



Vehicle Modifications for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging may require vehicle modifications to accommodate their driving needs. Available equipment selections include steering adaptations, brake/accelerator systems, hand controls, lifts, locks, back up alarms, rain sensing windshield wipers and driver positioning devices.

User Considerations

The decision to install special equipment and the task of identifying individual adaptive equipment needs requires a team effort. Teams typically include a trained driving evaluator, a qualified vehicle modification dealer and the potential driver. A comprehensive driver evaluation provides the adaptive equipment needed.

For wheelchair and scooter users, lifts can be installed that raise the driver and wheelchair or scooter together, or just the mobility device so that it can be stored. Adjustable power seats that swivel allow riders comfortable entry and exit and facilitate wheelchair or scooter transfers. Strategically located handles and grab bars provide additional positioning assistance. Automatic door openers, remote car starters, power locks and power window controls decrease the amount of movement and strength needed for some driving tasks.

For individuals preferring to remain in their wheelchair while driving or riding, tie-down devices are required to keep the chair securely in place while the vehicle is in motion. Some tie-downs are manually operated, using belts to hook the wheelchair frame to a floor-mounted track. There are also power lockdown devices that allow the individual in a wheelchair to drive directly over an automatic latching mechanism which grabs the lower chair frame and secures it in place.

For those with limited upper body or head movement, wide-angle and spotting mirrors can be used to increase range of vision. They can be placed both inside and outside the vehicle. Customized seat cushioning typically used for positioning and stability can raise a rider up to provide an improved field of view.

Vehicle Considerations

- What type of vehicle is needed to accommodate all the equipment that needs to be installed, the wheelchair, the driver and passengers?
- Are additional adaptations necessary for safe operation?
- Will existing vehicle safety equipment have to be modified in order to install the adaptive equipment?
- Does the dealer carry professional liability insurance?
- Is there adequate parking space at home and/or work for the vehicle; is there room for loading and unloading?

Vehicle Modification Dealer Considerations

- What credentials does the dealer have?
- How much experience has the dealer had in vehicle modification?
- Are references available from previous customers having similar modifications?
- What types of payment options are available? Is a prescription required? From whom?
- What is the time frame for the work?
- Will the individual need to be available for fittings?
- Does the dealer provide training? For how long? At what cost?
- Is there a warranty? Does the dealer perform ongoing service and maintenance? Do they stock replacement parts?

Funding Considerations

Costs associated with modifying a vehicle vary. Whether you modify a vehicle you already own or purchase a new modified vehicle, it pays to investigate funding options. These options may include programs that help pay for all or part of the cost of vehicle modifications and/or alternative financial loan programs.

ATAC and DRNJ do NOT provide funding for vehicle modification.

Loan Programs

[BANK OF AMERICA](#)

The Bank of America Access Loans program provides affordable and flexible terms for individuals with disabilities or access needs who need vehicle modifications. Immediate family members borrowing on behalf of an individual with a disability are also eligible. For example, a parent may apply for an access loan on behalf of a child with a disability. Terms are available up to 72 months

Contact: 1-800-900-9000 (voice) or 1-800-833-2632 (TTY)

[PNC BANK](#)

PNC Bank, in conjunction with New Jersey Citizen Action, offers the Self-Reliant Loan and Grant Program. This program can be used for any kind of accessibility issue – for

permanent projects like ramps, service animal maintenance, scooters, computers with adaptive software or other types of special equipment. The program offers:

- Highly discounted interest rates and competitive repayment terms
- Loan amounts from \$1,000 to \$5,000, with no application fee
- A limited number of \$1,000 grants are available on a first come, first served basis.
- Limit one grant per household.

Contact: 1-877-762-7000 (voice) or visit your local branch for more details.

Federal Resources

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

The VA provides the Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) program for individuals who have service-connected disabilities and need assistance to enter, exit, and/or operate a motor vehicle or other conveyance. The VA Driver's Rehabilitation Program provides training on how to safely operate modified vehicles. The VA also provides necessary equipment such as platform wheelchair lifts, UVLs (under vehicle lifts), power door openers, lowered floors/raised roofs, raised doors, hand controls, and digital driving systems. Additionally, VA's program provides reimbursements for standard equipment including, but not limited to, power steering, power brakes, power windows, power seats, and other special equipment necessary for the safe operation of an approved vehicle. For more information, call the VA directly at (800) 827-1000 or visit [Department of VA](#).

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS)

If an individual with a disability needs access to a vehicle for medical or employment purposes, some or all of the cost may be deductible from federal income tax as a medical expense (IRS Publication 502) or impairment related work expense (IRS Publication 529). Call (800) 829-1040 or visit [IRS](#).

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA)

A Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS) allows an individual with a continuing disability eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income to set aside income for a short or long term employment goal, which can include vehicle modification.. A PASS must be approved by SSA. For information about applying for a PASS, contact SSA at (800) 772-1213 or visit [SSA](#). Additionally, the New Jersey Work Incentive Network Support program may be able to assist you in applying for a PASS. Contact NJWINS at (866) 946-7465 or visit [NJWINS](#).

State Agencies

Several state agencies have programs that may help certain individuals purchase modified vehicles. These programs each have different eligibility criteria, different levels of available funding, and different application processes. In order to apply for assistance, contact the agency directly. If you apply with a state agency for services, and are denied, DRNJ may be able to advocate on your behalf. Please feel free to contact our intake department at (800) 292-9742 if you have questions or concerns.

- The New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS) provides financial assistance through the **Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund**. This program provides assistance to families whose children have significant health programs. Call (800) 335-3863 or visit the [DHS website](#) for assistance.
- The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) may provide access to vehicle modification through a Medicaid waiver program, such as the **Supports Program** or the **Community Care Waiver**. These programs are only available to DDD clients enrolled in Medicaid. For information about DDD services, call (800) 832-9173 or visit [DDD](#) for assistance.
- DDD and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) provide assistance with vehicle modification for individuals receiving services through the **Family Support Services** program. Families must exhaust any other services to which they are entitled before they can receive assistance through Family Support. Individuals may receive no more than \$11,000 for home and vehicle modifications over a three-year period. DCF provides services for families with children under age 21, while individuals over age 21 receive services through DDD. For information about DCF services, call 877-652-7624 or visit [Family Support Services](#)
- The Division of Disability Services (DDS) may provide access to vehicle modification through the **Community Resources for People with Disabilities Waiver**. This Medicaid waiver program provides assistance for people who would otherwise require nursing home assistance. DDS may also provide access to vehicle modifications through the **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Fund**, which provides assistance to New Jersey residents who have experienced a traumatic brain injury. The TBI fund will pay for vehicle modification when justified under a service plan as being appropriate and cost-effective, and is limited to one vehicle per twelve-month period. For information about all DDS services, call (888) 285-3036 or visit [DDS](#) for assistance.
- The **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)** may provide access to vehicle modifications as part of an effort to help an individual with a disability achieve employment.
 - For information about all DVRS services, call (609) 292-5987 or visit [DVRS](#) for assistance.

Foundations and Grants

Various organizations may provide grants that may assist individuals in obtaining access to modified vehicles. Some organizations may provide direct financial help, while others may provide assistance in fundraising. This is a partial listing of available foundations. In addition to the organizations listed here, your local faith-based organizations or community service organizations may also be willing to assist you in obtaining a modified vehicle. For more information about the specific organizations, or to apply for assistance, contact the organization directly. DRNJ cannot assist you with an application process of a private organization.

□ **Vehicle Modification Rebates**

- [Paul Jackson Fund](#) – (908) 233-6110
- [Ralph Braun Foundation](#)
- [SCORE](#) (Spinal Cord Opportunities for Rehabilitation Endowment) 323-655-8298
- [Travis Roy Foundation](#) – (617) 619-8257
- [Wheels With Wings Foundation](#) – (716) 668-4724

Vehicle Modification Rebates

Many automobile manufacturers provide rebate programs to help cover part of the cost of needed modifications. Different manufacturers have different programs that provide different levels of assistance. Contact the manufacturer directly for more information about specific programs.

- [Ford](#) – (800) 952-2248
- [General Motors](#) – (800) 323-9935
- [Honda](#) – (800) 999-1009
- [Subaru](#) – (800) 782-2783
- [Toyota](#) – (800) 331-4331
- [Volkswagen](#) – (800) 822-8987

Vehicle Modification Vendors

This is a partial list of organizations, businesses, and service providers in New Jersey that can provide assistance with vehicle modifications and driver training. For assistance in purchasing a used vehicle, [“Disabled Dealer Magazine”](#) contains classified advertisements for individuals seeking to sell adapted vehicles.

[Cycle Van](#)

6 William Street
South River, NJ 08882
Phone: (732) 238-3110

[Echelon Driving School](#)

203 West Evesham Road
Voorhees, NJ 08043-1050
Phone: (800) 446-7234
Phone: (856) 428-2200

[Drive Master](#)

37 Daniel Road West
Fairfield, NJ 07004
973-808-07004

[FT Mobility](#)

255 US Highway 46 West
Saddle Brook, NJ 07663
Phone: (973) 546-1900

[MobilityWorks of Farmingdale](#)

5105 Highway 33
Farmingdale, NJ 07727
Phone: 732 919 1444

[HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital](#)

14 Hospital Drive
Toms River, NJ 08755

[MobilityWorks of Woodbury NJ](#)

1549 Gateway Blvd
Woodbury, NJ 08096
Phone: (856) 848-3470

[Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation](#)

1199 Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, NJ 07052
Phone: (800) 248-3221

Other Resources and Links

- The [assistivetech.net](#) website maintains a list of vendors who provide adaptive driving controls:
- The website for the “[Car Talk](#)” radio program maintains a list of articles and information about adaptive vehicles:
- The [DisabledTravelers.com](#) website maintains a list of companies that provide modified vehicles for rent on a nationwide basis:
- The [Easter Seals Project Action](#) site has a great deal of information focused on transportation issues for people with disabilities.
- The **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** maintains a comprehensive brochure about vehicle adaptation, available online at: [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website](#).
- For information about **paratransit services** in your community, please contact NJ Transit at (973) 275-5555 or visit: [NJ Transit website](#)..
- For information about obtaining a license plate or placard for **accessible parking spaces**, contact the [New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission](#) at (888) 486-3339,.
- The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs handles “lemon law” complaints about car repair issues. Contact them at (973) 504-6200 or visit: [NJ Division of Consumer Affairs](#) website.



210 South Broad Street, Third Floor
Trenton, NJ 08608

800.922.7233 (NJ Only) | 609.292.9742
609.633.7106 (TTY) | 609.777.0187 (FAX)

[disabilityrightsnj.org](#)

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