



Assistive Technology and the Transition Process from High School

indata project

taking on disability together

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology (AT) is a term used to refer to adaptive, assistive or rehabilitative products or devices designed to allow people with disabilities or limited abilities caused by the aging process to increase their independence and lead more fulfilling lives.

AT DEVICES CAN HELP WITH:

- **Computer access:** Voice recognition, touch screens, head/eye control systems, programmable trackballs and mice, large print keyboards, key guards
- **Motor aspects of writing:** Adapted pens and pencils, splints, pencil grips, paper with raised lines, voice dictation
- **Composing written material:** Literacy programs, word-prediction and word-completion software
- **Reading:** Changes in text size, spacing, color, background, scan-and-read hardware/software, page-turners, electronic books, use of pictures/symbols with text
- **Communication:** Communication software for a computer with voice output, alternative and augmentative devices, artificial larynx devices
- **Learning/studying:** Scanning/reading pens, digital recorders, literacy software
- **Math:** Talking calculators, enlarged math worksheets, voice-recognition software, onscreen/scanning calculator
- **Electronic Aids for Daily Living (EADLs):** Also known as Environmental Control Units (ECUs): automatic door openers; devices that can control infrared devices and electrical appliances that power up or down via a single switch, your voice or through a computer
- **Mobility:** Wheelchairs, scooters, canes, stair-lifts, chair-lifts, adapted vehicles
- **Hearing:** Amplified phones, telephone accessories, alarm systems, sign language, video remote interpreting
- **Vision:** Magnifiers, screen-readers, scanning/reading programs, digital recorders, Braille devices
- **Vocational:** Modified off-the-shelf tools and equipment, custom devices
- **Recreation and leisure:** Adaptive sporting equipment; toys adapted with Velcro magnets, handles, or for single-switch operation; arm support for drawing/painting; accessible parks; lifts for swimming pools

AT SERVICES CAN INCLUDE:

- Assessing the student's need for AT
- Training the student to use the AT
- Training the school staff and/or family to use the AT
- Fitting, adapting, maintaining and repairing the AT as needed
- Assessing the work site and job responsibilities: What you should know about transition and AT?

For persons with disabilities, AT is the most essential tool for success in work or college. While there are many types of AT, devices generally fall into three categories that are as follows:

- 1) **Low-tech AT** is typically less expensive. This category often includes adaptations of devices that a person currently uses or devices that act as an extension of one's limbs. Some low-tech devices include canes and walkers, handheld magnifiers, large-print text, or grips for writing and food utensils.

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- 2) Mid-tech AT** might take more training or have more electronic features than low-tech devices. However, this category is not as complicated or intricate as high-tech AT. Examples include closed-captioning on TV, video magnifiers, books on tape, environmental control units and wheelchairs.
- 3) High-tech AT** costs the most and is often more complex than the other types of AT. Training is often required for high-tech AT, which might include installation or in-depth instruction on their usage. AT that falls into this category includes power wheelchairs, voice-activated telephones, adaptive software for computer access, mobile technology, personal listening devices and digital hearing aids.

Reducing Barriers

AT can reduce barriers and increase independence for work, school or life. From getting ready in the morning, getting to and from school or work, performing tasks, participating in your environment to interacting with teachers, friends, coworkers and employers, AT can make a difference!

AT can allow you to perform the essential functions of your job. Often, you already know what type of AT device you need to get your job done. If you've used an AT device successfully in school or college, that same device may be just what you need in the workplace. Sometimes just brainstorming with your employer or supervisor and trying different items available in your work setting might be enough to figure out what will work for you.

Other times, a formal AT evaluation is needed to assess your work setting, job tasks and abilities in order to determine what AT device you will need. Finally, talking with someone who has been through a similar experience may help you figure out which AT device to use.

What is Transition?

Transition projects work to enable schools, community-service agencies and families to better prepare youth with disabilities for life as productive, responsible adults in the community.

In the article, "Assistive Technology and Transition Planning," Thomas J. Nurse helps us to appreciate how the following steps can provide a starting point for evaluating how AT can benefit a child in school and beyond into adult life:

- Establish an understanding of the child's present level of academic performance by utilizing your state's standardized grade-level student expectations to identify both areas of strength and where additional assistance may be needed.
- Establish an understanding of the child's present level of functional performance by utilizing a tool such as the WATI Assistive Technology and Transition forms (www.wati.org/products/freematerials.html).
- Develop a written vision of life after high school in a detailed post-school outcome statement. This statement can help the Transition IEP team identify needed support and services.
- Consider whether AT can help achieve the outcomes.
- Identify who is going to do what in acquiring the technology, providing training in its use if needed, and funding it; also determine whether the funding source will allow the technology to go with the student into post-high school education and work.

To help understand the transition process and the steps you should be taking to make it a smooth one, we offer some steps and the timeline in which action should be taken during high school. Ideally, upon graduation, students will have the AT and the competence to use it well prior to starting college or jobs.

The following steps are recommended for the student/family considering transitioning from high school to higher education or to work, as indicated in the “NEST Collaborative Transition Guide.”

FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEARS

- Identify team members for Individualized Education Plan (IEP) case conferences.
- Begin asking Person Centered Planning (PCP) questions to assist with steps driving you to your vision of the future.
- Determine a graduation status (diploma or certificate of completion), and develop a plan to obtain this goal (begin asking this question in 8th grade and after).
- Create a course of study based on the goal (academic or vocational).
- Attend the IEP case conferences where a transition plan will be developed to help you decide what to do after graduation.
- Begin talking about the transitional services available at federal, state and local levels:
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program: (800) 545-7763
 - The Department of Workforce Development: (800) 437-9136
 - Work One Service Program: (800) 437-9136
 - The Social Security Administration: (800) 772-1213
 - Medicaid (Medicaid Waiver): (800) 901-1133
 - The Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services: (800) 545-7763
 - Adult Service Providers, such as IRCIL: (800) 860-7181
 - A Community Rehabilitation Program, such as Easter Seals Crossroads: (888) 466-1314
 - Division of Mental Health and Addiction: (317) 232-7800
 - Agency on Aging: (800) 986-3505
- Follow up on the status of your Medicaid Waiver Application; if an application has not yet been completed, do so immediately.
- Have parents sign a release of information to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).
- If you plan to go to school after graduation, begin to check into schools, and take the PSAT if those schools require an admission test.

JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS

- Review course of study/graduation status to ensure you’re still on track, and adjust course study/ graduation status as needed.
- Begin job-training classes or vocational programs if course of study is vocational.
- Begin talking with your family, teachers and job coaches about jobs that interest you.
- If you plan to go to school after graduation, begin to check into schools; take the SAT if those schools require an admissions test.
- If you plan to go to school after graduation, begin completing applications and financial aid forms to the schools of interest; be sure you know the deadlines.
- Meet with a counselor from Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), and begin the application process.
- Follow up on the status of your Medicaid Waiver application; if an application has not yet been completed, do so immediately.

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- Request AT evaluation from VRS in junior year, and receive AT early on in your senior year.
 - VRS will provide the AT; the school district will provide the training.

Post-Secondary Transition

The following items are recommended for the student/family considering transitioning from high school to employment:

- Students with disabilities who use AT in high school should be aware the technology may not follow them to work or college. Often, the school district purchases the technology and loans it to the student while he/she is attending school. However, if adequate plans are made, a smooth transition from high school to work or college can be achieved.
- Among these plans should be an assessment of the work site to determine needed AT and a thorough investigation of the college or university's accommodative services to figure out the ease or difficulty with which your AT needs can be met. Making plans for these services is essential to the student's success.
- The INDATA program provides a web-based tool that houses input from Indiana colleges and universities regarding AT and services provided by the school. To learn more, visit www.eastersealstech.com or call (888) 466-1314.
- By law, a student's AT needs must be considered in development of their individualized education program (IEP). It may be referred to as "assistive technology" in some IEPs, while in others it may be called "accommodations, supports, program modifications or supplementary aids and services" (Family Center on Technology and Disability, 2006b).
- Under IDEA 2004, transition planning must start no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16. However, in reality, earlier is often better. IDEA 2004 also states that a Transition IEP broadens formally to "a results-oriented process that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities ..." (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2005). AT needs should be included as part of the discussion to determine if a Transition IEP may be needed earlier than age 16; they should also be included in the IEP itself.
- Assessing the environmental aspects of a job site for AT includes the physical, social and cultural environments where work tasks occur. The equipment/objects, furniture, terrain and sensory characteristics within a particular work site may support or impede a student's performance.
- AT needs for work should include assessing the student's ability to: get to work (functional mobility), move within the work environment, perform specified job tasks, communicate and interact with coworkers and supervisors, and manage personal care needs while at work.
- Personal care needs may be related to bathroom use, eating and drinking, hygiene, medical routines and manipulating personal items. Observation of a student within work environments is the best means for gathering assessment data on his or her AT support needs.
- Easterseals Crossroads Assistive Technology Division provides professional, thorough worksite assessments. For more information, visit www.eastersealstech.com or call (888) 466-1314.
- In order to fully benefit from the AT that will be used, an exhaustive evaluation must be made on the job site and/or the college or university at which the student intends to enroll.

Easterseals Crossroads Assistive Technology Services

Since 1979, Easterseals Crossroads has been Indiana's premier provider of AT Services. These clinical services are available statewide, are the hallmark of our program and have been available for nearly 30 years.

- **Evaluation:** A qualified AT professional meets with an individual with a disability to evaluate his or her AT needs as they relate to employment, education or community living.
- **Consultation:** Similar to an evaluation, but typically shorter in nature and less comprehensive, this service allows for brief interventions by a qualified AT professional.
- **Technical Support:** Easterseals Crossroads' AT professionals are well-trained in supporting a number of AT devices and software; our 24-hour technical support line at (317) 466-2013 or (888) 466-1314 allows AT users to receive the support they need around the clock.
- **Training:** The key to successful utilization of any AT solution is ensuring the user is appropriately trained in its use; our staff provides a wide variety of individual and small-class trainings designed to teach the user how to use technology on the job, at home or in school.

INDATA Services

In October 2007, Easterseals Crossroads was awarded the Assistive Technology Act grant, which consists of state and federal funding targeted to increasing the availability of AT to Hoosiers with disabilities. There are 56 programs of this type in the United States and U.S. territories. These services are available statewide at no charge. We call this the INDATA (Indiana Assistive Technology Act) Project. INDATA services include:

- **Information and Referral:** Anyone with questions about AT may call our Information and Referral/Funding Specialist to learn more about available services and funding options.
- **Alternative Funding:** Although there are a number of available funding sources for AT equipment and services, there are times when an individual does not qualify for a traditional funding source.
- **Device Demonstration:** Many individuals benefit from experiencing a basic AT equipment demonstration; these demonstrations are available statewide and typically allow an individual to spend 10 to 20 minutes with an AT Specialist who demonstrates the basic features of the AT device or software.
- **Device Loan:** Easterseals Crossroads has a growing library of AT devices that can be loaned for up to three months.
- **Equipment Reutilization:** Easterseals Crossroads hosts an online buy/sell/trade web tool that facilitates the reutilization of previously-owned AT devices; this free service will reduce the number of AT devices that are abandoned when the original users no longer need them.
- **Recycled Computer Program:** Donated computers are picked up from the donor, wiped of all previous data, refurbished and provided, at no charge, to individuals with disabilities who live in Indiana and have no other means of obtaining a computer.
- **Training:** Easterseals Crossroads sponsors quarterly AT trainings, hosted in Indianapolis and broadcast via distance-education systems to various locations in Indiana; topics may include device-specific training, advocacy, funding, clinical techniques and other relevant topics; additionally, trainings will be offered to local universities as well as service clubs and other interested groups.

About INDATA

The INDATA Project at Easterseals Crossroads provides information and access to assistive technology, at no charge, to Hoosiers with disabilities.

These statewide services are derived through the Indiana Assistive Technology Act (INDATA) state/federal grant and include: device demonstrations, device loans, recycled computers, reutilized assistive technology equipment, alternative financing resources, and educational trainings and conferences.

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration/Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services has contracted with Easterseals Crossroads to be the statewide provider of the Federal Assistive Technology Act. The contents of this brochure were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

**Indiana's Leading Provider of
Assistive Technology Services
Since 1979**

The INDATA Project at Easterseals Crossroads

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