



Nebraska VR Report

2016-2017

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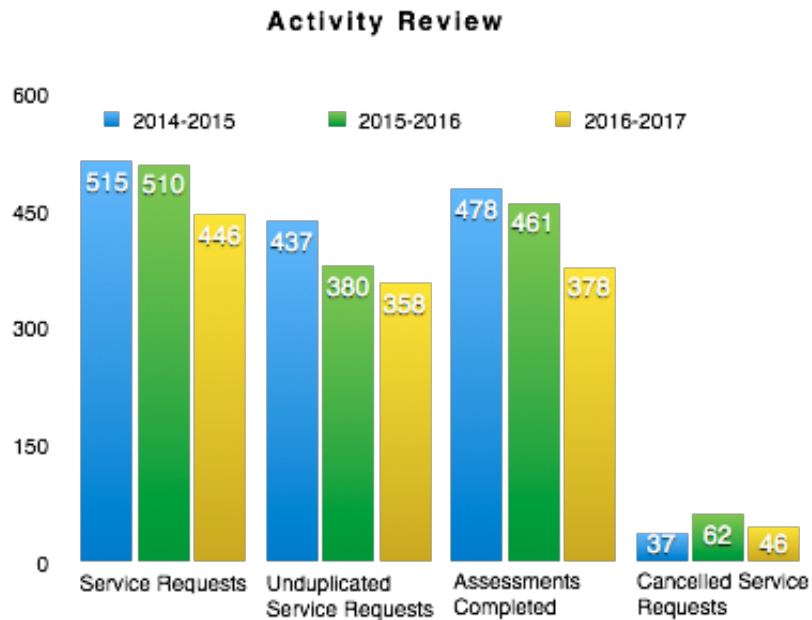
Director

Brooke Harrie

Program Coordinator

SERVICE REQUESTS AND ASSESSMENTS

The following report includes analysis and comparisons of Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) and Nebraska VR (NE VR) service program data for the last three fiscal years (FY 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017). The chart below is an overview of service requests received during this time, as well as the unduplicated service requests and assessments completed. ATP received a total of 495 services requests during the last fiscal year, however 49 of those were for ergonomic and worksite assessments for new and existing NE VR staff. In order to accurately report on the number of service requests received and assessments completed for NE VR clients, the number of service requests for NE VR staff has been removed from all data.



During FY 2016-2017, the total number of service requests received was lower than the previous two years. This reduction in numbers could be due to the changes being made throughout NE VR as a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The significant changes being made where the transition-aged youth are concerned could account for some of the decrease in the number of service requests received. ATP is working closely with the Program Director of Transition Services to create a process so the NE VR clients in the pre-employment transition program can be referred to ATP for services including informational assessments, loans and demonstrations of technology. Once this process is in place, we should see a steady rise in referrals for this population. The number of unduplicated service requests reflects the number of clients with significant disabilities that required several different AT services in order to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. The number of unduplicated service requests only dropped by 22 this year. This shows NE VR clients referred to ATP

last year had more complex AT needs, resulting in more services requests per client. This year there was a range of one to four service requests per referral, when last year we saw clients with up to six service requests each.

The number of cancelled service requests was lower this year when compared to last year. Service requests were cancelled for a variety of reasons including the needs of the client being met by another source, client determined they did not want or need services, client lost their job, or there was a duplication of service requests. The highest number of cancelled referrals was for hearing and mobility devices. Often NE VR refers clients before purchasing hearing aids to explore complimentary technology. Many times after the aids are purchased, it is discovered that they meet their needs and no other equipment is needed. When it comes to mobility devices, insurance may cover the cost and NE VR/ATP assistance is no longer necessary for this item. Upon investigation into the number of cancelled service requests, it was found that 12 cases were canceled after being assessed by ATP and 34 cases were cancelled before the assessment was completed.

The chart below (continues on next page) reflects the number of assessments completed by AT category for the past three fiscal years for NE VR clients only. Due to a lower number of service requests this year, fewer assessments were completed as well. Service requests received from NE VR staff are categorized to reflect the type of AT recommended by the Technology Specialist. Recommendations are based on the most cost-effective solution that will assist the client in meeting their individual education or employment goals. The type of AT most commonly assessed for has consistently been cognitive aids and vehicle modifications. The number of cognitive aid assessments is expected to rise as NE VR starts to serve more individuals with developmental disabilities.

ASSESSMENTS BY ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY CATEGORY

AT Category	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
ADL Equipment/ DME	23	26	26
Bathroom/Laundry Modifications	17	15	12
Cognitive Aids	141	128	91
My Bionic Brain (MBB)	4	0	0
Communication	6	7	5
Computer (hardware/software)	43	27	29
Entrance Modifications	13	17	13
Environmental Controls	0	1	0
Ergonomics	34	30	21
Hearing Devices	39	35	24
Information	8	9	9
Kitchen Modifications	3	3	0
Lift (exterior/interior)	7	8	4
Lift (repair)	1	2	2

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Mobility Device	24	34	23
Other	2	6	3
Other Home Modifications	13	9	4
Prosthetic/Orthosis	4	0	1
Ramps	0	0	1
Vehicle Modifications	45	51	57
Vehicle Modification (repair)	1	5	0
Vision Device	4	1	1
Worksite AT	46	47	52
Total	478	461	378

The following three charts reflect service request activity by NE VR office. When investigating the data it was found that the same NE VR counselors from each office tend to refer to ATP. This could be the result of new staff being unaware of the process or specific NE VR staff for each team being given all the cases of clients with AT needs. The ATP Program Coordinator has been presenting at the quarterly implementation trainings for new NE VR staff to explain the partnership between NE VR/ ATP and explain the referral process.

SERVICE REQUESTS BY VR OFFICE

VR OFFICE	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Columbus	27	37	31
Fremont	11	8	7
Grand Island	77	61	45
Kearney	79	90	81
Lincoln	105	85	90
Norfolk	44	33	30
North Platte	29	34	27
Omaha Downtown	76	71	64
Omaha West	41	60	56
Scottsbluff	24	29	14
South Sioux City	2	2	1
Total	515	510	446

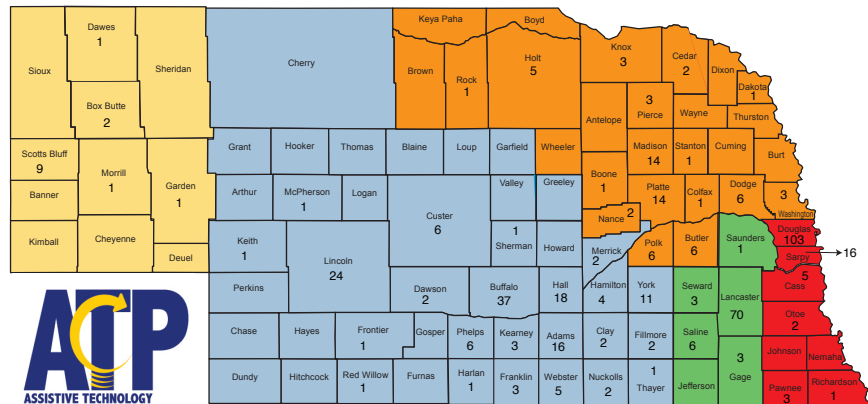
UNDUPLICATED SERVICE REQUESTS BY VR OFFICE

VR OFFICE	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Columbus	28	37	28
Fremont	7	6	5
Grand Island	59	49	38
Kearney	75	68	64
Lincoln	97	71	77
Norfolk	38	27	25
North Platte	23	24	21
Omaha Downtown	58	47	48
Omaha West	34	31	39
Scottsbluff	16	18	12
South Sioux City	2	2	1
Total	437	380	358

ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED BY VR OFFICE

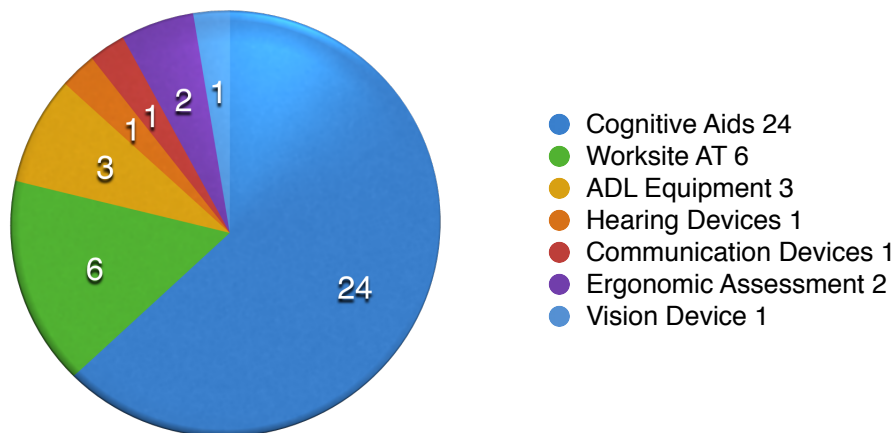
VR OFFICE	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Columbus	23	28	27
Fremont	11	7	6
Grand Island	68	53	29
Kearney	78	78	69
Lincoln	101	81	85
Norfolk	44	30	28
North Platte	24	30	20
Omaha Downtown	68	65	61
Omaha West	36	60	46
Scottsbluff	23	28	6
South Sioux City	2	1	1
Total	478	461	378

VR SERVICE REQUESTS BY ATP SERVICE AREA



PROJECT SEARCH

The ATP Technology Specialists work very closely with NE VR clients who are taking part in the various Project SEARCH programs throughout the state. A total of 38 service requests were received for Project SEARCH participants this year, which is also the first year collecting this data. Of those 38 service requests, none were cancelled and 36 were unduplicated requests. The following chart shows the assessments completed for Project SEARCH interns by assistive technology category. These numbers were included in the total number of service requests reported on initially.



FUNDING

The following two charts summarize and compare the amount of VR Title 1 funds and leveraged funds for assistive technology. The ATP Funding Coordinator researches local, state and federal funding guidelines and eligibility requirements. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator participates in funding coordination meetings quarterly to discuss potential comparable benefits that may be leveraged for VR Title 1 clients, including the Enrichment Foundation Grant and Nebraska DHHS Waiver services. Various NE VR clients have been referred to the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Program (NSTEP) for specialized telephone equipment if the consumer has a hearing impairment. NE VR clients are referred on to the NSTEP program or other similar programs throughout the state to get their needs met if funding is available for the recommendations through another source. The chart below shows only the amount of funds authorized between October 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017.

LEVERAGED FUNDS BY SOURCE

Source	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Enrichment	\$32,580.82	\$40,499.00	\$40,000.00
DHHS- A&D Waiver	\$9,690.00	\$21,564.00	\$20,000.00
DHHS-DD Waiver	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Part B	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
UCP	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Consumer Contribution	\$16,339.85	\$28,329.99	\$16,376.11
Total	\$63,610.67	\$91,392.99	\$76,376.11

AMOUNT EXPENDED FOR AT SOLUTIONS

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Title 1 Funds	\$1,149,742.13	\$1,085,024.84	\$970,097.61
Leveraged Funds	\$63,610.67	\$91,392.99	\$76,376.11
Total	\$1,213,352.80	\$1,176,417.83	\$1,046,473.72

DEVICE DEMONSTRATION, LOAN AND REUTILIZATION ACTIVITIES

The AT4ALL database tracks all demonstrations, loans and reutilization activities. The database was updated to provide information regarding loans for employment purposes. This is the third year of data collection of loans for employment purposes.

ATP Technology Specialists provide recommendations based on the most cost-effective solution that addresses the functional limitations experienced by the NE VR client. When possible, equipment demonstrations are conducted to determine what AT device may work best for the NE VR client. Equipment demonstrations can be conducted in the local ATP demonstration center, in the local NE VR office, in the client's place of employment, home or other community location that best meets their needs. The overall total number of demonstrations completed this year has decreased when compared to last year, with Lincoln and Kearney completing significantly fewer demonstrations.

Employment Demonstrations by ATP Service Area			
Service Area	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Columbus	6	9	21
Kearney	83	172	133
Lincoln	60	26	4
Omaha	60	96	102
Scottsbluff	0	1	1
Total	209	304	261

Short-term loans are often provided to NE VR clients. A short-term loan enables the individual to have direct access to the device, often in the school or employment setting typically for up to 30 days. Utilizing loaned devices can assist in decision-making, provide a short-term accommodation and serve as a loaner during device repair or while waiting for funding. The number of equipment demonstrations and loans has continued to go down the past three years. This can be attributed to the lower number of service requests received from NE VR as well as the availability of YouTube and other videos online effectively showing use of AT equipment. The recommendation of iPads, apps and other smart devices could also be a reason for the decrease in loans as these items are typically demonstration only.

Loans for Employment Purposes			
Borrower	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
NE VR Client	210	139	156
NE VR Staff	44	65	41
ATP Staff	25	8	9
Employer (not receiving VR Services)	2	0	1
Employee (not receiving VR Services)	25	17	20
Other	5	50	13
Total	311	279	240

When possible, Technology Specialists also try to reutilize equipment to offset the costs of assistive technology. This could mean using equipment that was donated to ATP by an outside source, or using AT that was purchased by VR for a consumer that did not end up needing it. Technology Specialists may also be able to repair technology if they have the necessary parts and skill to do so, also helping to save NE VR funds that can be used for other clients.

Equipment Reutilization - Employment			
Service Area	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Columbus	0	0	0
Kearney	1	0	1
Lincoln	11	23	11
Omaha	0	2	5
Scottsbluff	0	0	0
Total	12	25	17

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

1) VR Staff Training

ATP Technology Specialists and the VR Title 1 Program Coordinator provided two training sessions to NE VR staff this year. In October 2016, the VR Title 1 Program Coordinator partnered with Michael Patterson of Heartland Mobility in Omaha to provide training on high tech driving solutions at the Nebraska VR State Staff Conference in La Vista. Heartland Mobility is the only vendor certified to install AEVIT systems in Nebraska. In August 2017, the VR Title 1 Program Coordinator and the VR Technology Specialists provided training to all VR staff via videoconference. The training was titled “Back to School Apps” and each technology specialist presented on apps that could assist NE VR clients with math, reading, writing, note taking and organization. Training dates and times were coordinated with Cheryl Ferree, VR Program Director.

2) Marketing/Public Awareness/Employment Outreach

In order to assist with marketing and outreach, the VR Title 1 Program Coordinator and AT4ALL Program Coordinator presented to Mutual of Omaha and VODEC to provide information on ATP services that are available to individuals throughout the state. ATP Technology Specialists also attended monthly Business Advisory Council meetings as well as orientation nights for Project SEARCH to talk with the students, parents and teachers about ATP services. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator has participated in monthly marketing meetings with other ATP Program Coordinators and also joined DOTS, Disability Organizations Together Service, which meets monthly in Omaha to network with other agencies that serve a similar population.

3) **Improve Data Collection**

This year ATP obtained a new case management system. A new ATTIE replaced old ATTIE in July 2017. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator had provided feedback and suggestions regarding data collection for the new system. All ATP Technology Specialists have been participating in training for the new database and it has been a smooth transition. All data from old ATTIE was imported into the new system and improvements continue to be made as needed. Exporting data for the VR Title 1 report was less tedious with the new system and suggestions continue to be presented to the ATP Director on how to make the new system more efficient for collection of VR data.

4) **Maintain and Improve Communication with NE VR Teams**

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator and/or the ATP Director met with all NE VR teams during FY 2016-2017. The team tours this summer also included the NE VR Director of Community Services, the NE VR Director of the Client Assistance Program, the Lead Work Incentive Specialist from Easter Seals, the NE VR Director of Criminal Justice and the NE VR Director of Counseling. The NE VR offices were very welcoming and provided positive feedback about ATP staff and services. They stated they enjoyed the face-to-face meeting where they could get updates, ask questions and staff cases together. Topics discussed on the team tours included ATP updates/reminders, least cost options, comparable benefits and priority cases. Fourteen priority cases were received from NE VR this year, which is lower than the twenty-three priority cases received last year.

5) **Support Project SEARCH**

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator monitored all Project SEARCH sites and provided support as needed. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator is responsible for all Omaha sites and serves on the Business Advisory Council (BAC) in Omaha, while staff attends the BAC in Lincoln as well. Technology Specialists continued to participate in open houses, skills/assessment days and steering committee meetings for the sites throughout the state. ATP staff helped out at the Project SEARCH job fair in Lincoln this past year and they are already assisting with planning for the job fair coming up in Omaha in April 2018.

6) **Continuation of Workgroup**

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator and the NE VR Program Director of Community Services formed a workgroup last year to address how to best provide AT support for the new initiatives that NE VR was anticipating through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The NE VR Director of Counseling also joined this group and it continues to meet monthly. This group discusses policy, clarifies procedures and helps to maintain consistency for the VR and ATP programs throughout the state. Some of the changes approved by this group include the revision of the acceptance agreement form, updating of the funding email language and improving the process of submitting ATP reports to NE VR staff by combining the report and funding email.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Eighty-eight consumer satisfaction surveys were returned during FY 2016-2017. Clients reported between 86% and 94% satisfaction in all categories. The following table summarizes the survey results. A large number of questions were left blank. The form was revised to help make it more user-friendly and read more clearly in hopes of having a higher response rate next year.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
1- ATP staff responded in a timely manner	2	1	1	37	45	2
2- ATP staff explained the process and answered my questions	1	1	0	35	48	3
3- I was involved in making choices about the equipment/modifications	1	2	1	30	50	4
4- The equipment and modifications I received met my expectations	1	3	2	31	48	3
5- I know how to use the equipment and modifications I received	1	1	2	34	47	3
6- The equipment and modifications have helped me	1	1	2	28	48	8

GOALS 2017-2018

1) VR Staff Training

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will work with ATP Technology Specialists to provide training opportunities to NE VR staff. The idea is that ATP Technology Specialists will provide these trainings via 5-10 minute recorded videos demonstrating AT devices and discussing the pros and cons of the equipment. These videos will be placed online for staff to watch at their leisure. Due to technology constantly changing, the videos will have a window of time (approximately 2-4 months) in which they are available to be viewed before new are posted.

2) Marketing/Public Awareness/Employment Outreach

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will continue working with the ATP marketing staff to increase employer and public awareness. This will be accomplished by attending ATP Marketing meetings, Project SEARCH events, DOTS, community resources fairs and staff meetings of other organizations when invited.

3) Continue to Improve Data Collection

New ATTIE has been launched and is now an online case management system. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will continue to provide suggestions and feedback on how we can continue to improve the system. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will also provide any necessary training to ATP Technology Specialists to help ensure they understand how to properly enter NE VR consumer information into the database to ensure accurate data collection.

4) Maintain and Improve Communication with NE VR Teams

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will meet with all NE VR teams at least once during FY 2017-2018 to provide updates, reminders and to gather information from NE VR teams regarding the VR/ATP process and services. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will monitor all priority cases received to ensure referrals are appropriate and staff is following the policy; the NE VR Director of Counseling will be contacted for consultation on priority cases as needed.

5) Support Project SEARCH

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will continue to monitor all Project SEARCH sites and provide support as needed. The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator will serve on the Business Advisory Council and Technology Specialists will continue to participate in all steering committee meetings, skills/assessment days, open houses and orientation nights as needed to assist interns and staff with AT recommendations.

6) Continuation of Workgroup

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator, the NE VR Program Director of Community Services and the NE VR Program Director of Counseling will continue to meet at least once per month to focus on how to best provide AT support for the new initiatives that NE VR is currently implementing. The workgroup will continue to review policies, procedures and cases to ensure consistency is maintained by NE VR and ATP staff throughout the state.

7) **Establish a Process for Pre-ETS**

The VR Title 1 Program Coordinator and ATP Director will work closely with the NE VR Director of Transition Services to create a process for referring Pre-ETS clients to ATP. Technology Specialists will be trained along with NE VR staff on the process and what the services will look like at the Pre-ETS conference on December 5, 2017 in Lincoln. Pre-ETS clients will be provided AT assessments, demonstrations and equipment loans in order for them to have all the information and hands-on use of the equipment being recommended to assist them in their future educational and vocational job goals.

SUCCESS STORIES

AT for Education

Bridgett is a college student who started at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) this Fall. She was diagnosed with Spina Bifida at birth and wears leg braces to assist with mobility. Bridgett is very involved on campus, taking a full class load as well as working at the daycare on campus part time and taking the position of Student Director of UNO's



Disability Awareness group. Bridgett's activities require her to be in various buildings all over campus in a single day. Because of her slower pace caused by fatigue from walking long distances and carrying a backpack, her mother had to come to campus at least four times a day to help transport Bridgett so she could get to her classes and commitments on time. The constant stress and fatigue resulting from her physical limitations had her to the point of almost quitting school. After discussing the different options

with her ATP Technology Specialist, it was decided a scooter would meet Bridgett's needs. A Buzz Around scooter was recommended so she could easily get around the various terrains on the UNO campus. Bridgett is a leader on campus, doing well in school and able to get around independently and in style thanks to the assistance she received from NE VR and ATP.

AT for Self-Employment

Dana of Lincoln began sewing and quilting at the age of nine. One year she finished 27



quilts with the help of a Gracie Long Arm Quilting machine. The machine is located in her basement. A painful shoulder injury due to a fall made it impossible to work on her quilts since her machine was set up for a left-handed user when it was purchased. Dana's goal is to earn a living producing quilts and she is working on a self-employment plan with Diane Crouch of Nebraska VR. Diane made a referral to ATP to see what adaptations might be made for Dana. David Altman, an ATP Technology

Specialist, did some research on the machine before meeting with Dana. After examining the equipment, David was able to relocate the control arm for right-handed use. Dana was awestruck. She said, "I thought someone would come out, look at the machine, take a few pictures, and then I would be put on a list." David was able to adapt the machine without any new parts in just a couple of hours. Dana reports there is a steep learning curve to use the machine with her non-dominant side, however she is now back to quilting after six months.



AT for Job Retention



Robbie works in housekeeping at Mary Lanning Hospital in Hastings, Nebraska. Robbie has a history of a brain injury and experiences seizures and tremors. His coworkers communicate through their phones via text message and email when they need to reach him since the hospital is so large. Robbie struggles with typing on his phone due to his tremors and was not responding in a timely manner. He met with an ATP Technology Specialist to discuss AT that could assist him.

Robbie had a Samsung smartphone and he was loaned a Pebble Time Steel Smartwatch. He is tech savvy and was able to sync the watch to his phone by himself. Robbie was able to easily use the speech to text capabilities on the watch to text his coworkers while working and it notifies him by vibrating when someone is trying to reach him so he does not miss a message or distract others around him. Robbie is able to get reminders on the watch and use other apps that assist him in managing his day so he can be successful at work.

Accessibility for Job Retention

Cynthia works as an Administrative Assistant at Nebraska Medicine. She is diagnosed with Central Core Myopathy, or Central Core Disease (CCD). This is an inherited condition that causes muscle weakness, fatigue and can lead to skeletal deformities or joint dislocation. Cynthia had experienced multiple falls in her home and at work. VR assisted her in obtaining a wheelchair to help with mobility on campus. Home modifications were also necessary to allow Cynthia to use her

wheelchair in her home to help prevent falls and injuries, which were causing her to miss work. VR assisted with a handrail on her ramp, door widening and threshold ramp into the kitchen and various grab bars throughout the home. Cynthia's bathroom was too small to accommodate her wheelchair, so she was using her wall hung sink for support while using the restroom and getting in and out of the shower. She had slipped and fell multiple times. A new vanity was installed that is more stable and has a counter top that is less slippery and has more support. This was a safer solution to help her be able to ambulate in the bathroom to complete her daily grooming and hygiene activities each morning.

