

AT aids and services give children an equal chance to participate in academic and nonacademic activities at school.

Assistive Technology And School

Kelsey has pervasive development delays, including low muscle tone. She is unable to sit without support. The school bought her a special chair to use when doing work at school.

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. AT devices include everything from pencil grips to computers and wheelchairs. AT services assist the child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, use and maintenance of an AT device. Services include specialized evaluations and training for students, teachers and parents in the use and maintenance of AT.

How can AT help my child learn?

AT can help children with disabilities to participate more fully in school and preschool by helping them to do academic and other activities more independently, productively and efficiently. AT can bridge the gap between frustration and success.

Examples of AT devices:

- 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.

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.
- Training for the child, family and school staff in the use of an AT device.
- Arranging for the repair of an electric wheelchair.
- Help getting the most out of an electronic communication device to talk with friends.



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1 800-800-4005

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Questions to ask when evaluating AT needs:

- What are the child's abilities, skills and interests?
- What level of support will the child need to use a device effectively?
- To what extent will the child be able to make choices and use devices independently?
- What are the child's goals for reading, writing, math skill building, creativity, problem solving, independence, friendship and recreation?
- In what settings will the child use AT?
- Does the child have any special physical or intellectual needs?
- What is the child's learning style?
- What do other children the same age like or need to do?

How do I get AT in my child's IEP?

First, ask your child's team for an evaluation to see whether your child would benefit from AT and, if so, what type of AT is appropriate. You and your child's team must then determine whether your child needs AT to help meet IEP goals or objectives, to benefit from their special education program or to be in the regular classroom. If the team agrees that the AT is necessary, the AT device and/or services must be included in your child's IEP.

Who pays for AT?

If AT is included in your child's IEP, the device or service must be provided at no cost to you. Parents cannot be required to use private or public insurance to pay for AT.

What if I disagree with the team decision?

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.

What if my child has a disability but isn't eligible for special education?

Under Section 504, children with

disabilities who are not eligible for special education may still be entitled to AT. Accommodations, aids and services, including AT must be provided to children in order to allow equal access to all academic and non-academic activities. If you think your child qualifies for Section 504 services, ask your school to conduct a 504 evaluation. Make sure they evaluate your child's needs for AT devices and/or services. The 504 team must also consider any evaluation information you already have. If the 504 team decides AT is required, it must be included in your child's 504 plan.

Can my 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 your child's educational needs, such as completing homework or reinforcing skills.

What happens when my child finishes school?

Your child's need for AT should be discussed as you plan for the transition from school to college, technical school, employment and independent or supported living situations. Your 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.

Resources

[University of Vermont Center on Disability and Community Inclusion](#)

Promoting inclusion for people with disabilities, enhancing student learning and faculty scholarship since 1974.
802-656-4031

[Vermont Assistive Technology Program](#)

Works with individuals of all ages to find accessible solutions that will help with any disability and aging-related needs.
800-750-6355