

How People with Disabilities can Access and Learn IT

With the growing popularity of information technology, people with disabilities are now having more and more opportunity to come across Information Technology (IT) in their lives. If you have any difficulty in using computer and the Internet in your daily life, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has several ways to help you:

Free Public Computers

Nowadays, personal computers are available in all rehabilitation service units in Hong Kong for use by people with disabilities for free Internet browsing or training purpose. Most of the computers are Internet-ready via broadband connection for more convenient access to the multimedia content.

Your special needs will be taken care of by the rehabilitation service units in both environmental design and the use of adaptive devices, in order to minimize the difficulties you may encounter in using computers and the Internet. Staff of rehabilitation service units will try their best to render you assistance and guidance whenever the need arise.

If you are a visually impaired person, you may use specially designed personal computers and adaptive devices like Braille reader, text enlarging software or text-to-speech software, etc. in those service centres catering for visually impaired persons.

As regards persons suffering from spasm or cerebral palsy, touch screen, various keyboard modifications and pointer devices are offered by the rehabilitation service units concerned.

Besides, the Government also provides public computers in community halls/centres, district offices, public libraries, post offices and the Super Cyber Centre, etc. for your free access.

IT Awareness and Training Programme

The “IT Awareness and Training Programme” provides a variety of free computer trainings with specifically designed content and training mode to meet the special training needs of people with disabilities:

- If you are a wheel-chair user, we will arrange a barrier-free computer training room for you;
- If you are a visually impaired person, we will provide you with special training on how to use the text-to-speech software, or the Braille keyboard for text input;
- If you are a hearing impaired person, we will provide a sign language interpreter to facilitate your learning; and
- If you are a mentally handicapped person, the training pace will be slower and more instructors will be available to support you.

By joining the “IT Awareness and Training Programme”, you may learn how to:

- Handle the basic operation of personal computer;
- Browse the Internet and search for information you need;
- E-mail your friends;
- Design your personal web page using free web service;
- Make greeting cards or stickers using clipart libraries;
- Perform basic word processing; and
- Input Chinese characters.

All the above training programmes are free of charge. You may contact SWD or any rehabilitation service units for enquiries, or to enroll vide www.CyberAble.net website.

www.CyberAble.net

www.CyberAble.net is a barrier-free portal website providing one-stop information for different groups of people with disabilities and their carers. In www.CyberAble.net you may:

- Find information on Hong Kong’s rehabilitation service;

- Search in the database of barrier-free facilities in Hong Kong;
- Obtain the update activity news for people with disabilities;
- Obtain tips of daily living for people with disabilities and their carers;
- Share with other people with disabilities or their carers, and give mutual support to one another;
- Get in touch with the recent research findings and publications about rehabilitation service in Hong Kong; and
- Enroll on-line the “IT Awareness and Training Programme for People with Disabilities”.

Financial Support for Purchasing Personal Computer

If your mobility is hindered by your disability thereby hampering your engagement in open employment, you may apply through SWD for financial assistance from the Central Fund for Personal Computer to purchase computer equipment for performing income-generating job at home. Applicants should be nominated by SWD / subvented non-governmental rehabilitation organizations or the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department and should also meet the following requirements:

- be a service user of SWD / subvented non-governmental rehabilitation organizations or the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department;
- have been assessed to be capable of operating computer for productive work;
- have mobility or adjustment difficulty in taking up open employment;
- be able to produce a viable business plan and have obtained the nominating organization’s undertaking to provide follow-up guidance and support services; and
- have proven financial need.

You can either tender your application through the nominating organization or post the completed Application Form and Business Plan (in duplicate) to the Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services Branch of SWD at 9/F, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen’s Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong. Relevant information and application form can be downloaded from the SWD home page.

Apart from the above, the Employaid Scheme managed by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation and the Independent Living Fund established by the Association for Engineering and Medical Volunteer Services may also provide advice, support and grants/loans to people with disabilities for purchase of computer equipment and devices so as to enable you to further extend your work ability.

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(Chinese and Braille versions of this leaflet are also available from the Social Welfare Department.)