Free Resources for People with Disabilities

National programs that cost you nothing, with who qualifies and where to start, checked against each provider's own page

Who this is for: Staff at schools, libraries, employers and community programs who help people with disabilities find services, and people with disabilities and their families.

Not covered here: State and local programs (many states run their own equipment, transportation and benefit programs, and the networks near the end of this guide can point you to them), health coverage, and products you have to buy.

Current as of November 17, 2026. National programs. Each section ends with the sources it rests on.

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In brief

- Every entry here is free to the person who uses it unless the entry says otherwise. A few have conditions, such as income limits or a fee for ordering by mail, and those are spelled out.
- For people who can't read standard print, the Library of Congress talking book and braille library is free, covers reading and physical disabilities as well as blindness, and charges nothing for books, players or postage.
- Relay services let people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or have a speech disability make phone calls, and the people who use them don't pay the relay costs.
- Federal rules make some help free by law: special education, early intervention evaluations, the help an airline must give you, and the ride for a paratransit rider's personal care attendant.
- If you don't know where to start, one national line (DIAL, 888-677-1199) connects people with disabilities to local services.

Books, news and reading

Talking books and braille from the Library of Congress (NLS)

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled lends audiobooks, braille books, magazines and music materials through a national network of cooperating libraries. It serves any U.S. resident, or American citizen living abroad, who can't read or use regular print because of a temporary or permanent visual or physical limitation, including a perceptual or reading disability. Books come by download or by mail, and network libraries mail the playback equipment for free. Veterans get priority service whether or not the condition is service-related. An application has to be certified by someone the NLS rule accepts, such as a doctor, optometrist, psychologist, nurse, therapist, educator, social worker or librarian. Call 800-424-8567 or apply at loc.gov/nls.

Source: NLS, "Apply for NLS Services," "Equipment for NLS Materials" and "Veterans" pages (read November 17, 2026); 36 CFR 701.6(b)

BARD, the NLS download service

BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) gives NLS patrons hundreds of thousands of books, magazines and music materials in audio and electronic braille, through the BARD Mobile app for iPhone, Android and Fire devices, through BARD Express, and through a talking-books skill on smart speakers. Become an NLS patron first, then ask your network library to set up BARD.

Source: NLS, "Sign up for BARD and Accessing BARD" (read November 17, 2026)

Free postage for braille, large print and audio

The Postal Service carries qualifying mail free of postage for people who are blind or can't read or use standard print because of a physical disability, including NLS patrons. NLS books and players travel this way. Personal letters qualify too if they're in braille, in 14-point or larger type, or recorded, carry no advertising, are left unsealed and are sent by an eligible person. Mark the address side "Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped" in the upper right corner. It applies to domestic mail only.

Source: USPS Domestic Mail Manual 703.5 (updated November 2, 2026)

NFB-NEWSLINE

The National Federation of the Blind runs a free audio news service with more than 500 publications for people who are blind, low vision, deafblind or otherwise print-disabled, including people who can't read print because of dyslexia or a physical disability. You can listen by phone, through apps for iPhone and Android, on a text-only website, through an Alexa skill or by email. Call 866-504-7300 or apply online.

Source: NFB, "NFB-NEWSLINE"; Google Play, "NFB-NEWSLINE Mobile" (read November 17, 2026)

Bookshare

Bookshare's accessible library is free for qualified U.S. students of any age, through an award from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, and free for U.S. schools. Adults who aren't students pay $79.99 a year unless one of Bookshare's membership partners gives them free access.

Source: Bookshare, "How much does Bookshare cost?" and "Read your way" (read November 17, 2026)

Louis, a search tool for accessible school materials

The American Printing House for the Blind keeps Louis, a public search tool for braille, large print, audio and electronic materials from more than 60 organizations. Its results also include the national repositories of NIMAC, Bookshare and Learning Ally.

Source: APH, "About Louis" (read November 17, 2026)

Free braille books for children

Seedlings Braille Books for Children's Book Angel Program lets each child with vision loss from birth to age 21, in the U.S. or Canada, order 5 free braille books per calendar year. Seedlings also sells low-cost braille books.

Source: Seedlings, "Free Programs" and home page (read November 17, 2026)

Phone calls, relay and captions

Dial 711 for relay

Dialing 711 connects you to a relay communications assistant, so voice and TTY users can place relay calls from any phone in the U.S. The FCC calls it "fast, functional and free." 711 doesn't work for video relay, IP Relay or captioned-telephone calls, and a TTY user in an emergency should call 911 directly.

Source: FCC, "711 for Telecommunications Relay Service" (read November 17, 2026)

Video relay for sign language users

Video Relay Service lets people who use sign language talk with voice callers through a video link and a communications assistant who interprets. As with all relay calls, the relay costs aren't paid directly by the people who use the service.

Source: 47 CFR 64.601, "Video relay service"; FCC, "Internet Protocol (IP) Captioned Telephone Service" (read November 17, 2026)

Captioned phone calls

IP captioned telephone service is for people with hearing loss who can speak for themselves: you talk directly to the other person and read captions of what they say. The FCC says the relay costs of IP CTS, like all relay calls, aren't paid directly by the people who use it. The FCC page doesn't say whether the phone or app costs anything, so ask the provider before you sign up.

Source: FCC, "Internet Protocol (IP) Captioned Telephone Service" (read November 17, 2026)

Speech-to-speech relay

Speech-to-speech relay connects people with speech disabilities to voice callers through communications assistants trained to understand their speech, who repeat their words to the other person.

Source: 47 CFR 64.601, "Speech-to-speech relay service"

iCanConnect, for people who are deaf-blind

iCanConnect gives free communication equipment and training to people with both significant hearing loss and significant vision loss who meet its federal disability and income guidelines. It's a national program with local contacts.

Source: iCanConnect home page (read November 17, 2026)

Apps, tools and training

Be My Eyes

The Be My Eyes app connects people who are blind or have low vision with sighted volunteers around the world for live visual help. It's free.

Source: Be My Eyes home page (read November 17, 2026)

Seeing AI

Seeing AI, a free app from Microsoft for iPhone and Android, reads text aloud, describes photos and identifies products.

Source: seeingai.com (read November 17, 2026)

Aira, free at partner locations

Aira connects people who are blind or have low vision to professional visual interpreters, and its Aira ASL app connects people to American Sign Language interpreters. Aira Explorer is free at thousands of Access Partner locations, and Aira ASL at select partner locations in North America. Use outside those places is a paid subscription.

Source: Aira home page (read November 17, 2026)

NVDA screen reader

NVDA is a free screen reader for Windows computers. It works with common web browsers, email and other programs.

Source: NV Access, "About NVDA" (read November 17, 2026)

Talking currency reader

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing, working with NLS, gives eligible people who are blind or visually impaired a free iBill currency reader, a key-fob device that announces a bill's value by voice, tones or vibration. The bureau's EyeNote app, free for iPhone and Android, identifies bills with the phone's camera. NLS patrons can get application help from their library at 888-NLS-READ; the program's own line is 844-815-9388.

Source: NLS, "US Currency Reader Program" (read November 17, 2026)

A free white cane

The National Federation of the Blind's Free White Cane Program sends a straight fiberglass cane to any blind person in the fifty states, the District of Columbia or Puerto Rico, for personal use, at most once every six months. Apply online, by mail or at 410-659-9314.

Source: NFB, "Free White Cane Program" (read November 17, 2026)

Hadley, for adults with vision loss

Hadley offers practical how-tos, emotional support and community for adults living with vision loss, at no cost and with no waitlist.

Source: Hadley home page (read November 17, 2026)

Getting around

Free pass to national parks and federal lands

The America the Beautiful Access Pass is free for U.S. citizens and permanent residents with a permanent disability. It's honored where entrance or standard amenity (day use) fees are charged by the National Park Service, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation. It's free in person at a participating site with ID and documentation of the disability; ordering online through the USGS store costs $12.50 in processing and handling.

Source: NPS, "America the Beautiful Passes"; USGS Store, "Access Pass" (read November 17, 2026)

Air travel

U.S. airlines can't charge you for the facilities, equipment or services the federal air travel rule requires them to provide passengers with disabilities. For airport security, TSA Cares at 855-787-2227 takes requests for a Passenger Support Specialist; TSA suggests calling at least 72 hours before you fly. The specialist helps you through screening but doesn't exempt you from it.

Source: 14 CFR 382.31(a); TSA, "Passenger Support" (read November 17, 2026)

Paratransit

Where a transit system runs ADA paratransit, a rider's personal care attendant rides free, and the rider's own fare can't be more than twice the full fixed-route fare for a similar trip.

Source: 49 CFR 37.131(c)

Guide and service dogs at no cost

Some national schools place trained dogs without charge. Guiding Eyes for the Blind provides all of its services completely free of charge. Canine Companions says every service dog and facility dog it places, with follow-up training and support, comes at no cost.

Source: Guiding Eyes for the Blind and Canine Companions home pages (read November 17, 2026)

Work, money and taxes

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

JAN answers questions about workplace accommodations, free and in confidence. Call 800-526-7234 or use askjan.org.

Source: JAN home page (read November 17, 2026)

Vocational rehabilitation

State vocational rehabilitation agencies provide employment services to people with disabilities. A state may ask some people to share costs based on income, but it can't charge for the assessments, counseling, referrals, job-related services, personal assistance services or interpreters and readers you need to take part, and it can't ask anyone who receives SSI or SSDI to share any costs.

Source: 34 CFR 361.54

Ticket to Work

Social Security's Ticket to Work program connects people ages 18 through 64 who receive SSDI or SSI because of a disability with free employment services, such as career counseling, vocational rehabilitation and job placement. Taking part is free and voluntary.

Source: Social Security, Ticket to Work, "How It Works" (read November 17, 2026)

Free tax preparation

The IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program offers free basic tax return preparation and names persons with disabilities among the people it serves, along with people who generally make about $70,244 or less. Individual sites may set their own income limits.

Source: IRS, "Free tax return preparation for eligible taxpayers" (read November 17, 2026)

Tax forms you can read

The IRS posts hundreds of tax forms and publications in text, e-braille, HTML, accessible PDF and large print.

Source: IRS, "Accessible IRS tax products" (read November 17, 2026)

School and early childhood

Early intervention, birth to age 3

Under the federal early intervention rules, finding and evaluating infants and toddlers, service coordination, writing and reviewing the family's plan, and the family's procedural protections are carried out at public expense, and parents can't be charged for them.

Source: 34 CFR 303.521(b)

Special education

Special education is defined in federal law as specially designed instruction at no cost to the parents. Each state must identify, locate and evaluate every child with a disability who needs it, including children who are homeless, wards of the state or in private schools, whatever the severity of the disability.

Source: 34 CFR 300.39(a)(1); 34 CFR 300.111(a)

Educational materials for students who are blind

Under an 1879 federal law, the American Printing House for the Blind receives federal funds each year, based on a census of eligible students who are blind or have low vision, to provide specialized educational materials. Each state's account is managed by a trustee, and educators and parents use it to get materials for those students.

Source: APH, "The Federal Quota Program" (read November 17, 2026)

Captioned and described school videos

The Described and Captioned Media Program offers standards-aligned videos with captions and audio description. Families and school staff with at least one student with a disability can join for free, and adult members can set up accounts for students under 18.

Source: DCMP home page (read November 17, 2026)

Networks that can point you to more help

These are national networks with a local office near you. Some charge for some services and some don't, so ask before you start.

DIAL, the national disability information line

DIAL connects people with disabilities to local services, including transportation, housing and legal help. Call, text or videophone 888-677-1199, or chat live with a specialist, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern. HHS describes it as a free service.

Source: ACL, "Not sure where to begin?"; HHS, "What agencies advocate for people with disabilities?" (read November 17, 2026)

Protection and advocacy agencies

There's a federally mandated protection and advocacy agency in every state and territory, plus one serving the Native American population in the Four Corners region, with a federal mandate to provide legal representation and other advocacy services to people with disabilities. Several say their services are free, and they set priorities, so they can't take every case.

Source: NDRN, "NDRN Member Agencies"; Disability Rights North Carolina, Disability Rights Arizona and Disability Rights Wisconsin service pages (read November 17, 2026)

Centers for independent living

Centers for independent living are local, community-based nonprofits. Every center offers information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, individual and systems advocacy, and help moving into and staying in the community.

Source: ACL, "Centers for Independent Living" (read November 17, 2026)

State assistive technology programs

State assistive technology programs funded under the federal Assistive Technology Act must run short-term device loan programs and device reuse programs that exchange, repair and recycle equipment.

Source: 29 U.S.C. 3003; AT3 Center (read November 17, 2026)

Parent centers

Nearly 100 Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers across the U.S. and its territories work with families of infants, children and youth with disabilities, from birth to age 26.

Source: Center for Parent Information and Resources, "Find Your Parent Center" (read November 17, 2026)

The ADA National Network

Ten regional ADA centers answer questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act at 800-949-4232.

Source: ada.gov, Child Care Centers and the ADA, Q29; adata.org (read November 17, 2026)

If someone wants to charge you for an accommodation

State and local governments and businesses open to the public can't charge you extra to cover the cost of an accommodation the ADA requires, such as an interpreter or a ramp. Airlines are under the same kind of rule for the help the air travel rule requires. Our ADA Title II and ADA Title III guides explain what each kind of organization has to provide. For help with your own situation, DIAL and your state's protection and advocacy agency are the places to start.

Source: 28 CFR 35.130(f); 28 CFR 36.301(c); 14 CFR 382.31(a)

Common questions

I have dyslexia, not a vision loss. Can I use the talking book library?

Yes, if it keeps you from reading standard print. NLS serves people with a perceptual or reading disability, and the rule's list of people who can certify an application includes certified reading specialists and school psychologists.

Source: NLS, "Apply for NLS Services" (read November 17, 2026); 36 CFR 701.6(b)

Do I need proof of disability?

Often, yes. NLS and the free postage rule rely on certification by a doctor or another professional on their lists, and the Access Pass asks for documentation of a permanent disability. Others, such as 711 and the free apps in this guide, don't list any proof requirement.

Source: NLS, "Apply for NLS Services"; 36 CFR 701.6(b)(2); USPS Domestic Mail Manual 703.5.1.4; USGS Store, "Access Pass"

I live outside the U.S. Can I still use these?

NLS serves American citizens living abroad. Most of the others are for people in the U.S., and Seedlings' free books also go to children in Canada.

Source: NLS, "Apply for NLS Services"; Seedlings, "Free Programs" (read November 17, 2026)

Primary sources

- Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled
- NLS, US Currency Reader Program
- USPS Domestic Mail Manual 703, section 5.0
- NFB-NEWSLINE
- NFB Free White Cane Program
- Bookshare, adult members
- FCC, 711 for Telecommunications Relay Service
- FCC, IP Captioned Telephone Service
- iCanConnect
- USGS Store, Access Pass
- Social Security, Ticket to Work
- IRS, free tax return preparation
- Job Accommodation Network
- NDRN, protection and advocacy agencies

- ACL, Centers for Independent Living
- Center for Parent Information and Resources, Find Your Parent Center

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ADA Access for All (Guillaume & Co. LLC) performs the ADA and Section 504 program function for organizations. Principal Marc Guillaume holds the ADA Coordinator Certification (ADACC) from the University of Missouri, is a DHS Trusted Tester and served as a Disability Service Facilitator for New York City Public Schools. More material: adaaccessforall.com/resources · info@adaaccessforall.com