

\$563,000 to start statewide program for disabled Alaskans

Disabled Alaskans will get equipment and help from a new federal program operated by a state agency.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Department of Education received a \$563,000 grant to start a statewide program to provide devices and services to enable disabled Alaskans to live and work independently.

The grant, from the U.S. Department of Education, is renewable for three years.

An advisory board will direct the operation of the program, Keith Anderson, the director of the DVR, said. He promises to involve clients in every step in the process of developing the program.

The state agency will use federal funds from the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act, Public Law 100-407.

The program will provide wheelchairs, modified computers for

the blind, evaluation for needed devices, and training for those who employ disabled Alaskans.

In the first year, the department will determine the number of Alaskans who need help under this program, identify the types of help needed, assess the services available in the state, train and expand a network of persons who provide services, establish a service to provide information and referrals, promote the services to Alaskans with handicaps and develop cooperative agreements with state, local, federal and other agencies to help coordinate services.