

# Midstate Independent Living Choices

# MILC RUN

Quarterly Newsletter | July - September 2023 | TEPP Feature

## What on Earth is TEPP?

This edition of the MILC Run has everything you've ever wanted, and didn't know you needed to know about TEPP. Check out this brief introduction, then learn more on Pages two and three. Find out how to apply with our assistance on Page four. In addition to TEPP, this newsletter features some new content, including a staff spotlight, and a crossword puzzle!

TEPP stands for "Telecommunication Equipment Purchase Program". Telecommunication is the exchange of information over a long distance through an electronic source. Everyone engages in telecommunication when they use a cellphone or landline phone to call or video chat with someone!

TEPP assists Wisconsin residents with disabilities to acquire a telecommunication device to use for their telecommunication needs.

Disability Category	Voucher Amount
Hard of Hearing (no co-payment required)	\$100
Severely Hard of Hearing or Deaf	\$800
Speech Disability	\$1,600
Mobility or Motion Disability	\$1,600
Severely Hard of Hearing or Deaf and Low Vision	\$2,500
Severely Hard of Hearing or Deaf and Blind	\$7,200

There are six different disability categories that can qualify someone for the TEPP program. Each category comes with a different allotted voucher amount to cover the cost of the equipment that one may require.

- Madison Matijevich, Independent Living (IL) Consultant



## History:

TEPP was created to help Wisconsin residents get the telecommunication services they need. In 1993, the Telecommunication Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP) was established by Wisconsin Act 496. Even though it was established in 1993, it was not implemented until May of 1996. TEPP helps residents receive advanced communication equipment needed to use the telephone, but it also funds the promotion of this unique program. The TEPP logo and application were redesigned in 2022.

## Funding:

TEPP is funded by the Universal Service Fund (USF) and was created by the Public Service Commission. The fund addresses telecommunication needs for low-income consumers, residents in areas with high service charges, people with disabilities, non-profit groups (like Midstate Independent Living Choices), medical clinics, and public health agencies. Every month, the USF surcharge is collected on your phone bill (both wireless and landline) and distributed to programs like TEPP.

## Application:

Wisconsin is one of few states in the country that has a loan AND a voucher program designed to help residents purchase the equipment they need. If you self-identify with one of the disability categories covered by the program, you may apply for a voucher every three years. There are also no income restrictions! You can apply either by filling out a paper application (available at MILC) or online at: <https://tepp.solixcs.com/>. Check out Page four for more information on how you can apply for TEPP with the assistance of MILC.

- Sandi Walkush, IL Consultant

# TEPP qualifications and restrictions:

To be eligible for TEPP, you must meet 3 criteria:

1. Be a Wisconsin Resident.
2. Be a person who self identifies as having a qualifying disability from the table on Page one.
3. Have a need for special equipment in order to communicate at a distance (not face-to-face).

*There are some instances where you may be denied due to no fault of your own.*

## Reasons someone may be denied:

- Only one TEPP voucher is allowed per person every three years.
- Only one TEPP voucher is allowed per address. If you live in an apartment or hotel, someone may have used the same address to claim a TEPP voucher. You may also be denied if someone you live with has received a TEPP voucher.

If you or someone you know meets the requirements for the TEPP program but have had trouble accessing the TEPP program based on your address or for other reasons, contact Midstate Independent Living Choices to speak with an IL Consultant about advocacy for addressing the barriers you are facing.

*- LeeAnn Kopecko, IL Consultant*

## Assistive Technology: TTY Phone



TTY stands for 'teletypewriter'. Rather than speaking, you can type what you want to say, and read what the other person is saying. If two people have a TTY phone and call each other, there is no need for a relay worker; they automatically connect. This device is great for someone with a speech impairment or severe hearing loss who wishes to use a landline service.

MILC has a TTY phone in the Loan and Demonstration Program that you or a loved one can borrow to see if it will work or not. Also, this type of phone is approved under the TEPP program. If you are interested in learning more about the TTY phone or other devices that may be able to assist, please contact us and ask to speak to an Independent Living Consultant.

*- Alex Lena, IL Department Manager*



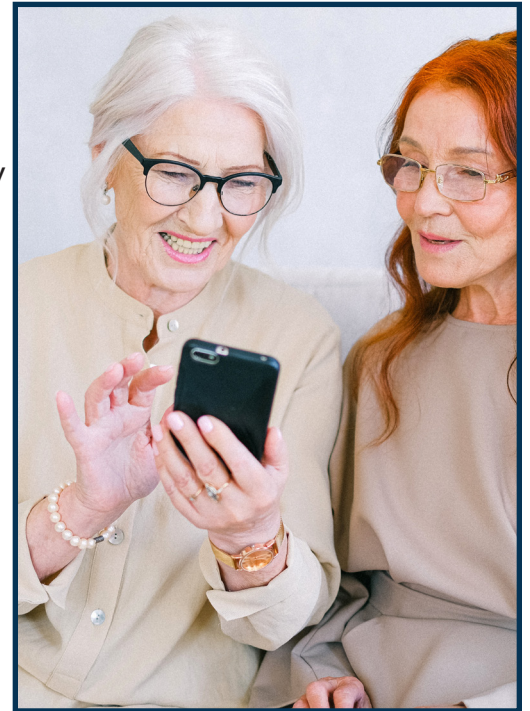
*Partially Supported by Wistech,*

*Wisconsin's State Assistive Technology Program.*

# How to Apply for TEPP with assistance from MILC

MILC can help you through the TEPP process and be engaged as much as needed. We can assist in getting your telecommunication needs met through these seven (7) steps.

- 1. Contact MILC:** Call 715-344-4210 and ask to speak with the Information and Referral Specialist. You will provide them with your name, address, contact information, disability type and inform them you are interested in the TEPP program.
- 2. Device exploration:** You will work with an Independent Living Consultant who can help you decide which TEPP-approved device is best to meet your needs.
- 3. Application:** While trying devices, staff can help you apply for a TEPP voucher under the disability category that you are eligible for. The voucher will take a few weeks to process and be mailed to the address provided on the application.
- 4. Voucher:** Once the voucher is received and you determine which device works best for you, then staff can assist in placing an order with an approved vendor.\*
- 5. Copay:** Most applicants are required to pay a \$100.00 copay for their new device. This copay is required to be paid at the time of voucher submission.

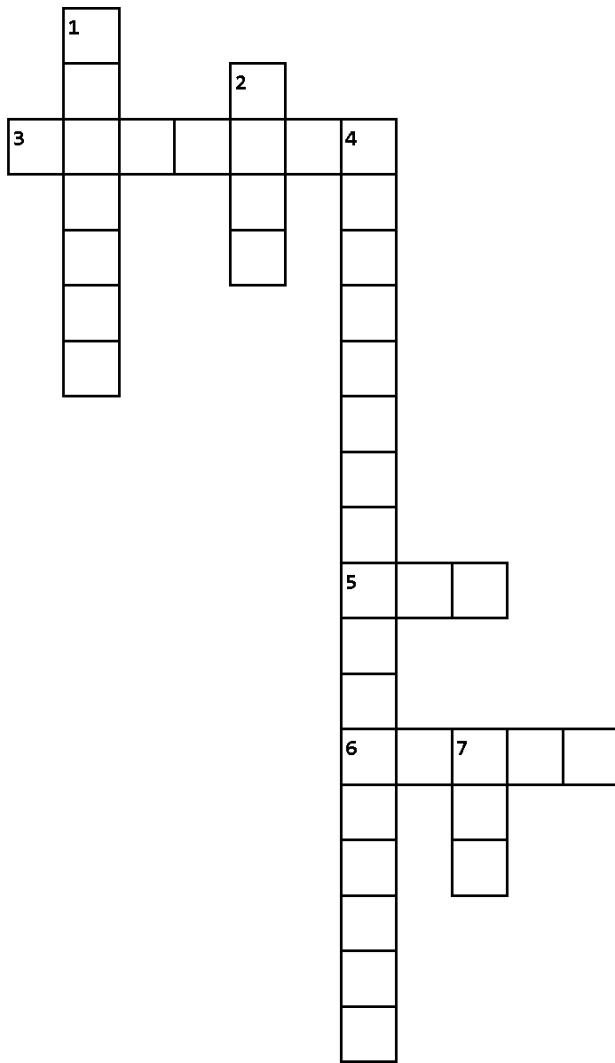


Depending on the disability category you qualify for and your income, you may be eligible for a financial assistance program to cover the cost of the co-pay. MILC staff can help with the copay assistance application if you are eligible.

- 6. Device order:** Once all the materials are together, the staff member can assist in sending in documentation. It takes roughly three-four weeks for staff to receive the device.
- 7. Device delivery:** Once the devices are received, staff are available to assist in setup and training on the device if needed. The device will then be left with you as its new owner.

*\* If the TEPP-approved device(s) exceed the allotted amount covered under the disability category you qualify for, you will be asked to make up the difference in cost. For example, if your voucher amount is \$800 but the device is \$825, then you must pay an additional \$25 alongside your copay amount.*

- Karalyn Peterson, Resource Coordinator



## TEPP: Crossword Corner

- Kent Henderson, IL Consultant

### ACROSS

- 3. Technical help also known as technical \_\_\_\_ is available through MILC.
- 5. Abbreviation, the funding source for TEPP.
- 6. The \$100 contribution you pay towards a qualifying device is called a \_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

- 1. Funding from TEPP, in amounts of \$100 to \$7200 is paid in the form of \_\_\_\_.
- 2. TEPP related equipment is available to borrow for 45 days from MILC through its \_\_\_\_ and demonstration program.
- 4. Amplified phones, TTY phones, hands free speaker phones, are all types of \_\_\_\_ equipment.
- 7. Abbreviation, the governing body for TEPP.

## Loan Programs: Wisloan and Telework

Wisloan is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with a disability, or their families, to purchase adaptive equipment, assistive technology or modify their homes so that they can live more independently. The applicant must be 18 and a resident of Wisconsin who wishes to improve his or her quality of life through the acquisition of items (examples include assistive technology, modified vehicles, etc.).

Telework is a statewide, alternative loan program allowing Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to work from remote sites away from the office, including at home, on the road or at a Telework center. In addition to the purchase of equipment, the loan funds can be used for training to use equipment, extended warranties, the cost of maintenance and repair.

Both Telework and Wisloan loan amounts will depend on the item being purchased and the ability to repay. The current interest rate is 6.5%.

Bad credit, including bankruptcy is not a reason to not apply. The focus is on the ability to make the monthly payments. Reasons for credit issues are taken into consideration by the review board. Contact an IL Consultant at the MILC office for assistance in completing an application.

# Staff Spotlight

The Personal Assistant Services (PAS) Program at Midstate Independent Living Choices (MILC) is extremely fortunate to hire amazing caregivers. PAS wishes to recognize our Personal Care Worker (PCW) Nancy Dosemagen.

Nancy grew up in Watertown, WI and has worked in home care since 1993. She joined the PAS team in November of 2014. With over eight (8) years of personal care experience with MILC, Nancy continues to thrive in her career, providing outstanding care for her consumer.

*"I love my work and I always put the client first. I put myself in their place and try to treat them how I would want to be treated. To go the extra steps, makes a big difference in their lives!" -Nancy Dosemagen*



In February of this year, Nancy made the decision to check on her consumer on her day off, as she knew he hadn't been feeling well and wasn't responding to her calls or text messages. When Nancy arrived at his home, she found him in need of emergent care. She quickly got EMS to transport him to the hospital. We were told that he wouldn't have survived if Nancy had not made the choice to go above and beyond for her consumer. We are so grateful for caregivers like Nancy.

## How did you get into this career field?

*"I love people! When I was in high school, I had a chance to work at Bethesda Lutheran Home for disabled children and I fell in love with it!"*

## What are you most proud of in your career?

*"Going the extra mile for my clients and getting to meet and know their families."*

## What do you do for fun?

*"I like to read, go boating and spend time with my kids. I also consider work fun!"*

## What are you most proud of outside your career?

*"My kids."*

Thank you, Nancy, for your 8+ years of outstanding service with MILC!!!

## Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)

CCS helps with recovery by stabilizing and addressing mental health and substance abuse concerns.

CCS is available to adults and children who are eligible for Medicaid, and need psychosocial rehabilitation services.

### Services offered:



- communication/ interpersonal skills
- independent living skills
- employment skills training
- recovery education and illness management

MILC's recovery centers are staffed by CCS certified staff. These include ROCC Point in Stevens Point, A Better Way (ABW) in Marshfield, and River Cities Clubhouse (RCC) in Wisconsin Rapids.

We have CCS certified staff on hand to provide community based services. Contact us to learn about what counties these services can be provide in.

- Morgan Potter, Peer Support / Mental Health Manager

## WE ARE HIRING!

### Join our PAS team

MILC is in search of caregivers interested in assisting individuals in their homes providing personal, supportive, and or respite care.

- Variety of shifts
- Positions available throughout our 11 county service area
- Travel allowance for eligible cases/employees
- Experience preferred, or willing to learn new skills

For a full listing of our current openings visit: <https://milc-inc.org/careers>

Complete the application online and submit to:

[ebuckles@milc-inc.org](mailto:ebuckles@milc-inc.org) or call 715-344-4210 ext. 222 to request an application.

### How To Get a Hold of Us:

Midstate Independent Living Choices  
3262 Church Street  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
715-344-4210 or 800-382-8484  
[milc@milc-inc.org](mailto:milc@milc-inc.org) or [www.milc-inc.org](http://www.milc-inc.org)



[facebook.com/MILCinc](https://www.facebook.com/MILCinc)



[instagram.com/MidstateILC](https://www.instagram.com/MidstateILC)

To contact the following departments dial:  
Mental Health/Peer Support: Ext. 243  
IL Program: Ext. 238  
PAS Program: Ext. 224  
Human Resources: Ext. 226  
Accounting: Ext. 214  
Marketing and Communications: Ext. 231



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# Adapted Kayaking

July 29, 2023      10 am - 3:30 pm  
Nepco Lake, Wisconsin Rapids

Scan the QR code to register today!  
Or visit [AdaptedKayaking.eventbrite.com](https://AdaptedKayaking.eventbrite.com)

