

### **What is the purpose of assistive technology in education programs?**

The purpose of assistive technology is to facilitate the student's participation in his or her education program and to enable the student to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). For example, the technology may provide an alternative means of accessing the curriculum (e.g., listening to and following along with a digital textbook), an alternative means of learning, or it may provide access to the school program. Keeping the mandates of the 1997 and 2004 reauthorized IDEA in mind, assistive technology should support the student in the general curriculum and in the least restrictive environment to the greatest extent possible.

### **Should AT be considered for all students with disabilities?**

Yes. Under consideration of special factors, the IDEA states "that the IEP team shall consider whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services."

### **Is AT required for all students who have an IEP?**

No. AT must be considered for all students with an IEP. The IEP team will determine if AT is required based on the results of assessments/observations, etc.

### **Who makes the decision if a student needs assistive technology devices or services?**

The IEP team makes the decision of whether students need AT to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The IEP team may need to rely on an AT evaluation or consultation from a

team of professionals. The team could include: a speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, special education teacher, psychologist, computer specialist, hearing specialist, vision specialist.

Some school districts may have an assistive technology team identified and trained to provide the assistive technology evaluation on a local level. Parent input and participation is important in the evaluation process and as a member of the IEP team.

### **How should the scope of the assistive technology evaluation and its components be determined?**

A comprehensive AT evaluation is tailored to the individual student's needs. Depending on those needs, the evaluation might address communication, written work, seating, positioning, mobility, academic and nonacademic concerns, access to the general curriculum, access to extracurricular activities, software and hardware options, environmental modifications, training, maintenance of the device, and other issues specific to the student.

### **What are critical components of an assistive technology evaluation/assessment?**

AT assessment is a systematic process to ensure that decisions regarding the selection of AT devices are based on information regarding the student's abilities, needs, environments, and tasks. AT assessment includes a team approach, assessment of educational tasks and routines, and is ongoing in nature. Although most AT assessments are not standardized, the assessment process should be replicable and use a framework for effective decision making.



## What is the role of parents in the AT assessment process?

Parents are members of the IEP team and provide input in all decisions regarding AT and the IEP. Parents, and the student, if appropriate, should be invited to participate in all aspects of the process. Parents have information about their child that other team members can use to fit, customize, and adapt technology to meet their needs.

## What are the timelines for purchasing and/or providing assistive technology devices and services?

IDEA regulations do not specify a timeline for the provision of assistive technology. However, if AT is determined necessary for a FAPE then it must be provided in a timely manner. "Timely manner" is defined as, "at the same time typically developing peers receive their similar materials." The school district may not delay or deny the provision of AT due to funding issues, if a child requires AT to benefit from the IEP.

## Are personal use devices excluded?

The IEP team decides on a case-by-case basis what AT a student needs to benefit from special education and related services. With the exception of cochlear implants or other surgically implanted devices, if a device is included in the IEP, the school is responsible for the provision of that device or ensuring that it is provided at no cost to the parents.

## Who is responsible for buying assistive technology?

The school system is responsible for acquisition and provision of AT devices. Sometimes, parents may choose to purchase devices and send them to school with the student. Schools may use various funding sources to provide needed AT devices with

parental consent, including but not limited to the following:

- Medicaid
- Medicaid Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment
- Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver
- Medicaid In Home Support Waiver Medicaid Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA)
- Private Insurance
- SoonerStart
- Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Financial Loan Programs
- Private/Community Resources

## Who owns the assistive technology device?

It depends on who purchased the device. If the school purchased the device, the school maintains ownership. If the parents' private insurance purchased the device, then it belongs to the student. If Medicaid purchased the device, then Medicaid maintains ownership. A family or other entity (For example, Department of Rehabilitation Services) may enter into an agreement with the purchaser and buy the device(s) at a depreciated amount.

## May the student take home assistive technology devices purchased by the school?

Yes. As stated in the IDEA regulation 34 CFR §300.308 (b), "On a case-by-case basis, the use of school purchased assistive technology devices in a child's home or in other settings is required if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices in order to receive FAPE." The IEP team will decide if a student requires the use of school-owned equipment in environments outside the school environment, including the student's home.



## Who is responsible for maintenance and repair of equipment?

The local school district is responsible for:

- Maintaining the equipment (i.e. replacing batteries and charging).
- Repairing AT devices used as part of the student's special education and related services.
- Ensuring that the student receives substitute equipment while his or her device is being repaired.
- Ensuring that the external components of surgically implanted medical devices are functioning properly.

## What provisions should be made while AT devices are being repaired?

It may not be possible to provide the same device in the interim. During the development of the student's IEP, IEP teams should identify: the steps to take if the device needs repairs; how they will secure a substitute system; and/ what other technology options used on a temporary basis during the repair process would offer an acceptable substitute to the student's device.

## What provisions should be made for transfer of equipment when a student moves to another school or to a post-school program?

Local school districts should consider transferring the equipment with the student. Participating agencies should discuss the transfer of AT equipment for a student transitioning from school to post-school programs, using Memoranda of Understanding or Interagency Agreements between agencies that procure AT.

## What should happen when an assistive technology device is no longer effective for a student?

The AT team should begin the assessment process again by first gathering information about the student, environment, and tasks then continue the process with a trial of new device(s), collecting data, making a decision, and documenting in the IEP.

## Do parents have the right to request a due process hearing over the provision of assistive technology?

Yes. AT devices and services contribute to an appropriate education for a child with disabilities and are subject to the procedural safeguards required by the IDEA, including the right to request a due process hearing. As specified in the Policies and Procedures for Special Education in Oklahoma, parents or guardians may request a hearing to determine whether an educational program is free and/or appropriate for a child with disabilities or for a child alleged to have a disability. Mediation in special education is also available to assist parents and schools in resolving disagreements regarding the education program of a student with disabilities.

