECDOTE

The Medical Equipment Recycle and Reuse (MERR) program was contacted by a caregiver in MH's home. The caregiver stated that MH is having problems with her hydraulic lift and they had it removed to see if it could be repaired. MERR informed them that we have powered lifts available, and she does qualify for one. MERR was able to step in and provide a power Hoyer Lift for MH, which was far better than her old manual one that was not working. MERR delivered the power lift to the caregiver at MH's home and trained her on its safety and functionality. Both the caregiver and MH were so pleased to have a lift even better than the one that was broken and out for repair. This lift keeps MH from having to be in the hospital and/or nursing home so she was incredibly pleased with the program and what it provided for her.

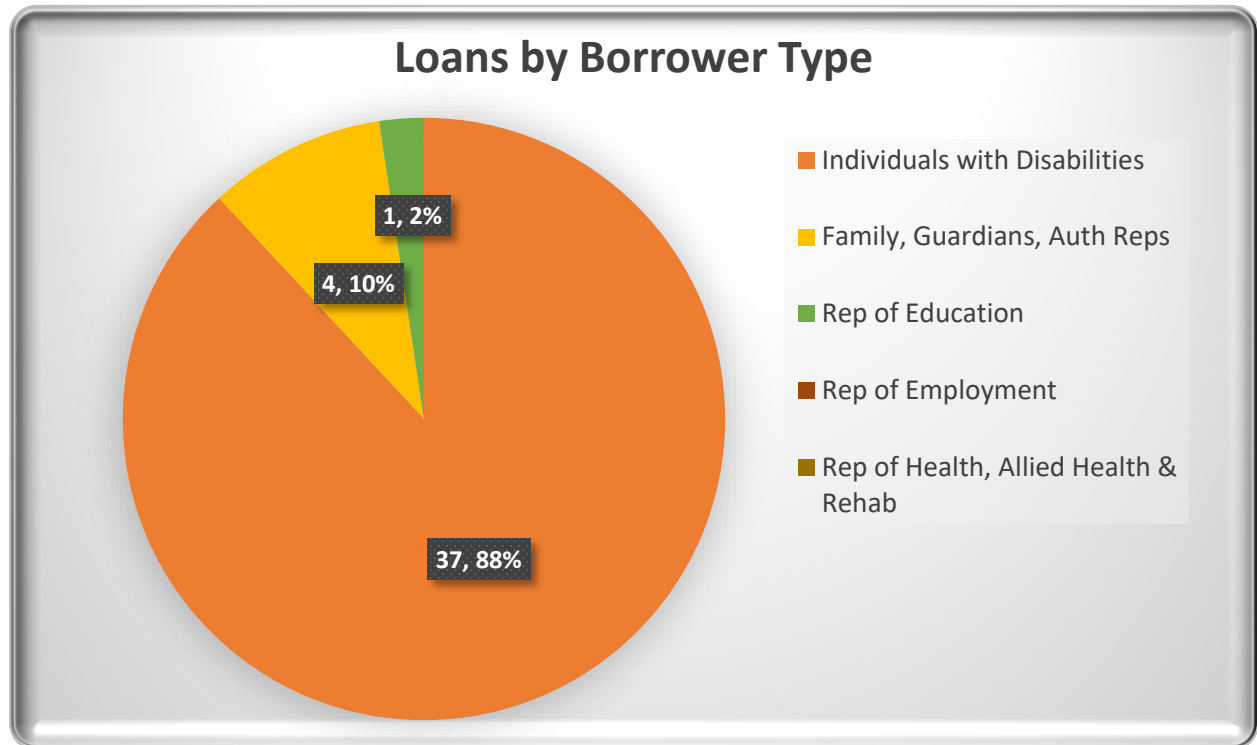


A Recycled Power Hoyer Lift

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AT Device Loans

DakotaLink provides short-term loans of A.T. devices for decision-making, repairs, short-term accommodation, training, and professional activities. In 2023, 42 loans were issued. In 2022, we had 29 loans.



Total 42 Loans

ANECTDOTE

A college student with a reading disability wanted to be independent in her reading. She had always dreamed of owning an iPad to increase her independence, but her budget was tight, and she could not justify the expense. She contacted DakotaLink and was offered to lend her an iPad with Reading Software as well as Voice Over for a few weeks. She received it and some initial training over the phone to get her started. Grateful and excited, she accepted the generous offer. With the borrowed iPad in hand, she dove headfirst into reading assignments. The iPad's Voice Over and TextHelp's Read & Write opened a world of possibilities she had never experienced before. As the weeks passed, she flourished in her reading assignments. Eventually, it was time to return the iPad to DakotaLink. She did so with a mixture of gratitude and reluctance, as she had grown attached to the device and the independent freedom it had provided.

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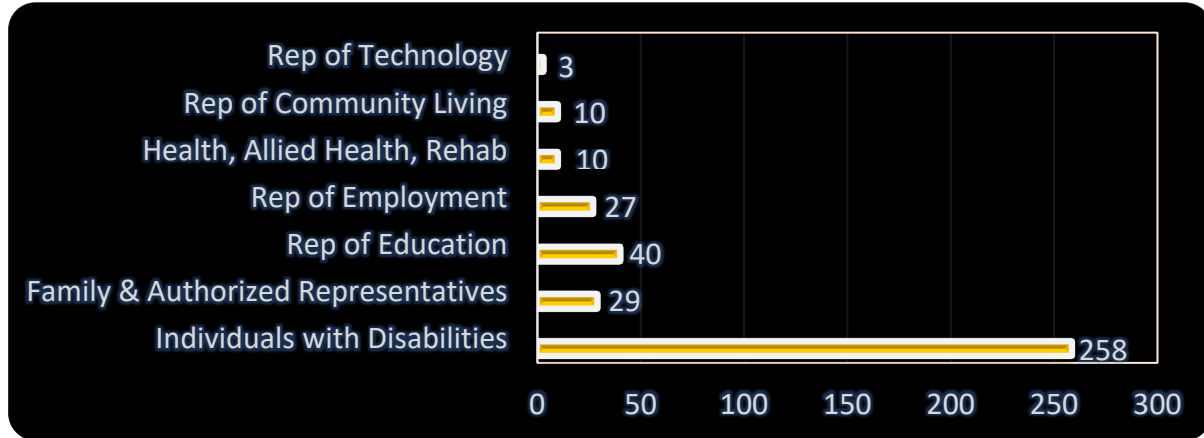
DakotaLink, seeing the impact it had on her reading, helped her contact the Department of Rehabilitation Services to purchase one of her own. She went on to complete her school year with more independence than she has ever had regarding reading. The loan of the iPad not only enriched her independence but also gave her confidence in utilizing this device for the remainder of her college career.



Woman with iPad

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AT Device Demonstrations



377 Total Participants by Type

DakotaLink conducted 377 demonstrations of A.T. devices in 2023. In 2022, we had 310. Demonstrations involve showcasing various devices, including iPad Apps, Computer Software, Low Vision Devices, and Personal Body Lift Systems. Demonstrations occurred at four Demonstration Centers and through outreach events, impacting thousands of individuals.

DakotaLink participated in various events, including Let's Talk Work and Catch the Wave, providing demonstrations to students, adults, and parents. Positive feedback was received, and the presence at events increased as pandemic restrictions eased.

ANECTDOTE

A client reached out to us about his new job at the Holiday Inn in Spearfish. His duties there are to clean the outside of the room windows. We first observed how he cleans the windows and spoke with his employment coordinator (EC) to see what his shortfalls are. He said that he assists him cleaning the upper part of the window and he cleans the bottom half by himself. EC did make a device that can allow him to reach high, unfortunately it is very flimsy and about to break in half. We brought a much sturdier pole and had him use hold that to see if that would work better. He said that it would, and it looked better for him being it was thicker and had more grip for him. This pole can also extend much further allowing him to be able to reach the top of the windows without straining himself. We told him that we can build or find one that will work better and his limited range of motion. EC feels that with a stronger pole that he may be able

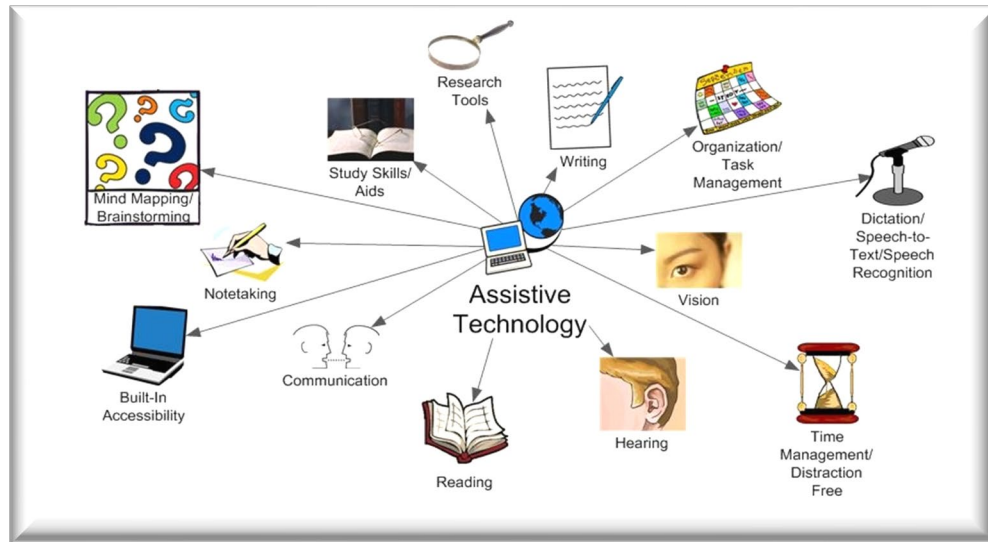
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to get him to do the entire window by himself. The next thing that addressed was how he cleans the lower portion of the windows. He currently uses a microfiber rag and EC wraps it around his hand. This does not work well for him. The rag will eventually come undone and will just be hanging in his hand. This is not very effective and limits hand movement. We suggested a couple of different types of microfiber gloves that could possibly work. He thought that it would be good to try both and see which would be the better option for him. This will allow for greater use of his full hand.



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Training Activities

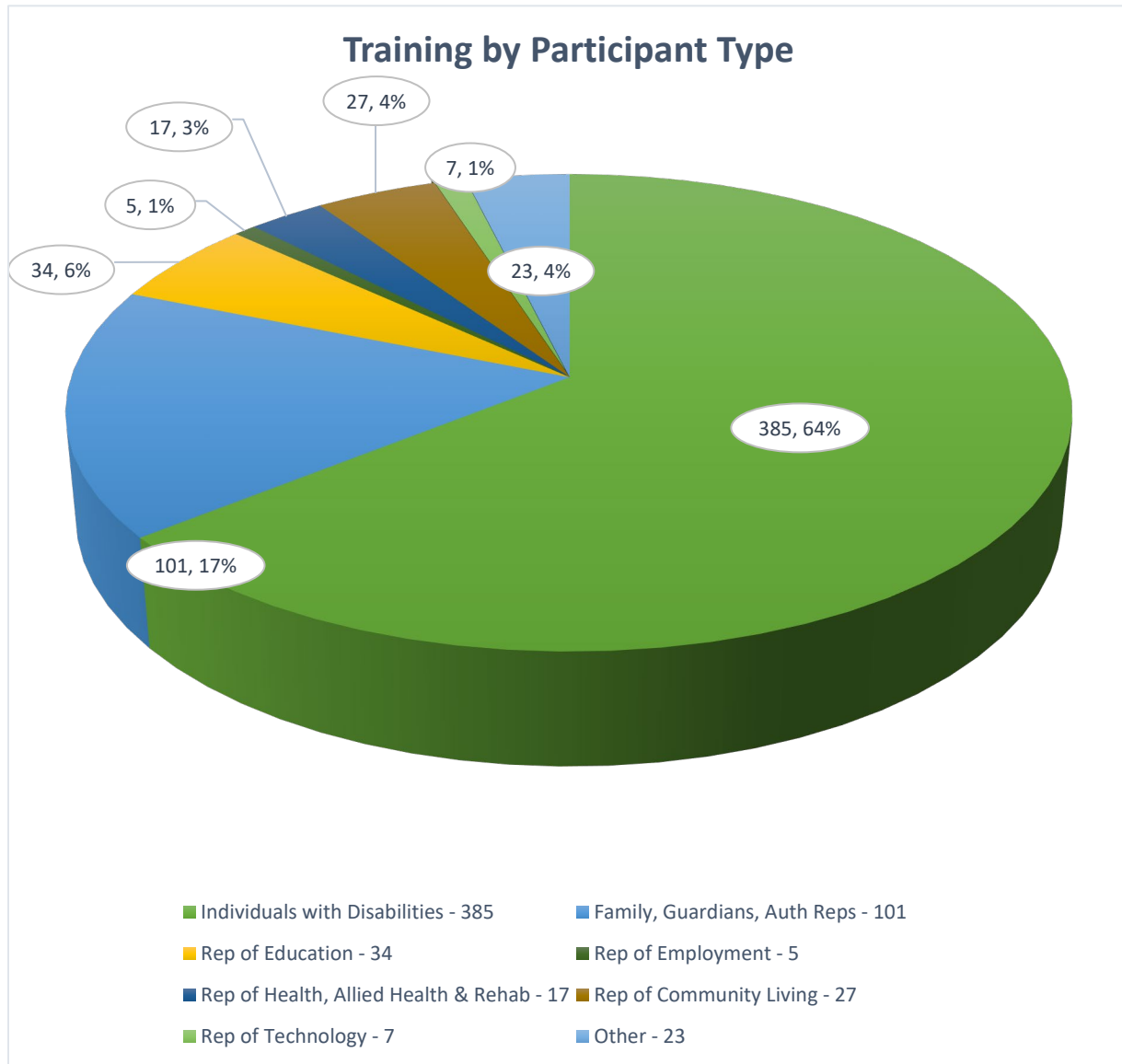


DakotaLink Technicians provided training to 599 individuals on the use of assistive technology devices in 2023. In 2022 we provided 522 individuals with training. Training sessions covered a range of topics, including classes, workshops, conference sessions, and presentations aimed at increasing participants' knowledge and skills.

Referral Types

DakotaLink receives referrals from diverse sources, including TV commercials, Dakota at Home program, various state departments, programs for the blind and visually impaired, and more. A total of 599 participants benefited from these referrals.

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Total of 599 Participants

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Technical Assistance & Collaboration

DakotaLink partners with the State Department of Human Services to offer technical assistance to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors across the State to deliver valuable Assistive Technology devices and services to their clients. South Dakota employs an electronic Referral Process that grants clients access to Assistive Technology assessments, equipment, and training. DakotaLink has collaborated with the Department to create a Program Guide, and some adjustments to the policy have been made to simplify the process. The initiative is supported by AT Act Funding.

Referrals to DakotaLink come from a diverse range of sources. Our outreach efforts generate self-referrals, while other referrals come from the Dakota At Home referral service, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, , the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), the iCanConnectSD program, the Strengthening Families Program, Family Support 360, the Department of Education Office of Special Education, Independent Living Centers, Disability Rights South Dakota, and the South Dakota Benefits Specialist Network.

We utilize Survey Monkey to distribute surveys to individuals engaged in business with DakotaLink. We achieve a response rate of approximately 60%, with 82% of the feedback being positive. The clear procedural outline enhances the efficiency of delivering assistive technology to people with disabilities. Engaging directly with our referral sources has proven to be more effective than other methods. This endeavor will persist and be adjusted as necessary in the future. We conduct this training at least once annually to address staff turnover and ensure that the process is functioning as intended.

Public Awareness

DakotaLink distributes newsletters every quarter to individuals on our mailing list. We regularly update the list as new people express interest. Additionally, we share updates on various list-servs affiliated with DakotaLink. We also engage with audiences on list-servs, blogs, and social media platforms. This allows us to

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connect with around 500+ individuals annually. The list-servs we utilize are at3center-ml@list.ataporg.org and The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) ataporg@ataporg.org. We maintain an active presence on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/DakotaLinkAT>, where we share our activities and keep our audience informed. We have brochures available for the DakotaLink program and maintain a record of the presentations and conferences in which we participate.

DakotaLink has a resource directory that is on our website:

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



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DakotaLink's mission is to empower individuals facing functional limitations due to disability, illness, injury, or aging by maximizing their potential through Assistive Technology. For more information, contact DakotaLink at 605-394-6742 (V/TD), Toll-free at 1-800-645-0673, Email: atinfo@dakotalink.net, Facebook, or visit the website.

It is our privilege to serve the people of South Dakota.