

*Discover how
your child can
benefit from
assistive
technology by
requesting an
evaluation.*

Assistive Technology Evaluations

Tom, a preschooler, has an AT evaluations team that includes his parents, a teacher, a speech-language pathologist, and physical and occupational therapists.

What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology, or AT, is any type of device or service that helps a person with a disability be more independent at home, at work, at school or in the community. Children and adults with any type of disability can use AT to make the most of their abilities, have fun and do things more quickly, easily and independently. Assistive technology can remove or lower barriers an individual may have to a life function, create equal access, or enhance an individual's capabilities.

AT can be high tech or low tech.

Examples of AT devices include:

- A computer or electronic notebook for a child who has difficulty writing notes in class because of a physical or learning disability.
- An augmentative communication device for a child who has difficulty communicating.
- A hearing aid for a child who has a hearing impairment.
- Specialized software for a student with needs around learning,

processing or organization.

- A battery-operated toy modified to include a large, easy-to-use switch.
- Adapted skis that enable a child to participate in an after school recreation program.

If you think your child might benefit from assistive technology, you can ask the school to evaluate his or her AT needs. Both the IEP process and Section 504 require teams to consider assistive technology for students with disabilities. An IEP team must discuss whether a child would benefit from AT. If the answer is yes, then the AT evaluation becomes part of your child's comprehensive special education or Section 504 evaluation. If no one at the school has the background to evaluate your child's AT needs, the school must bring in a qualified evaluator.

What should the evaluation look like?

The evaluation should address concerns about what is difficult for a student to do independently. It identifies a

student's abilities and challenges, and the demands of the classroom. It determines if AT can bridge that gap. A trial of selected AT should be part of the process to determine if it is going to help decision making by your child's team. Areas of need include:

- Communication
- Writing
- Math
- Daily Living Skills/Eating/Dressing
- Recreation
- Reading/Learning/Studying
- Use of Computers
- Behavior

What will we learn from an AT evaluation?

A good assistive technology evaluation should provide the following about your child needs:

- Complete answers to your questions regarding your child's AT needs.
- Specific recommendations about possible solutions to your child's AT needs.
- A list of choices of AT devices, along with product names, addresses and prices.
- An opportunity for you and your child to try more than one possible product.

Things to think about in the process:

- It is important to consider how your child feels about the AT device.
- Once you and your child's team have decided on an AT device, arrange the time to try out the equipment. Sometimes AT equipment can be borrowed or rented before you buy it. It may also help to talk with a family who has used the equipment.
- In Vermont, families and educators can visit the [AT Try Out and Access Center](#) at the Center for Disability and Inclusion CDCI. They provide information, referral and hands-on experience with assistive technology for Vermonters of all ages and abilities.

- Once the team selects the appropriate AT and it becomes part of the child's IEP or 504 plan, think about others at home and school who may need to be trained on how to use the AT and support the child. Your child and your family may need AT services so you can learn to use a device. Assistive technology services, **including training**, need to be written in your child's IEP or 504 plan.

What if I disagree with the school's evaluation of my child's AT needs?

If disagreements cannot be resolved in a cooperative and informal way, you can request an independent evaluation at school expense, mediation or a due process hearing. You may also file a complaint with the [Vermont Agency of Education](#).

Resources

[Vermont Assistive Technology Reuse Project](#) manages the Assistive Technology Exchange in New England, the [Vermont AT School Swap](#) and the Medicaid Equipment Reuse Project. 800-750-6355

[Vermont Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired VABVI](#) offers free training, services and support to visually impaired Vermonters. 800-639-5861

[Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) provides complete audiological evaluations for adults and children, hearing aid evaluation and repair and hearing aid dispensing and supplies. 802-258-9500

[CAST Center for Applied Special Technology](#) CAST is an educational research & development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals through Universal Design for Learning 781-245-2212



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