



Creating Independence

An Introduction to Assistive Technology



Illinois Assistive Technology Program

www.iltech.org

800-852-5110 v/tty



What's up . . . what we'll cover

The Illinois Assistive Technology Program

Define Assistive Technology

Benefits of Assistive Technology

How to Choose Assistive Technology

Funding Assistive Technology

Share Devices

How IATP Can Help You

Resources



Who is IATP?

The Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) is a not-for-profit agency that promotes the availability of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for people with disabilities. IATP serves all people with disabilities in the state of Illinois, their families, service providers, state agencies, private industry, educators, and other interested individuals, regardless of age or income.



It's All Assistive. . .



www.mrtoys.com

Clocks & wrist watches

Wheelchairs

Forks, knives & spoons

Braille printers

Shoes with Velcro rather than laces

Hearing aids

iPad

Communication devices



www.texthelp.com



Assistive Technology Device

Any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.





Assistive Technology Service

Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.



www.healthtrainingguide.com



tonydoctor.com

Why is AT Important?

It has the potential to impact a person with a disability by contributing to his or her:

- Learning
- Independence
- Self esteem
- Quality of life





Benefits of Assistive Technology

School age children remain in regular classroom

Stay in own home

Reduce dependence on family members & paid assistants

Increase earnings

Participate in the community

Promotes independence



blog.vanproducts.com



cdrlibraryblog



Basic Principles of Choosing Technology

A team approach is best

The user is the most crucial member of the team

Circle of friends/family are the next most

important team members

Focus on function

Strive for simplicity

Generalize



www.attainmentcompany.com

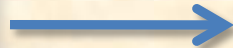
System of Selection

Start with lowest tech solution available.

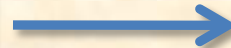
Work upward only when the lower tech device doesn't work.



www.stepforward123.com



www.blitt.org



www.shopping.com



Considerations for Choosing Technology

Personal

Ease of use/Training

Access

Maintenance/Repair

Financial



Financial Considerations

What's the total cost?

Is training included in that cost?

What sources are available for paying for it?

Is rental better than buying?

What's the return policy?



Who Pays?



Some children receive medical assistance which may approve the purchase of technology.

Other State agencies that may pay for AT are the:
Division of Specialized Care for Children;
Division of Developmental Disabilities; &
Division of Rehabilitation Services, if the student is receiving Transition Services.



Funding Sources

DHS DRS

Medicare/Medicaid

Private Insurance

AT Loan Programs

Disability Organizations

Service Organizations



www.hhs.gov



The Funding Perspective

Define the need

- Identify equipment & services necessary

- Determine if alternative equipment will meet the need

Determine the funding source

Document the need

Secure necessary documentation

- Prescriptions

- Other reports from family, therapists and vendors

Collect & submit necessary paperwork

Get the authorization or denial

Appeal





Private Insurance

Learn what the policy says

Hurdles to Jump

- Definition of Medical Necessity

- Definition of Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetic Device, or Therapeutic Service

How to Read a Summary of Benefits

- Covered Services

- Specific Exclusions

- Specific Language

 - Technology won't be listed

 - Use their language

Follow Procedures

- Look for Natural Advocate

Know Appeals Procedures





Justification

Establish self as expert

- Always submit justification on letterhead

- Respect your own skills, brag, don't apologize

Use Two Resumes

- One gets you a job

- The other gets devices funded

Justification is most crucial document for funding

- Especially for medical programs



Examples of AT



www.enablingdevices.com



www.the-review.com



seeitourway.org



What does IATP do?



www.audiogear.com

Device Loans

IEP Support

AT Assessments

IATP AT Loans

AT Reuse & Reutilization

Demonstration Center

Work Incentive Planning & Assistance

Website



www.enablingdevices.com



Where Do I Find AT?

Contact the Illinois Assistive Technology Program
for information on

Assistive Technology and where to find it

800-852-5110 v/tty

www.iltech.org



Resources

Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative

sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_at-wati-resources

Texas Assistive Technology Network

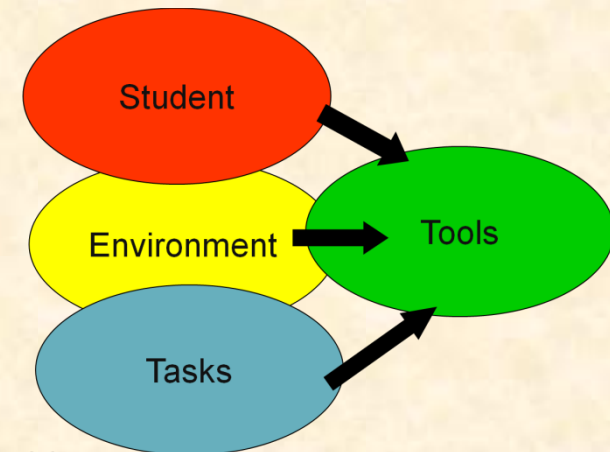
www.texasat.net

SETT Framework

www.joyzabala.com

Closing the Gap

www.closingthegap.com





Other Resources

Job Accommodation Network

askjan.org 800-526-7234 v; 877-781-9403 tty

Able Data

www.abledata.com 800-227-0216 v; 301-608-8912 tty

RESNA

www.resnaprojects.org

Assistive Technology Industry Association

www.atia.org

IL Network of Centers for Independent Living

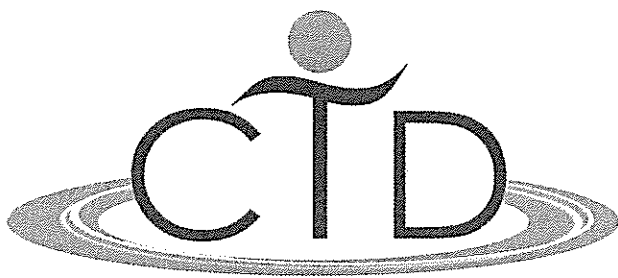
www.incil.org 800-587-1227 v/tty



Thank you!

**Please Fill Out Your
Evaluation.**





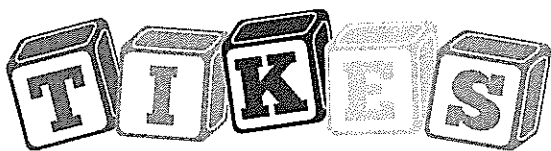
Center on Technology and Disability

www.CTDinstitute.org

How to Try Assistive Technology with Your Infant, Toddler, or Preschooler

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PACER Center

PACER CENTER 
CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES™



How to Try Assistive Technology with Your Infant, Toddler, or Preschooler

When making an important decision such as buying a car, most people want to take a test drive. How does it feel to drive the car? Will it fit your needs? Could you see yourself using this car day to day? Like test driving a car, providing your child with the right assistive technology (AT) is easier if your child has an opportunity to use it, and you have a chance to see if it's the right fit. Some schools and disability organizations have AT lending libraries which allow your child to try assistive technology at school and home before making a decision. Advice on how to find and use assistive technology lending libraries is available in "Explore Assistive Technology and Open New Doors for Your Child", which is available at PACER.org/stc/tikes.



Once your child has access to assistive technology to try, it's time to observe and see if the technology makes a difference. By watching your child interact with AT, you'll be better-equipped to work with professionals to find the best technology to fit your child's needs. Here are some important things to do during your "test drive."

Measuring quality

Whether it is helping your child communicate, play with others, or be more independent, the purpose of assistive technology is to help your child reach his or her potential. You can measure quality looking at the changes you see in your child's ability to do a task when using AT. For example:

- Before using modified toys, a child struggled to manipulate and play with them. After the toys were modified with larger grips (changes made to the handles) a child was able to confidently hold onto the modified handles and move and play with his toys at home.

Measuring quantity

You can count how many words your child uses in a sentence, or how many letters he or she can write. You can also measure if assistive technology helps your child. Think about the important areas in your child's life where you can gather information, and then measure these while he or she is trying assistive technology. Here are some examples:

- When using a regular marker, a child could only draw one shape (a circle). By using a marker with an adapted grip (one that is thicker) the child was able to draw three shapes (a circle, square, and triangle).

Measuring time and effort

Sometimes your child can complete important tasks but may take longer than his or her typical peers and require more effort due to the disability. Assistive technology can provide your child with a quicker, easier way to complete

the same task. When your child is trying assistive technology, keep track of how long it takes him or her to do certain tasks. Also pay close attention to your child's facial expressions and body language to see if assistive technology is making it easier to complete the task. For example:

- A child's fingers struggled to independently turn the pages of a book, making reading a challenge. After adding Velcro to the top of each page, the child is able to confidently turn pages and look through the book.

Measuring behavior changes

When a child is struggling with tasks due to his or her disability, some of the frustration can be misinterpreted as inappropriate behavior. Assistive technology can help your child manage his or her behavior by providing other strategies, clear instructions, and ways to understand his or her emotions. See if your child's behavior changes when he or she is using assistive technology. Is the AT helping your child feel more confident and in control? For example:

- A child who becomes upset when transitioning from one activity to the next can watch a sand timer to know when an activity will end. The child could then look at a picture to know what the next activity will be. Using this strategy, the student is less anxious and upset when transitioning from one activity to another.

Measuring level of independence

As seen in these examples, assistive technology can boost your child's independence, allowing him or her to accomplish tasks that might otherwise be a struggle to complete. To help your child be as independent as possible with AT, consider the following:

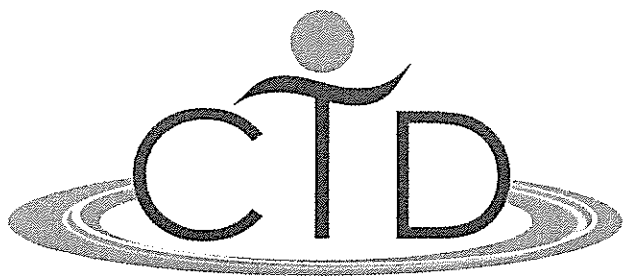
- Be sure both you and your child know how to use the assistive technology you are trying

Anyone can try assistive technology, but it's important to learn how to use it before testing it with your child. Ask a professional what you should know about the device, and how to show your child. Starting small and incorporating AT into familiar routines is a great way to begin.

- Maintain high expectations for your child

While a disability can affect your child's level of independence, your expectations for your child can do the same thing. Assistive technology can open countless doors for your child, enabling him or her to do much more than you may have thought possible. By having high expectations for your child's level of independence, you'll be influencing others to do the same. More information on the importance of high expectations is available in the PACER Center tip sheet titled, "A Parent's High Expectations and Vision are Powerful" at PACER.org.

Finding the right assistive technology for your child can be an exciting and rewarding process for both of you. By following these suggestions, you will be more informed and confident in the decisions you make on your child's behalf and both of you are more likely to be successful.

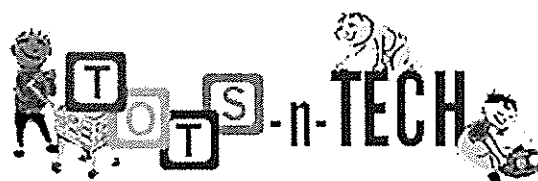


Center on Technology and Disability

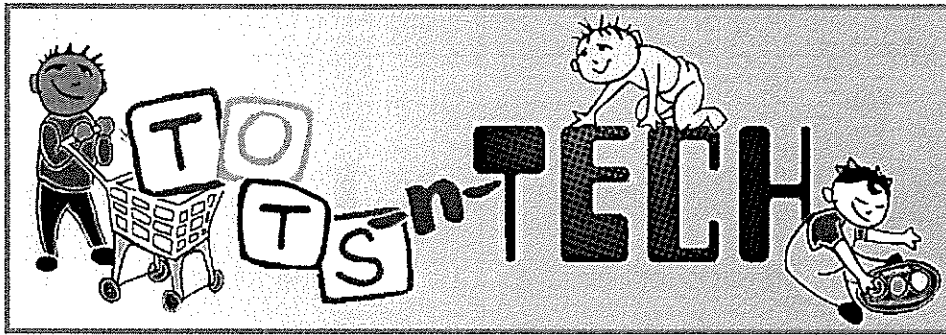
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Funding Assistive Technology

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University



Arizona State
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FUNDING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Funding is a major barrier in acquiring assistive technology (AT) devices and services. Barriers may arise from the high cost of equipment, vague eligibility criteria, lack of knowledge about funding sources, and locating/accessing third party payment sources. While funding should in no way shape the AT selection process it is certainly an aspect of the process that should not be ignored.

Before deciding on a specific funding source the following information should be obtained.

Child and Family Information	Funding Source Information
Child's age	What authority the funding source is established under (e.g. federal legislation, waiver of legal requirement)
Parental income	Who is the administering agency for the funding source (e.g. private insurer, Dept. of Health)
Child's disability	What term does the funding source use to describe AT (e.g., durable medical equipment, rehabilitation technology)
Where the AT will be used	Does the AT have to be used for a specific purpose
What the family and child want to achieve	Does the AT have to be used in a specific place
	The process to acquire AT (e.g. application)
	The individuals involved in the process
	The appeal process if the AT is denied

Source: *A Parent's Guide to Assistive Technology* by Wyoming New Options in Technology

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Medicaid—state and federal medical insurance program for individuals and families with low income. Durable medical equipment (DME) is covered if the device is medically necessary; a physician's authorization is needed. There are variations in the services that each state provides. AT services (OT, PT, speech therapy) are covered under federal Medicaid law.

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) - is a program through Medicaid for children from birth to 21 that covers regular/periodic exams for eligible children. Any medically necessary services or DME prescribed must be provided to child, even if the service is not covered by that state's Medicaid program.

Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) - Federally funded medical benefits insurance program for spouses and children of active duty, retired, and deceased active duty and retired uniformed services personnel. Will provide funding if it is medically necessary.

Public School Programs—School districts are required to provide AT to children with disabilities if it allows them to receive an education in the least restrictive environment. Need should be noted on the child's IEP.

Private Insurance - Varies greatly, most cover AT that is medically necessary and prescribed by a physician.

Private funding—Nonprofit disability associations (March of Dimes, United Cerebral Palsy Association), private foundations, service clubs and organizations (Shriners, Rotary Club), and national advocacy groups may provide funding for AT, especially if other sources have been unsuccessful. Must meet eligibility requirement and follow specific guidelines.

Loan programs—Info about credit financing can be obtained from the manufacturer of the AT. Some state Tech Act projects have low or no interest loans.

Source: Judge, S.L. (2000). Accessing and funding assistive technology for young children with disabilities. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 28(2), 125-131

DEVELOPING MINI-GRANTS

Excerpt from Assistive Technology and Early Childhood Education by The Early Assistive Technology Training Project Staff

A mini-grant is defined as a relatively brief and straightforward document sent to local or regional service organizations or foundations, for the purpose of funding a specific piece of equipment or project. A simple mini-grant process can be used to yield increased funding with a minimum amount of time and effort:

- A. Select Appropriate Equipment or Projects for which funding is requested
 1. Choose and describe specific pieces of equipment (e.g., speech output device, microcomputer); add supportive information such as vendor brochures.
 2. Choose and describe specific projects (e.g., setting up a toy lending library or adaptive cooking program)
- B. Identify Potential Funding Sources
 1. Sample funding sources
 - a. Service organizations are excellent targets (e.g., *Lions*, *Rotary International*, *Civitan Sertoma*, *Seroptomist*, *Knights of Columbus*)
 - b. Local/regional foundations (contact the librarian of your local college for assistance in locating appropriate foundations); *The Foundation Center* (79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003) is an excellent resource for learning about available funding sources.
 - c. Support groups for your organization (e.g., auxiliary for hospital, parent-teacher organization for school)
- C. Develop a Basic Cover Letter
 1. Include the following information:
 - a. Identifying information
 - b. Tie-in to the target organization
 - c. A brief summary of request
 - d. A comment on the impact of the project/equipment
 2. Offer to give a presentation to support your proposal
 3. Take the time to use a word processor to tailor the letter to the needs and interests of the group; for example, the mission of *Seroptomist* is to assist persons with communication impairment, and the motto of the *Society for Preservation of Barbershop Quartets in America* is "We sing so that they might speak." This is information you can use in writing proposals.
 4. Make references to enclosures, which provide the "meat" of your proposal.
- D. Write a Mini-Grant to Send to Each Target Organization
 1. For the purpose of this chapter, a mini-grant is defined as a brief funding proposal to be provided to an organization, whether solicited or unsolicited.
 2. For maximum success, the mini-grant should include the following:
 - a) Abstract Page: This should summarize the need, the scope, and procedures for accomplishing the project. Reference should be made to additional information, which will be included in appendices.
 - b) Target Population: A description of the individuals who will benefit from this project, including specifics. Information on the host facility may also be included, indicating why it is an appropriate site for the project.
 - c) Project Objectives and Expected Benefits: This should describe outcomes of the grant in specific measurable terms. The listing of specific benefits should be based on a framework (e.g., domains such as social skills or, expressive communication, or academic areas such as math or science).
 - d) Budget/Description of Equipment Requested: A clear budget should be outlined, with a concise description of each piece or equipment requested. Specific ways that equipment will be used should be delineated.
 - e) Evaluation and Dissemination Plan: This will help determine the degree to which objectives are met and a procedure for reporting back to the granting agency. For some projects, information gained will be shared with other professionals. While extensive dissemination plans are beyond the scope of mini-grants, it is feasible to indicate plans to share information via strategies such as giving a presentation at a local or regional conference. In addition, this section might indicate how an announcement of the project can be shared with the general public (t.v., newspaper), thus giving positive exposure to the granting organization.
 - f) Summary of Expertise of Grant-Writer: A brief résumé should be appended, highlighting information relevant to the grant request; for example, if requesting, computer equipment, a summary of recent microcomputer workshops attended would be appropriate.

FUNDING DECISION TREE

Source: Adapted from *Access to Learning Through Assistive Technology by Wyoming New Options in Technology*

1. Will AT help child perform functional skills (e.g., mobility) or participate in activities and routines?

No Yes

→ If the IFSP team determines that AT is necessary for the child to perform functional skills or participate in activities/routines, the EI program is required to provide the child with the needed technology.

2. Is AT written on the child's IFSP?

No Yes

→ If AT is part of the IFSP, the team must determine if it is necessary for the child to participate in activities/routines and perform functional skills. Many Part C programs purchase AT when listed on the IFSP and not covered through other sources.

3. Is AT medically necessary?

No Yes

→ If AT is medically necessary or if it can be proven to be medically necessary, additional funding sources may be available.

4. Is child Medicaid eligible?

No Yes

→ If child is Medicaid eligible and the AT is covered in the State Plan as one of the Medicaid services, Medicaid is a funding source.

5. Is child covered by private insurance?

No Yes

→ Private insurance may pay for AT if it is covered in the policy. AT may qualify as Durable Medical Equipment.

6. Is child deaf or blind?

No Yes

→ Special equipment and devices may be purchased for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf/blind through special programs for these populations.

7. Does your state have a Tech-Act Program?

No Yes

→ Most states have a federally funded Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Program. Some of these programs allocate resources for the purchase of AT devices. Find your state's Tech-Act program here: <http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/at/statecontacts.html>

8. Are special purchase programs available?

No Yes

→ Many service and disability related organizations have programs to purchase devices for children.

9. Is private/family purchase possible?

Yes

→ If other sources aren't available, families may have to purchase the device. Organizations do exist to assistive families in organizing fund raising activities.

FUNDING RESOURCES

Tools for Life Dollars and Sense: Navigating the Funding Streams Funding Guide

Sample Materials—<http://gatfl.org/ds/samplematerials.htm>

This site provides sample funding materials on how to develop a funding strategy, a funding worksheet to match needs to funding sources and a sample funding letter.

Funding Sources—<http://www.gatfl.org/ds/Search/Search.aspx>

While this site mainly applies to the state of Georgia, the user can search for National funding sources for assistive technology.

AT Network

Developing a Funding Strategy—<http://www.atnet.org/index.php?page=developing-a-funding-strategy>

This website, produced by a California based organization, details steps to follow when funding assistive technology.

Sample Letter—<http://www.atnet.org/index.php?page=sample-letter>

This website contains a sample cover letter to philanthropic organizations for assistance with funding.

RESNA

State AT Loan Programs—<http://www.resnaprojects.org/AFTAP/state/RESNA.html>

A list of AT loan programs with contact information by state.

State Financing Activities—<http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/activities/financing/statefinancing.htm>

This site contains information on the definition of state financing activities, what makes a good state financing activity, and examples of financing activities from Maryland, Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, and Virginia.

Alliance for Technology Access

Guide to Low-Cost/No-Cost Online Tools for People with Disabilities—<http://www.ataccess.org/resources/lowcostnocost/LowCostNoCostATAguide.pdf>

A general funding guide with lots of funding resources.

United Cerebral Palsy

Assistive Technology Funding Search Tips—http://www.ucp.org/ucp_channel.doc.cfm/1/14/86/86-86/2938

Practical tips when searching for funding of assistive technology.

NOCK

Do You Need NOCK's Help? - <http://www.nockonline.org/?q=node/5>

NOCK provides assistive technology to qualified special needs children when families have no other means to pay for such devices. Current programs focus on technology that can assist or improve mobility and communication.