



"Parents Are Vital in Education"

# Parent Training and Information Program

## WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

People use assistive technology (AT) to achieve greater independence and to enhance the quality of their lives. Assistive technology includes both devices and services. It may also be called "adaptive" technology or "aids" for independent living.

- Devices include any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability, for example, aids for daily living, wheelchairs, computers, assistive listening devices, magnification systems and communication devices.
- Services are supports provided to people with disabilities and/or their caregivers to help them select, acquire, or use assistive technology devices. Services also include functional evaluation, training on or demonstration of devices, and purchasing or leasing, and maintaining devices.

### Does My Child Have a Right to Assistive Technology?

If your child is eligible for special education or Section 504 accommodations, then the answer is "yes" if the assistive technology is necessary to achieve a "free and appropriate public education". Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA), states "The Individualized Education Program, (IEP), team shall consider whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services". The Washington State regulation (WAC 392-172-075) similarly states "each public agency shall ensure that assistive technology devices or services or both shall be made available to a special education student if required as part of the student's Individualized Education Program." These are strong mandates to use in advocating for inclusion of assistive technology in your child's IEP.

### What Kinds of Devices Do Schools Have to Provide?

Both the State and Federal special education laws define assistive technology broadly to include a range of devices (from "off the shelf" to customize) and services. The inclusion of "services" is very important. Such services can include evaluation and training for both school staff and family members. Such training is often the key to successful use of the assistive technology. Some examples of AT could be: word processors, electronic communication devices, computers and printers, calculators, speech recognition software, print enlargement, text reading equipment, wheelchairs, electric scooters, etc.

### How Do I Know What Kind of AT My Child Needs?

Get an evaluation from a competent professional. If your school district does not have a staff person knowledgeable about AT, ask for an independent evaluation from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Special Education Technical Center in Ellensburg (or satellite in Tacoma) or another experienced AT evaluator. There are many, many devices available. Be open-minded. There may be more than one appropriate solution for your child's needs. The most expensive device may not be the best match for your child. Sometimes, such devices are complicated and frustrating for the child, resulting in a total turn-off from technology. A progressive approach is often the most effective – for example, where the child "works up" from simple to technology that is more complex.

## **Can My Child Bring the Device Home?**

Yes. If it is necessary to achieve a free and appropriate education as for example, when the device is needed at home for homework and/or additional and supplementary training.

## **Does the School Have to Pay for Any Device – No Matter How Expensive?**

Not necessarily, the school is not required to buy the “Cadillac” of assistive technology if a “Volkswagen” will work to achieve a free and appropriate education. The school’s obligation is to “provide” assistive technology from their own inventory or an outside source and it cannot ask you to contribute. If the device is paid for by the school district, the district maintains ownership of it.

## **What Will Happen to the Child’s AT When the Child Graduates or Leaves the District for Another Reason?**

Because the district owns the equipment, the district keeps it unless you can convince the district to sell it to you, or the next program, at its depreciated value. Planning for your child’s transition to post-secondary education (college or vocational training) is also a critical part of the process. To help ensure a successful transition after high school, planning should begin by at least age 14. Remember to consider what AT the child will continue to need in the higher education setting.

## **What is a College or Vocational School’s Obligation to provide Accommodations or Assistive Technology?**

In higher education, there is no requirement that the college provide special education. However, the college must provide reasonable accommodations, including auxiliary aids and services as necessary to provide equal access to its services in as integrated a setting as possible.

### **Additional Laws and Regulations to consult include:**

State of Washington Rules and Regulations for Providing Services to Children with Disabilities

Public Law 105-17: Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (ADA)

Your local school district policies and procedures with regard to assistive technology

### **Where to get additional information:**

#### **Washington PAVE**

253-565-2266 (v/tty)

1-800-572-7368 (for the office closest to you)

E-mail: [wapave9@washingtonpave.com](mailto:wapave9@washingtonpave.com)

Webpage: [www.washingtonpave.org](http://www.washingtonpave.org)

#### **Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)**

360-753-6733

Webpage: <http://www.k12.wa.us/>

#### **Skyline Elementary School**

2301 North Mildred

Tacoma, WA 98406

#### **Special Education Technology Center**

Central Washington University

400 East University Way

Ellensburg, WA 98926

(509)963-3350 Fax:(509)963-3355

#### **Washington Assistive Technology Alliance**

**Seattle:** 206-685-4181 (v) 206-616-1396 (tty)

E-mail: [uwat@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwat@u.washington.edu)

This information adapted from an article written by Karen Ozmun and Frances J. Pennell at the Washington Assistive Technology Alliance.

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