

About Assistive Technology

Jordan, a sixth grader with learning disabilities, uses a calculator in his math classes. This piece of “assistive technology” (AT) has changed math from a nightmare to a fun and productive time.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology—called AT—is any device or service that helps a person be more independent at home, at work, at school or at play.

Children and adults with any type of disability can use AT to make the most of their abilities and to do things more quickly and easily.

Who can use AT?

AT can benefit our daily lives. Many of us use calculators to balance our checkbooks or wear hearing aids to improve our hearing. Maybe we use a wheelchair or a communication device or we might take a computer course.

For children with disabilities, using assistive technology can bridge the gap between frustration and success.

What are AT devices?

Assistive technology includes everything from a pencil grip to sophisticated wheelchairs, computers and communication devices.

AT devices can be purchased or rented. They can also be modified or created.

Examples of AT devices

- a tape recorder or a computer for a child who has difficulty writing notes in class because of a physical or learning disability
- a voice output device for a child who has difficulty speaking
- a hearing aid for a child who has a hearing impairment
- word prediction software for a student with learning disabilities
- a battery-operated toy modified to include a large, easy-to-use switch
- adapted skis that enable a child to participate in a school recreation program

What are AT services?

An AT service can help children select and make the most of their assistive technology device.

With AT services many children are able to take full advantage of their preschool or classroom experiences.

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Vermont Family Network

To order copies of this fact sheet, or to learn more about VFN's materials and services, contact the

Vermont Family Network

600 Blair Park,
Suite 240,

Williston, VT 05495

1-800-800-4005

You can also contact us via e-mail at info@vtfn.org.

And don't forget to visit our website at www.vtfn.org.

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Examples of AT services

- evaluation by a speech and language pathologist to see how a student would benefit from an augmentative communication device
- modification of a restroom to make it accessible
- help getting the most out of an electronic communication device to talk with friends
- instruction for a student and his family and teachers in the use of a large-type viewer for doing school work
- arranging for the repair of an electric wheelchair

Can a child take AT devices home?

Generally, yes. If the school paid for the AT device, use at home or in the community must be tied to the education needs of the student, such as completing homework or reinforcing skills. If the AT was paid for by Medicaid or private insurance, then it is the property of the student and its use cannot be restricted.

What happens when a child finishes school?

A child's need for AT should be discussed as part of his or her transition from school to college, technical school, employment or independent or supported living situations. This discussion should include identification of other possible funding sources for AT.

If the AT device is needed for employment, it is possible that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services will purchase the equipment from the school.

Resources

Vermont Family Network
help for families advocating for AT
(802) 876-5315 • 1-800-800-4005
info@vtfn.org • www.vtfn.org

Disability Law Project
legal support for getting AT
(800) 747-5022 Burlington/Champlain Valley

(800) 789-4195 Central Vermont
(800) 769-7459 Rutland Area
(800) 769-6728 Northeast Kingdom
(800) 769-9164 Southern Vermont
All phones (v/TTY).

Association for Cerebral Palsy
help with AT issues for families and students with physical disabilities
(800) 639-1930 Main office
(802) 257-2237 Southern Vermont
(802) 723-6303 Northern Vermont

Austine Evaluation Center
assistive learning devices for the deaf and hard of hearing
130 Austine Dr., Ste. 210 • Brattleboro, VT 05301 • (802) 254-3922
www.state.vt.us/schools/aus

Children with Special Health Needs
information on AT devices and funding
(800) 660-4427
www.state.vt.us/health/hi/cshn/cshn.htm

Vermont Assistive Technology Project
"How Do I Pay For It? A Guide to Funding Assistive Technology Equipment" gives a complete overview of AT funding sources.
(802) 241-2620 (v/TTY)
www.dad.state.vt.us/atpl

Vermont Adaptive Equipment Loan Fund
Vermont Development Credit Union AT funding
(802) 865-3404
www.vdcu.org

Vermont Center for Independent Living
information on AT devices and funding
(800) 639-1522
www.vcil.org

Titles in VFN's Assistive Technology (AT) Series

Facts About AT • AT Evaluations • AT & the IEP • AT & the IFSP • AT & Section 504 • Funding AT • Funding AT Through Medicaid • Funding AT Through Private Insurance