



AbleLink and SHIFT Announce Launch of SMART Travel Training System

November 15, 2022

In early 2022, AbleLink Smart Living Technologies and Tech First SHIFT began discussions with the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) regarding the lack of real-world travel training experiences for people with cognitive disabilities. The resulting collaboration, the SMART Travel Training System, is a comprehensive educational curriculum designed to engage both “Trainers” (agency staff or family members who want to teach others) and “Travelers” (people with cognitive disabilities).

The SMART Travel Training System connects those learning to become Travel Trainers with those who want to build skills to travel more independently. Tech First SHIFT’s travel training certification equips Trainers with fundamental community navigation concepts that are integrated into real-world application by using the WayFinder technology for travel support. AbleLink gives Travelers access to self-directed online, cognitively accessible training for a wide variety of important travel skills, as well as specific training on using the WayFinder app to support trips.

The online learning culminates in a community-based training experience for both Traveler and Trainer. This Experiential Learning Project (ELP) ensures that the Traveler is demonstrating safe, effective, and person-centered travel while using the WayFinder app as a natural support. Trainers accompany Travelers to evaluate progress and support success. As a result, people with cognitive disabilities gain a greater capacity to determine their own priorities for community engagement.

Tennessee’s Medicaid Alternative Pathways to Independence (MAPs) program was created to set people with cognitive disabilities on a path to learn skills to help them work, live independently, learn about their neighborhoods, and find hobbies that interest them. MAPs services give program participants the tools, technology, and support they need to meet their goals. MAPs can immediately benefit people on waiting lists for other long-term services and support programs. Each MAPs participant will have access to a T-Mobile smart phone and the WayFinder app. To learn more about MAPs, contact Jason.Camperlino@tn.gov or visit <https://www.tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/maps.html>.

About AbleLink:

AbleLink Smart Living Technologies was founded in 1997 specifically to address the significant need for research-based technologies for individuals with cognitive disabilities. AbleLink's research and development team has conducted over eighty-five projects to investigate, evaluate, and develop technology applications to help individuals with cognitive disabilities to live more independently. AbleLink's pioneering research and award-winning solutions have a common purpose: To enable individuals with cognitive disabilities to experience a more self-determined and fulfilled life.

About Tech First SHIFT:

SHIFT acts as a catalyst for the Technology First movement in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) supports community through resources that inspire possibility. SHIFT is committed to organizational transformation through online education, experiential learning, and professional collaboration with a goal of developing standardized best practices for organizations and states leading the way in the Technology First movement.

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