

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Welcome
- 5 Device Reutilization
- 6 Device Loan Program
- 7 Device Demonstration
- 8 Training Participants

Mission Statement

It is the express mission of Project START to empower Mississippians with disabilities through education, awareness and access to Assistive Technology.

Vision Statement

Mississippi Project START (Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology) was established to provide information about assistive technology to consumers and other interested parties so they may make informed decisions about available assistive technology services.



Billy Taylor
Executive Director

Letter from our Executive Director

Dear friends,

I am pleased to present the 2025 Annual Report for the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services' Project START, also known as the Mississippi Technology Act Program. START stands for Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology.

Project START is a program administered by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services which provides Mississippians with disabilities access to assistive technology. Assistive Technology includes mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, accessibility software, technology for low vision and blindness, and augmentative and alternative communications devices.

For many children and adults with disabilities, access to and acquisition of assistive technology can make a tremendous difference in their ability to fully participate in employment, school, and recreational activities. The right tools-very specialized devices-allow individuals with disabilities to live, learn, work, and play independently.

Please see what great things we have done together this past year, and know that your continued support of Project START is vital to our mission and to what we can accomplish in the next year.

Sincerely,

Billy Taylor
Executive Director





Jamie Tucker
Director

Letter from our Director

It is my pleasure to share with you our 2025 annual report highlighting the accomplishments of Mississippi's Assistive Technology Act Program, Project START. Working with and providing services for Mississippians with disabilities is a true blessing. Each day Project START strives to ensure every individual has the opportunity to live their life to the fullest through the assistance of assistive technology.

I would personally like to thank Mr. Billy Taylor, Executive Director of Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, and his dedicated employees for their hard work and support of our program. Also, thank you to our Advisory Council for their guidance and support, and last but not least, our dedicated staff who work tirelessly every day to assist Mississippians with a disability.

As the director of Project START, I am excited about some additions to our program for the coming year and invite you to first our website at msprojectstart.org for more information about our services and upcoming events. You can contact us at any time through our website or by calling our office at 601.853.5249 or 1.800.852.8328 or emailing me directly at jtucker@mdrs.ms.gov.

Jamie Tucker, Director
Project START



Device Reutilization

The Device Reutilization program focuses on the under-served populations in Mississippi with the mission to provide education, awareness and access of assistive technology to individuals with limited resources in their community. The program redistributes used equipment that has been sanitized, checked for safety and refurbished for appropriate use.

Device Reassignment/Refurbishment

Mobility, Seating, and Positioning	1
Daily Living	1
Computer and Related	45
Vision	0

Customer Satisfaction

Highly Satisfied	33
Satisfied	0
Somewhat Satisfied	14

Total Surveyed 47

Testimonial

Project START continues to provide it's computer refurbishment program that is unique to MS's Assistive Technology Act Grant program. Laptops, Chromebooks and desktops are donated to our program that are in turn wiped clean and updated with the latest operating systems. We are able to donate these to Mississippians with disabilities in need for educational, occupational or community needs.

In addition to the computer refurbishment program, START frequently reutilizes various DME equipment for mobility, vision and activities of daily living as donations are made by individuals who wish for their valued equipment in turn be donated to another individual in need. The savings to MS consumers who utilized our reuse/reutilization program for FY25 were \$\$20,936.

Device Loan Program

Project START provides a short term equipment loan program allowing an individual to try a device before they purchase it. This program also allows an individual to borrow a device to use while theirs is being repaired or while funding is being secured for the purchase of their device.

Device Loans by Type or Borrower

Individual with Disabilities	61
Family members, Guardians & Authorized Representatives	12
Representatives of Education	18
Representatives of Employment	1
Representative of Health, Allied Health & Rehabilitation	1
Representative of Community Living	0
Representative of Technology	0

Purpose of Devices Loaned

Assist in Decision Making (device trial or evaluation)	70
Serve as Loaner During Device Repair or While Waiting for Funding	2
Provide an Accommodation on a Short-Term Basis	13
Conduct training, self education or other professional development activity	8

Types of Devices Loaned

Vision	13
Hearing	1
Speech Communication	25
Learning, Cognition, & Positioning	11
Mobility, Seating, & Position	36
Daily Living	15
Environmental Adaptions	0
Vehicle Modification & Transportation	0
Computers & Related	9
Recreation Sports & Leisure	0
Total	110

Customer Satisfaction

Highly Satisfied	84
Satisfied	9
Satisfied Somewhat	0
Not at all satisfied	0
Non respondent	1
Total	94

Testimonial

A middle school student presented with bilateral hearing loss. He currently uses both a cochlear implant and hearing aids, but he was beginning to prep for academic competitions in both engineering and robotics. He already uses a Roger pen that works in many scenarios, but he is a little embarrassed by the use of this pen. The academic competitions were set to take place as a team competition in a very large open concrete room, and the acoustics were not going to be sufficient to allow the child to hear and understand his teammates to compete. He was loaned an iPad mini with Ava close captioning system. They were able to take the AT device to competition and have a system in place where the child could receive the information from his teammates, and they went on to place in the top five in both Engineering and Robotics!

Device Demonstration

In addition to our offices at the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services in Madison, our partnerships provide Demonstration Centers throughout the state to educate individuals and their families or caregivers on assistive technology to aid in hearing, mobility, communication, vision and performing activities on daily living.

Demonstrations By Device Type

Vision	8
Hearing	1
Speech Communication	101
Learning, Cognition, & Developmental	10
Mobility, Seating, & Position	45
Daily Living	8
Environmental Adaptions	0
Vehicle Modification & Transportation	70
Computers & Related	8
Recreation Sports & Leisure	1
Total	252

Types of Participants

Individual with Disabilities	238
Family members, Guardians & Authorized Representatives	42
Representatives of Education	32
Representatives of Employment	0
Representative of Health, Allied Health & Rehabilitation	0
Representative of Community Living	23
Representative of Technology	0
Total	335

Customer Satisfaction

Highly Satisfied	84
Satisfied	298
Satisfied Somewhat	6
Not at all satisfied	1
Non respondent	77
Total	466

Testimonial

The Activator Pro is a brand-new refreshable Braille display that uses active touch technology to create a more natural use of the display. Each pin is equipped with a sensor that allows the device to keep up with where the user is reading. As they user finishes one line of text, the device automatically displays the next line. No more scrolling down to access each line. The Pro is also the very first to offer split screen or multiple simultaneous device use. The user can choose how many of the cells they want to use for each output. The Activator will sense which one they are reading and allow for navigation and input onto that device. Toggling between devices is not required. Cheryl Saucier from Mountain View Low Vision Services brought the very first Activator Pro in the US to TKMC for us to see, try and to use for and evaluation. Currently there are two of these devices in the US with a third being shipped.

There were a few features we were working through with the individual from the demo. His word for the device is EPIC! It was really surprising to see how well it could move between devices and lines of text. For this individual it will be a huge benefit for him to be able to work at a more efficient rate. As with everything we work with, this is not a device for everyone, but it is a very impressive device. I had no clue we would be able to secure access to the first one in the US. There is a possibility that this was the first evaluation in the US completed with the device. At that time, it had only been in here a few weeks and shown at professional events.

Training Participants

Project START provides training, technical assistance and public awareness activities, providing information on availability, benefits and cost of AT devices and services.

Total Training Participants

Individual with Disabilities	153
Family members, Guardians & Authorized Representatives	0
Representatives of Education	49
Representatives of Employment	105
Representative of Health, Allied Health & Rehabilitation	26
Representative of Community Living	14
Representative of Technology	36
Unable to Categorize Trainees	0
Total	383

Training Topics

AT Products/Services
AT Funding/Policy/ Practice
Information Technology/Telecommunication Access
Combination of any/all of the above
Transition

Testimonial

Planning with a Purpose- Transition Conference for Families, Educators and Professionals" was hosted on Mississippi State University's campus. T.K. Martin Center's ((Project START subcontractor) director opened the conference and shared MloD's (MS Institute on Disabilities) mission highlighting services and supports available through its four centers as well as how the Tech Act Grant Program can assist with assistive technology acquisition. A.C.C.E.S.S. (MS's only federally approved Comprehensive Transition Post-Secondary program) spoke on specialized college services for supporting the transition from high school to college with a focus on MSU's inclusive programs for students with autism and intellectual or developmental disabilities. MDRS VR director spoke on how to prepare students with disabilities for employment and independence. Disability Rights of MS shared practical strategies for navigating the transition from high school to adulthood, including goal setting, resources and advocacy tips for families and students. MS Division of Medicaid explained their services and helped families understand eligibility, applications and supports. A special needs planning attorney also shared strategies on benefits eligibility, special needs trusts and planning tools that secure long-term stability for individuals with disabilities.



Your perspective is extremely valuable,
and we greatly appreciate any and all feedback!

Please send any comments or questions to:

Jamie Tucker

jtucker@mdrs.ms.gov

Post Office Box 1698 | Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1698
1.800.852.8328 (in MS only) | www.msprojectstart.org

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MDRS Project START, the statewide assistive technology program for Mississippians,
is coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services agency