

# Assistive Technology and the Individualized Education Program

## Section on Pediatrics FACT SHEET



SECTION ON  
**PEDIATRICS**  
AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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The use of assistive technology (AT) and AT services has been shown to improve the quality of life of children with disabilities and increase their access to school and community activities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004), Part B has provisions to ensure that AT and AT services are available to students who need it to access their education.

## What Are Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology Services Under IDEA?

- AT is any item, piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.
- AT can be low tech, like a rope on a door handle to assist opening or a pencil grip to improve writing, or it can be high tech, like a computer or power wheelchair.
- AT services are any services that directly assist a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device, including evaluation, maintenance, coordination, and training services.

## What Does AT Have to Do with the Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) requires that each IEP team is required to "...consider whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services..." when creating or reviewing IEP goals.

## What Does "Consider AT" Mean?<sup>1</sup>

The IEP team can ask some guiding questions in relation to the child and IEP goals; for example:

- What do you want the student to do?
- Can the student do the task without AT?
- Would AT allow the student to do the task?
- Is AT currently used to do the task and, if so, is it working? Would another type of AT allow the student to do the task?

The team may decide several things based on consideration of AT; for example:

- AT is not necessary.
- The current AT is working.
- AT is needed or further AT assessment is needed to determine the extent to which AT is best for the child and the task.

## How Should the AT Be Included in the IEP?<sup>1</sup>

- The AT is included in the annual goal with specific outcome criteria for measurement of skill progress while using the AT.
  - Record the specific device; any features required; and the duration, frequency, and location of use.
  - Specify the AT services required, including evaluation, training, customizing, maintaining, and coordination of team members.

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## Who Pays for the AT?

- The school is responsible for providing the device if it is needed to access a child's education and is placed on the IEP. The item stays with the school when the child leaves.
- Families who prefer to purchase the device have some funding options:
  - Public sources
    - Medicaid
    - State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
    - State Assistive Technology Centers
  - Private sources
    - Medical Insurance
    - Civic and Volunteer Organizations
    - AT Manufacturers

## What Is the Role of a Physical Therapist in AT Consideration and Implementation?

AT consideration:

- Recognition of barriers to outcomes and benefits of AT.
- AT assessment or referral for AT assessment.

AT implementation:

- Coordination with IEP team, caregivers, and AT service providers (if necessary).
- Selection and purchase of AT.
- Training of family, child, teachers, and other service providers on use.
- Follow up on use and progress toward IEP outcomes.
- Assistance and coordination with maintenance of device.
- Recognition for the need for changes or discontinuation.

## Where Can I Learn More About AT?

### Print Resources

Angelo J. *Assistive Technology for Rehabilitation Therapists*. Philadelphia: FA Davis Company; 1997.

Edyburn D, Higgins K, Boone R (eds). *Handbook of Special Education Technology Research and Practice*. Whitefish Bay, WI: Knowledge By Design Inc; 2005.

Kates D. Funding for assistive technology and assistive technology services. Washington, DC: Consortium for Children and Youth with Disabilities, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development; 2005. Available at: [gucchd.georgetown.edu/consortium/consumer%20Brief3-final.pdf](http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/consortium/consumer%20Brief3-final.pdf).

McEwen IR. *Providing Physical Therapy Services Under Parts B & C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. Alexandria, VA: Section on Pediatrics, American Physical Therapy Association; 2000.

Zabala J, QIAT Consortium Leadership Team. Quality indicators for assistive technology services in schools. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 15 (4); 2000. Available at: [jset.unlv.edu/15.4/Zabala/first.html](http://jset.unlv.edu/15.4/Zabala/first.html).

### Internet Resources

Assistive Technology Training Online Project: [atto.buffalo.edu](http://atto.buffalo.edu).

Department of Education, Office of Special Education Rehabilitative Services, Special

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Education IDEA 2004 Resources: [www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html).

Family Center on Technology and Disability: [www.fctd.info/resources/AT\\_IEP.php](http://www.fctd.info/resources/AT_IEP.php).

National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership: [www.resna.org/taproject/about/index.html](http://www.resna.org/taproject/about/index.html).

Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative: [www.wati.org](http://www.wati.org).

### References

1. Adapted from Zabala J, Reed P. Assessing AT student need (from the Assistive Technology Online Training Project available at [atto.buffalo.edu](http://atto.buffalo.edu)).

### For More Information

If you have additional questions, would like to order additional copies of this fact sheet, or would like to join the Section on Pediatrics, please contact the Executive Office of the Section on Pediatrics of the American Physical Therapy Association at:

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