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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive technology is one of the early intervention services authorized under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for children with disabilities birth to three years of age. Oklahoma has allocated funds to help provide assistive technology devices/services for children birth to three when funds are not available from other sources. To access these funds, children must be participating in the SoonerStart Early Intervention program.

Definitions

Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of children with disabilities.

Assistive technology service means a service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device. Assistive technology services include:

- the evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary (natural) environment;
- purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices for children with disabilities;
- selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing or replacing of assistive technology devices;
- coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
- training and technical assistance for a child with disabilities, or if appropriate, that child's family and
- training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing early intervention services or other individuals who provide services to, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of individuals with disabilities).

Types of Assistive Technology Devices

Assistive technology devices fall into one of the following categories:

- Vision
- Assistive Listening
- Self-care
- Positioning
- Mobility
- Communication
- Early Reading
- Early Writing

- Early Math
- Computer Access
- Play
- Environmental Control

Assessment and Provision of Assistive Technology

Assessments for assistive technology devices should be conducted by a multidisciplinary team. This team should include the parent and persons with experience in providing assistive technology devices/services. The team may also include the service coordinator and other team members as appropriate. The SoonerStart program recommends that assistive technology devices be used as part of the assessment process for fitting, demonstration, and extended trial. Assistive technology devices for assessment have been provided by Oklahoma ABLE Tech via an established Memorandum of Understanding with the State Department of Education and the State Department of Health. Additionally, assistive technology devices are available for assessment and short-term loan from various statewide programs such as Oklahoma ABLE Tech, Oklahoma Assistive Technology Center, Oklahoma Library for the Blind and other community based programs.

Assessment for assistive technology devices may occur as part of the initial multidisciplinary evaluation when a child is referred to the SoonerStart early intervention program. It may also occur as part of follow-up to the initial multidisciplinary evaluation or at any other time while the child is receiving SoonerStart services. SoonerStart supports the idea that assessment of the child's development and assistive technology needs is an on-going process rather than a one-time event.

The team assessing assistive technology needs should address the following:

1. Child's developmental needs and function.

IFSP teams consider the child's age and the need for technology to support the achievement of outcomes that address the child's abilities and overall development. The IFSP team identifies the most appropriate device for the child's current development. Because technology devices and the needs of children and their families change, devices should be used to enhance the child's current development and functioning, and address immediate needs.

2. Equipment and device options.

IFSP teams consider a range of supports and services that address the needs of children and their families and may include a continuum of options ranging from creative use of existing resources (e.g. household items, toys, etc), to low technology devices, to high technology devices. The IFSP team may use devices currently available within the SoonerStart program as well as devices that may be outside the SoonerStart program.

3. Child and family needs.

IFSP teams consider devices that fit easily into the family's routines and assist in the achievement of outcomes. In doing so, appropriate assistive technology devices should assist in the child's development and functional abilities.

4. Assistive Technology service coordination.

Following the provision of assistive technology, the IFSP reflects how SoonerStart intends to train children and caregivers in the use of the assistive technology device(s). Additionally, the IFSP reflects the coordination of various services, such as other educational and/or rehabilitation plans and programs along with maintenance and repair of the assistive technology device(s) when needed.

5. Funding.

The service coordinator and other team members should help the parent identify funding for the assistive technology devices. When funding is not available, SoonerStart is the payor of last resort.

When equipment cannot be purchased through other resources (i.e., Medicaid, Title V, private insurance, other community, civic and service organizations) in a timely manner, the SoonerStart early intervention program may purchase equipment that is required by the infant or toddler with a disability to promote and enhance access to and function within the child's natural environment and to achieve IFSP outcomes. Assistive technology devices and equipment purchased by SoonerStart remain the property of the SoonerStart Program. The equipment may be used by the child/family until the child's third birthday.

During the transition planning process, the SoonerStart team includes information on the child's assistive technology device and service needs and is encouraged to consider the Assistive Technology Device Purchase/Sale Agreement, see note below. SoonerStart may use public or private funding sources to pay for needed assistive technology devices and services; however, SoonerStart is the payer of last resort and will provide the devices and services in a timely manner.

Note: Oklahoma State Department of Education provides a mechanism for school districts, public agencies and/or parents to transfer assistive technology either through sale or transfer. The Agreement can be found within the OSDE Technical Assistance Document, Assistive Technology for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

SoonerStart Assistive Technology Acquisition Process

Step 1: Assistive technology devices and services are identified as necessary to meet an IFSP outcome.

Step 2: Determine if additional assistive technology assessment is needed.

Step 3: Identify appropriate assistive technology evaluator.

Step 4: Access expertise of local early intervention team members if available within the team or community.

Step 5: If assistive technology expertise is not available locally, contact the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Center (OATC) or other appropriate providers for consultation.

Step 6: Complete the assistive technology assessment process and make appropriate recommendations.

Step 7: Identify all possible resources to cover the cost of the recommended assistive technology devices and services. Possible resources include, but are not limited to the following:

- Medicaid - A funding source that provides reimbursement for medical services for individuals who are financially and categorically eligible. Devices must be medically necessary for the child and must be prescribed by a physician. There must be a statement of the medical necessity to justify the equipment. Medicaid will also reimburse medically necessary services and devices which are unrelated to the child's developmental needs. The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority can provide more information.
- SSI-Disabled Children's Program (SSI-DCP) - This state program provides formula, diapers (for children over four), adaptive equipment, including van lifts, and environmental aids. Children must be receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and under 16 years of age to be eligible. Applications can be made at the county Department of Human Services office.
- Private pay - The parent may choose to purchase device(s) or service(s) for the child with private funds. This can occur either when assistive technology is initially recommended by the multidisciplinary team or during the transition process, at a reduced fair market value, for equipment that was formerly purchased by SoonerStart or other public or private resources.
- Private insurance - The parent may choose to use their insurance company if their policy covers the cost of assistive technology devices/services. Parents may decline to use private health insurance based on financial cost considerations, such as a out-of-pocket expenses, co-pays, insurance deductions, or decreases in lifetime coverage.
- Alternative resources - Private foundations, charitable organizations, service clubs, or other local groups may be approached to provide funding support for assistive technology devices/services.
- Other - A combination of any of the above or some other creative source that results in provision of assistive technology devices/services.

Step 8: If the team is unable to access funding for assistive technology devices/services in a timely manner, then SoonerStart resources can be utilized. To access funding through SoonerStart the team must submit the SoonerStart Assistive Technology Request (**Appendix N**) to the

Executive Director of SoonerStart Early Intervention, Special Education Services, Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Step 9: The Executive Director reviews the documentation of the team's assistive technology assessment, the need for assistive technology to support the child's outcome(s), a letter of medical necessity or a letter of justification, and the attempts to access other funding sources within ten working days. The documentation review is to insure that the IFSP team has provided adequate information regarding assessment and how it relates to the child's IFSP outcomes and all attempts at seeking other appropriate funding sources.

Step 10: The SoonerStart team is contacted within ten working days to request more information/documentation if necessary or to inform the team that the reviewed documentation is determined complete.

Step 11: Once the documentation has been reviewed and determined complete, acquisition of the equipment is coordinated through the SoonerStart Program and provided to the family in a timely manner.

In some circumstances, families may offer to donate assistive technology equipment to SoonerStart that is no longer being used by their child. All donations are subject to the Oklahoma State Department of Education's "Donation Solicitation and Acceptance Policy" which can be viewed at <http://ok.gov/sde/sponsorshipdonation>.