

# Assistive Technology

## Definitions:

**Assistive Technology:** 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 the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

**Assistive Technology Service:** Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device. These services may include activities, such as an assistive technology evaluation, purchasing, leasing, customizing, adapting equipment, coordinating with other team members, training or technical assistance for the child, child's family and/or other professionals.

**Consideration:** Every IEP Team is required to "consider" the student's need for assistive technology. This "thoughtful look" should include a brief discussion about challenges faced by the child in accessing educational goals and whether assistive technology may be helpful. The team should discuss possible assistive technology options, as well as services that may be needed.

## Consideration Process Should Be:

- **Brief** - If it takes longer than 15-20 minutes, then an assistive technology evaluation should be recommended.
- **Knowledgeable** - Someone on the team should have enough knowledge of AT to represent the need for an evaluation.
- **Based on IEP Goals** - The bulk of the IEP should be developed before consideration. The annual goals that the student is expected to accomplish will be the focus of the discussion about whether assistive technology, if any, might assist or allow the student to accomplish them.
- **A Team Process** - It is important that all team members provide input. A discussion of the data resulting from strategies/techniques that have been implemented without success be reviewed prior to requesting an evaluation.
- **The AT Considerations Guide** could be completed during this time.

## When to Consider AT:

- **Initial Evaluation:** The Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team may determine that an assistive technology evaluation should be recommended based on the SAT's concerns.
- **IEP:** Every time an IEP is written, assistive technology should be considered.
- **IEP Amendment:** The team may request an additional evaluation through an IEP Amendment and use of the *Request for Additional Evaluation* form.
- **Transition:** When the student transitions into the school system (from Birth to Three) or out of the school system (Division of Rehabilitation Services).

## Areas To Consider:

- Seating/Positioning and Mobility
- Communication
- Computer Access
- Motor Aspects of Writing
- Composition of Written Material
- Reading
- Math
- Organization
- Recreation and Leisure
- Vision
- Hearing
- General and Daily Living Skills

## Possible Team Conclusions:

- No Assistive Technology is needed.
- Current Assistive Technology is working.
- Assistive Technology Evaluation is needed.
- Assistive Technology should be trialed.
- Current Assistive Technology is not working. Team may recommend new equipment to trial or an assistive technology evaluation.
- IEP Team does not have enough information to make an informed decision: May recommend an AT evaluation or reconvene after needed information is gathered by a knowledgeable team member.

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## Assistive Technology Consideration Guide

It is highly recommended that the IEP Team use this form to guide them through the consideration process.

### Documenting AT in the IEP

When the IEP Team determines there is a need for AT devices or services, it is then necessary to describe it in the student's IEP. IDEA does not specify where in the IEP to include AT devices or services. It is up to the IEP Team to determine which IEP section is most appropriate for its inclusion. The most important thing is not specifically where to document the need, but to document it somewhere within the IEP. Remember to describe the AT device or service. **Do not list brand names.**

There is a variety of ways that assistive technology can be documented within the Online IEP including:

- on the Considerations page
- as the part of a Present Level of Academic Achievement and functional performance statements
- on the General Information page
- as a condition of a Goal Statement
- on the Services page as part of Supplementary, Special Education, Related or Transition Service

See **AT Guidance Document** for more information about documentation on the IEP. The important thing to remember is to document it somewhere on the IEP.

### Responsibility for Use

The purpose of assistive technology is for the student to access the educational environment. The assistive technology goes with the student where it is needed. Consequently, **EVERYONE** who comes into contact with the student needs to be familiar with the assistive technology and make a commitment to incorporating AT into the daily, educational routine.

In other words, the assistive technology is not the responsibility of the service provider or teacher, only. In order for the student to reap the true benefits, there must be "buy in" from all-involved; teachers, family, service providers, bus drivers and additional staff. That is why consideration and implementation must be a team effort.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Are school districts required to pay for assistive technology devices and services?

Yes. It is the responsibility of the school district to provide the equipment, services or programs recommended in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). If the assistive technology devices and services appear in the IEP, then the school district is responsible for providing the identified assistive technology need(s). The school district maintains ownership of the device.

### Can school districts require parents to use their private insurance to pay for necessary assistive technology devices and services?

No. The "free" in FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) is extremely significant regarding children with disabilities who may require assistive technology devices or services. As stated in IDEA and its regulations, all aspects of special education and related services must be provided "at no cost to the parents." If the family agrees to allow the school district to access their private insurance, this decision must be strictly voluntary.

### Are school districts responsible for customization, maintenance, repair and replacement of assistive technology devices?

AT services such as customization, maintenance, repair and replacement are included as considerations in the acquisition of equipment or devices purchased/provided by the school district. It is the responsibility of the school district to ensure that students who require assistive technology devices also receive the necessary assistive technology services that will make the technology meaningful to the student. This requirement reflects the "individualization" of a specific type of device. If family owned AT is used by the school, is listed in the Individualized Education Program (IEP), and is necessary for providing Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the school district is also responsible for maintenance, repair and re-placement. Responsibilities for these services should be identified in the IEP.