

Changes in the AT Act and What it Means to North Dakota

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

The AT Act of 2004 requires states to conduct specific activities and identifies the percentage of their funds to be used for these activities. This is a change from the previous Act. The required activities are identified under two categories, State-Level Activities and State Leadership Activities. The following are the required activities within each category. State Level Activities: 1) Alternative Financial Loan Program, 2) Device Reutilization Program, 3) Device Loan Program, and 4) Device Demonstrations. State Leadership Activities: 1) Training and Technical Assistance, 2) Public Awareness Activities, and 3) Coordination and Collaboration. North Dakota is in a very good position as IPAT is already engaged in a majority of these activities.

Funding this wide array of services continues to be a challenge. The Act allows for increased funding, however, federal appropriations left it at level funding for the State programs for the upcoming year. This means IPAT will continue to provide the current core services but will need to leverage other types of funding to increase or expand these services.

The State Level Activities that IPAT will continue are: 1) the IPAT Equipment Loan Library, which provides an opportunity for a short term loan of a wide range of devices, 2) the Technology Access Center in Fargo, which provides demonstrations and hands on experience with devices, and 3) the on-line Swap & Shop or re-use program, giving individuals and organizations a chance to sell or buy used equipment. The 4th required activity, the Alternative Financial Loan Program, will give North Dakota residents an alternative financing option for AT. The program will soon be ready to take applications and information regarding this service will be released in the near future.

The State Leadership Activities that IPAT will continue include: 1) Training and Technical Assistance provided by IPAT Coordinators located in Fargo and Bismarck, 2) on-going Public Awareness Activities such as participation at local conferences and other types of events, the AT Key newsletter, and the IPAT website and 3) on-going Coordination and Collaboration through participation in task forces and committees whose focus is to make AT more accessible to people in North Dakota.

IPAT and stakeholders will need to continue to look for ways to leverage other funding in order for these and other needed AT services to be readily available to all people in all corners of the state. IPAT's focus will be to maintain a consumer-responsive program of technology-related assistance for individuals with disabilities that is equally available to all individuals with disabilities residing in the State, "regardless of their type of disability, age, income level, or location of

residence in the State, or the type of assistive technology device or assistive technology service required” (AT Act of 2004).

SOLUTIONS FOR THE ONE-HANDED KEYBOARD USER

Accessing the standard computer keyboard with one hand can be trying. Because the typing area is large, accessing the keys efficiently can be difficult and tiresome. It is also hard to perform simultaneous key commands such as control-alt-delete. There are many solutions available to make one-handed keyboarding easier and they are discussed below.

Alternative Keyboards

Alternative keyboards designed for one-handed users can replace the standard keyboard. They are usually smaller, have fewer keys, and require the user to learn a different way of typing such as key combinations to produce one letter. Examples of keyboards of this type include the BAT, Frogpad, and the ½ keyboard from Matias. The half QWERTY from Matias is a standard sized keyboard that allows access with the right, left or both hands, simply by changing ones' hand position. All of the keyboards above can be plugged into the USB port and do not require additional software to run on the Windows platform.

Small Keyboards

Many people find typing on a smaller standard keyboard easier than learning to use an alternative keyboard. The important feature when selecting a smaller keyboard is the distance from the middle of one key to the middle of the next, not the overall size of the keyboard. The standard distance (key pitch) is 19mm; smaller keyboards typically range from 16-17mm. The majority of small keyboards are USB and do not require additional software. Due to variations in adult hand size, not all people can use smaller keyboards.

Operating System Built-ins

The following built-in accessibility features can be turned on from the Start Menu within the Windows operating system (95-XP). Go to Start – Programs – Accessories – Accessibility. The built-in features can be used with most standard keyboards (large and small) and some alternative keyboards.

Sticky Keys- allows one to use only one hand when implementing 2-3 simultaneous key commands such as Ctrl-Alt-Del.

Filter Keys- when enabled ignores brief or repeated keystrokes improving accuracy.

Keyboarding Tutorials

Whether one is typing on a standard or smaller keyboard, there are several programs available to learn typing with one hand such as:

- The manual and CD from www.aboutonehandtyping.com -free sample pages from the manual available at the site;
- The Five-Fingered Typist from several vendors such as <http://www.mayer-johnson.com/> ; and

- Keyboarding-by-Ability from <http://www.special-education-soft.com/OneHand.html> --free demo available at the site.

If you have any questions regarding keyboard options, please contact IPAT at 1-800-265-4728. Alternative and smaller keyboards are available for loan through the IPAT Equipment Loan Library-1-800-895-4728.

Some information for this article was obtained from the following website:
<http://www.aboutonehandtyping.com/littlefingers.html>

Life on Your Own Terms

- John W. Johnson, Options

“Back in the 1960’s when my brother was a young man, the only choice we had was to put him in an institution, where they could handle his disability. He’s dead now, but I wish he could have seen your display, it would’ve opened up his world.”

This was the comment I heard at a conference where Options Interstate Resource Center for Independent Living had set up its display of adaptive recreational equipment. This equipment has been accumulated by Options over the past several years, and has been displayed at various sports and recreational shows, as well as, events often attended by people with disabilities.

The most imposing device is the 12-foot deer stand; it allows a person to transfer from a wheelchair into a chairlift and then be raised to hunt. Options displays a wheelchair equipped with trigger mechanisms to allow for people with quadriplegia to shoot with a sip ‘n puff switch or mouth stick. This year, a person with quadriplegia shot a deer using a sip and puff device mounted to his wheelchair.

A big hit for winter recreation, is the “sledge” hockey device. It is for individuals who cannot walk or have difficulty walking. There is a seat with two blade runners under it, a guide near the front and two adapted hockey sticks that the ‘skater’ uses with their hands to move about on the ice. There is a similar device for downhill skiing.

For more information about the recreational equipment Options displays, call 1-800-726-3692.

CONSUMER CONNECTION

A look at what IPAT has been doing and who they have been serving over the past year:

Direct Consumer Assistance – IPAT provided direct services to 3,029 individuals.

AT Trainings, Demonstrations/Exhibits and Public Awareness Activities – IPAT provided 11 trainings, 19 demonstrations/exhibitions, and 23 public awareness activities attended by 3,360 individuals.

IPAT Equipment Loan Library – providing short-term AT equipment loans to state residents of all ages with disabilities – 20 Young Child; 128 Education; 202 Employment; 108 Older Adult; 11 Minority; 52 Community.

FUNDING NEWS

Could Owning a Home be an Option for you?

(Information provided by Robert Knoll at Fannie Mae)

The ND HomeChoice Coalition is a joint collaboration between disability rights organizations, housing counseling agencies, state agencies and lenders to help make homeownership easier for people with disabilities or who have family members with a disability. The Coalition provides information on the home-buying process including education; they understand the issues surrounding down payment costs, accessibility, and credit issues; and can help you know about flexible, low-cost mortgages.

While you must have enough income to afford a home, the Coalition can keep you informed about resources that make it possible for people with disabilities and their families qualify for homeownership.

Features of the low-cost mortgages include low down payment, as little as \$500, and a loan value that equals 100% of the purchase price. Other mortgage features include the following:

Income Sources

- Income sources other than wages and salaries – including public or private disability benefits, and Section 8 housing assistance payments – are allowed.
- You can count rental payments from boarders as income, even if the boarders are not related to you.
- With higher borrower income limits, two people can buy a home together.
- For two-unit properties (live in one and rent out the other), 75 percent of rental income can be added to your qualifying income.

Credit

- Flexible credit guidelines allowed for homebuyers with nontraditional credit.
- Co-borrowers are not required to have an established credit history to count a portion of their income to qualify for the loan, as long as the primary borrower meets the minimum credit requirements.

Some examples of success stories from the Coalition are as follows:

- A single man with disabilities purchased his first home after 14 years of renting a home modified to accommodate his disabilities.
- A couple began accumulating debt after one of them became disabled. Although they had a stable income, the mounting medical bills prohibited them from buying a home until the Coalition helped them to find affordable mortgage financing.
- A couple obtained financing and other resources to modify their home after the husband became disabled on the job. Adaptations, including an entrance ramp, made the home wheelchair accessible so the couple was able to remain in their home.

If you would like to learn more about taking the first step toward homeownership, contact IPAT at 1-800-265-4728 for participating agencies.

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT



A Small Keyboard for One-handed Use

The Zippy Mini USB Keyboard (WK610USB) is a small keyboard that can be used for one handed typing. The Key Pitch (the distance from the middle of one key to the middle of the next) of this 88 key keyboard is approximately 16 mm. The keys are wide and flat making it accessible to users with larger hands. This keyboard also incorporates 2 USB ports, enabling one to connect other USB products to the computer. This device is available through the IPAT equipment Loan Library, 1-800-895-4728; and may be purchased (price varies with each vendor) from several vendors including: NewEgg.com

<http://www.newegg.com/app/ViewProductDesc.asp?description=23-128-002&depa=0> or S & H at Directron.com <http://directron.com/wk610usbhub.html>

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

AT EXPO!

April 14, 2005

1 pm – 7 pm

Civic Center – Fargo, ND

Contact: Ronda Wilson

701-239-7332

Materials Available

The North Dakota Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) has developed some promotional/educational materials specific to Workers with Disabilities (WWD) and Medicaid Coverage. The following materials are available:

1. WWD Fact Sheet

2. WWD Promotional Video in DVD, CD or VHS format
3. WWD Brochures
4. WWD Resource Guide

If you are interested in these materials, call 1-800-233-1737 and ask for Tom.