

**Jane Cummins**

---

**To:** jcummins@heartprogram.org  
**Subject:** FW: Using Assistive Technology with HEART for Better Employment Outcomes

---

**From:** Office of the Governor <[txgov@public.govdelivery.com](mailto:txgov@public.govdelivery.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 24, 2016 9:26 PM  
**Subject:** Using Assistive Technology with HEART for Better Employment Outcomes

## Office of the Governor Greg Abbott

During National Disability Employment Awareness Month the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities continues our state's conversation on how to effectively promote the full employment of people with disabilities through our guest authors and partners. This week's authors include the [Texas Technology Access Program](#) affiliated with the Texas Center for Disability Studies University of Texas at Austin and the HEART Program, a grant recipient of the [Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities](#).

Last week we shared an article from Sharron Rush with Knowbility, Inc. about the importance of having information and communications technology in the workplace accessible for ensuring equal access to employment opportunity for workers with disabilities. This week we will hear from two more GCPD partners on the opportunities that are possible when workers with disabilities are able to use assistive technology in accessible workplaces.

### **Assistive Technology and Employment**

By Roger Levy, Director of Texas Technology Access Program

"For most people technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, however, technology makes things possible. In some cases, especially in the workplace, technology becomes the great equalizer and provides the person with a disability a level playing field on which to compete." (A quote from Mary Pat Radabaugh, a former employee with the IBM Disability Support Center).

Technology makes it possible for many people with disabilities to succeed in employment. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), qualified people with disabilities have a right to receive reasonable accommodations that enable them to perform the essential functions of a job and be afforded the same opportunities as a person without a disability. Among the many possible accommodations an employer may provide are re-arranging a workstation, telecommuting, or furnishing assistive technology. In addition, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments include "rehabilitation technology" within the range of services state vocational rehabilitation programs provide to maximize individuals' progress in reaching their employment goals.

Because it can be difficult to predetermine when the introduction of a strategy may work for an individual worker, the Texas Technology Access Program (TTAP) partnered with other entities to sponsor 16 [demonstration centers](#) throughout the state where persons with disabilities or employers can see possible assistive technology options. TTAP offers a short term loan of assistive technology for a 30-day trial. TTAP leads the state's efforts to carry out the federal Assistive Technology Act of 2004. TTAP develops and promotes services that increase access and acquisition to assistive technology. Through such services Texans with disabilities can increase independence. A list of TTAP services and activities can be found at: <http://techaccess.edb.utexas.edu/>

So what does an accessible workplace that optimizes the use of assistive technology look like for workers with disabilities? One shining example is brought to us by the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities and ***Technology with HEART***

The HEART (Housing, Entrepreneurship and Readiness Training) Program's mission is to create new opportunities for low-income adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Houston to achieve their employment potential and, ultimately, to live independently. And, by developing an app, HEART is one tap closer to achieving its mission.

The HEART Program operates and maintains over 70 vending machines throughout the Houston area. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who participate in HEART receive the guidance and training necessary to work the vending machines, which includes maintaining product inventory, restocking the machines, and collecting and counting the cash deposited into the machines.

However, despite the training HEART provides, some people with IDD may require individualized support to increase their employability and prepare them for a career. Take Adrienne Clark, for example. While participating in HEART, Adrienne has become very good at monitoring vending machines inventories, but her ability to write and record the inventories was limited.

To address this issue, which affected many people in the program, HEART teamed-up with Houston-based technology firm Blue Lance Group. With funding from the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, HEART and the Blue Lance Group developed an iPad application for recording inventories. The app is very visual, easy to use, and it allows users to customize it to fit their needs. Also, with the app, HEART can monitor inventories electronically rather than manually, therefore removing the need to maintain paper forms in countless binders.

Adrienne has been using the app and it has made a big difference for her. Adrienne can now record inventories and report totals by tapping a screen instead of filling out forms. In addition, since she can customize the app to suit her needs, she can activate different features, like the ability to add photos of products to help her ensure she restocks items correctly.



And, as Adrienne has become more effective at work, she has gained confidence in other areas of her life and become a leader.

“Adrienne has blossomed from a quiet and shy young woman to someone who advocates for herself and has even given speeches about her job,” said Dr. Ross Castillo, the director of programs for HEART. “By working with HEART, Adrienne has not only improved her employability and increased her income, but she has also become a more independent person.”

To learn more about The HEART Program, visit: <https://www.heartprogram.org/>

*This article was submitted by the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD). TCDD’s mission is to create change so that all people with disabilities are fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives. Learn more about TCDD at [www.tcdd.texas.gov](http://www.tcdd.texas.gov).*

*The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities (Committee) provides GovDelivery updates for informational purposes on a variety of disability related issues for a diverse audience. Updates may include information provided by external sources. The inclusion of this external information does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by the Committee or the Office of the Governor of any information, policy, product, or service offered by an external source.*



[Manage Subscriptions](#) | [Unsubscribe All](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[GovDelivery](#), Inc. sending on behalf of the Office of the Governor · P.O. Box 12428 · Austin TX 78711-2428 · 800-843-5789