

POCKET GUIDE TO FEDERAL HELP FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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POCKET GUIDE TO FEDERAL HELP FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Produced by the:

**CLEARINGHOUSE ON DISABILITY INFORMATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ROOM 3132 SWITZER BUILDING
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FOREWORD

For more than eighteen years, the **POCKET GUIDE TO FEDERAL HELP FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES** has been one of the most widely distributed publications produced by the U.S. Department of Education and its predecessor, the Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Since its inception in 1980, the Department of Education has committed itself to ensuring that all individuals with disabilities achieve their full potential as productive, fully-contributing members of our society. The publication of this booklet is part of this continuing effort.

Written for people with disabilities, their families, and service providers, this publication contains information on government-wide benefits and services for which individuals with disabilities may be eligible. As we publish this new edition, it is our sincere hope that it will reach the wide and varied audience for which it is intended, and that it will increase awareness and provide useful information.

Knowledge is often the first step toward empowerment. We believe that the information contained in this **POCKET GUIDE** will begin to empower those who read it with the knowledge they need to achieve independence, which is not a privilege in our country, but every person's right.

The Clearinghouse on Disability Information
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

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PREFACE

This booklet is meant to make you, an individual with disabilities, or the parent/guardian of a child with disabilities, aware of the principal government services for which you or your child may be eligible. This revised edition describes benefits applicable specifically to those who are blind, deaf, or developmentally disabled. These persons are also eligible for the general benefits as outlined in this booklet.

Because so much of the federal contribution to services for individuals with disabilities is made to states -- and the states determine how to spend the money, within certain guidelines -- it would be impossible to pinpoint exactly what you will find in your own state or locality. What we have tried to outline for you in this guide is the general scope of federal support for services to individuals with disabilities.

Included are the names and addresses of the various federal agencies that can steer you to their state and/or local counterpart offices. You may also wish to contact us for a listing of key agencies in your state. These agencies should be your starting point for exploring the services available to you where you live. Write to the Federal Headquarters if you are unable to reach your state service agencies directly.

States and localities may provide services which are financed out of their own resources. These are not discussed in this guide. To find out about any of these special programs, contact an information and referral center in your vicinity to help put you in touch with the array of services for which you may qualify.

We hope this guide will alert you to the variety of services which may be of benefit to you and that it will get you started on the road to contacting those that are pertinent to your needs. Every time you call a state or local agency, we suggest that you ask for the names of other people or agencies that might also be helpful. You may accumulate a number of useful and helpful contacts in this way.

VETERANS

If you are a veteran with disabilities and want to know about the many programs available to you, apply to your nearest Department of Veterans Affairs field office, or write to:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

PROGRAMS FOR LOW INCOME, INDIAN, OR ELDERLY POPULATIONS

If you are an American Indian, a person over 65, or a person with little or no income, you may qualify for additional programs based on factors other than your disability. For leads on tracking these down, call your local welfare office, your local public housing authority, or your Indian tribal housing authority. If you are elderly, you may be eligible for special nutrition programs such as Meals on Wheels, or for other special services. The federal government provides funds for area resource centers for the aging, usually listed in the Yellow Pages under "Aged" or "Elderly" or "Social Services."

A WORD OF ADVICE

Use this booklet to help you track down the appropriate agencies nearest you. Remember, not every service is available and not every person can be helped 100 percent. Keep in mind that every year new programs begin and some old ones end, particularly at the state and local levels. Keep in touch with your contacts and stay as aware as you can, through reading and talking to knowledgeable people about what is happening in the area of services to individuals with disabilities. There are many excellent voluntary organizations, as well as state, local, and federal offices that can help you. Numerous newsletters are produced by groups of and for individuals with disabilities.

We hope you will take advantage of all these avenues and that your search for assistance will be a fruitful one.

PROGRAMS FOR SPECIFIC DISABILITY GROUPS

Special programs and benefits for blind and deaf individuals are listed in the appropriate section (e.g., vocational rehabilitation or education). Since the Program for Developmental Disabilities encompasses medical assistance, job training, and social and other services, and is administered by a special state agency, it is described below.

PROGRAMS FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS

The developmental disabilities (DD) program makes use of existing services in health, welfare, education, and rehabilitation to provide for the long-range needs of people with developmental disabilities. These disabilities are defined as severe, chronic disabilities attributable to mental or physical impairment, which are manifested before age 22, result in substantial functional limitations in several areas of life, and require services over an extended period.

Availability of services will vary in all communities, and services can include diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment of the disabling c