

Living At Home Safely

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

There are many senior citizens in North Dakota who are facing the decision to remain at home or move to a care facility. Safety issues are often a major factor in this decision. The effects of aging and the changes these effects have on a persons abilities, directly impacts whether a person continues to be safe living at home.

The Senior AT Safety Program is designed to help people remain safe in their homes through the use of assistive technology (i.e., grab bars, magnifiers, reachers, medication dispensers, seat-lifts). It is designed to serve all North Dakota residents who are 60 years and older and not living in a nursing facility. All persons meeting these criteria can be served; however, the program gives priority to those people living in medically underserved rural areas.

The Senior AT Safety Program offers a wide range of free AT equipment that will assist individuals to safely care for themselves in their home such as: bed risers, bath benches, pill cutters, raised toilet seats, long-handled shoe horns, fire alarms, kitchen gadgets, mobility devices, eating utensils, phone amplifiers, talking clocks, medication dispensers and more. Many AT devices are simple to use, but others may require training for the individual or those caring for them. The program will provide the support services needed to properly use the devices. Some devices may also require assistance with installation. There is a \$200 per person cap on devices.

A separate component of the Senior AT Safety Program is dedicated to medication management. There are many types of medication devices available to help people remember to take and to organize their medication. A trained AT specialist will assist the individual in determining which device is most appropriate for their medication dispensing needs. If it is a more complex unit, training on its use will be provided.

Who can benefit? If a person has difficulty: putting away groceries, preparing meals, accomplishing grooming activities, doing laundry, collecting or sending mail, getting from place to place, taking medication, or, feeling safe in their home or bathroom, they could benefit from this program.

Further information about this program can be received by calling 1-866-265-0450. A form can also be obtained on-line at www.ndipat.org under Services/Senior AT Safety Program.

This program is funded by the Aging Services Division, ND Department of Human Services.

'No Place Like Home' Grant Award

It is your choice. Where you live is up to you. Individual choice about where to live became a nationally recognized right as the result of the Olmstead decision. This decision affirms the right of people in institutions to challenge their placement. It can also prevent the placement of people in institutional settings, who with appropriate supports could remain living in their home.

In North Dakota, the Governor's Commission on the Olmstead decision recently awarded funding to the Center's for Independent Living (CIL's). Their goal is to help individuals understand their options and make informed choices based on those options. The CIL's are partnering with Protection and Advocacy of North Dakota, and the Interagency Program for Assistive Technology, to develop informational products and a consumer-driven system of services for people with disabilities and long-term illnesses under the 'No Place Like Home' proposal.

Through the 'No Place Like Home' award, the CIL's, P&A and IPAT will work directly with people who have disabilities, or who are elderly, to answer the questions, "What are my living options?" and "What supports are available to help me live at home?". Areas to be addressed are: 1) home and community based services; 2) legal representation if needed for a documented rights violation; and 3) assistive technology services. IPAT is responsible for the assistive technology services which include: an AT assessment; assistance with purchasing the equipment; and training on equipment use. By working together, the 'No Place Like Home' project partners can develop a wider range of long-term care and support services based on individual need. If you want further information, call IPAT at 1-800-265-4728 or your regional Center for Independent Living.

Medication Management

Prescription drugs can be lifesavers – but only if they are taken correctly. AARP surveys show that nearly half of the medications in the U.S. are not taken as directed. People frequently skip doses, take dosages more often than recommended, or confuse dosages. To increase the likelihood of avoiding these common medication errors, IPAT is administering the **Medication Management** program with funding through the North Dakota Aging Services Division, Department of Human Services.

The **Medication Management** program serves all North Dakota residents who are 60 years and older, not living in a nursing facility. IPAT can help this population take medications as directed by providing them a medication dispenser, organizer, or reminder to fit their unique needs. When needed, IPAT will also train the individual to use the medication management system. All services are provided **at no cost** to the individual.

Remember, there are many types of medication dispensers available, from vibrating wristwatches to self-contained, lockable fully automatic pill dispensers

with a voice message to help people medicate correctly. For more information about medication management solutions, call toll-free **1-866-265-0450**.

Funding News

Medicaid Funding and AAC Devices

Question: “Has anything changed in the last year regarding Medicaid Funding for Alternative/Augmentative Communication (AAC) Devices?”

Answer: The procedure has not changed; however, Medicaid’s reimbursement rates have. They now use an allowable that is different for each category of durable medical equipment. This may or may not affect a request for an AAC device. Some companies do not accept what Medicaid reimburses, so even though Medicaid approves the order, the company may not agree to the terms.

AAC Device Purchase Steps for a Person who has Medical Assistance as their Primary Insurance:

1. An appropriate AAC evaluation should be completed and a report written.
2. The individual should try various devices. Medicaid wants to see that the individual has tried at least two or three devices. They want to make sure that the correct device has been chosen for the person. They want to be assured that he or she is not going to outgrow the device in a year or two, and/or the device won’t sit on a shelf unused.
3. An equipment request report must be written. It can be a stand-alone document or be incorporated within the evaluation report.
4. Is the chosen device available through a ND Medicaid provider? If yes, contact them for their funding procedure. If not, a vendor for that device will have to be found that is willing to be a ND Medicaid provider.
5. You will need the individual’s physician to sign a prior authorization form. This form can be obtained on line at <http://www.state.nd.us/EFORMS/Doc/snf01115.pdf> or by calling toll-free: 1-800-472-2622. Ask for Medical Services and from SFN 1115. The speech pathologist can fill out the top portion, the physician should sign where indicated, and the vendor should fill in all of the equipment information. The vendor can send the form to the physician, but sometimes it is faster if the speech pathologist does it.
6. Once you have the letter, the prior authorization, and the vendor’s required paperwork, send it all to the vendor, and they should take care of the rest.
7. You should call a few days after you send it and every week after that to make sure that it does not sit on someone’s desk.
8. Remember, obtaining the device is just the first step.

For sample reports and/or other questions regarding the funding process, please call Jeannie Krull at 1-800-895-4728.

Consumer Connection

AT Items Help Senior Citizens Remain at Home Safely

A number of North Dakota seniors are living at home more safely because of the *Senior Assistive Technology Safety (SATS)* program. To date, over 200 people have received AT devices that have helped them to safely cook, clean, manage medication, communicate with family and friends, obtain emergency assistance, or enjoy leisure activities while at home.

Comments on the SATS program

. . . . it helps to provide safety equipment not paid for by Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance it really makes a difference for people leaving the hospital to return to their home.

Cass County – HCBS Worker

. . . . it helps me deliver needed items, and shows the elderly I work with that ‘someone’ is there to help.

Langdon, ND – Outreach Worker

. . . . many seniors spend a significant amount of their income on medications, this program helps them get the safety equipment they need but often can’t afford.

Rolla, ND – Outreach Worker

. . . . it provides items that people need in their homes to live safely.

Harvey, ND – Outreach Worker

. . . . it is not limited to a certain income level and the paperwork is not overwhelming.

Rolla, ND – Outreach Worker

So remember, next time you find yourself wondering . . . is there some way I could safely put lotion on my back . . . should I buy medicine or a smoke detector . . . is there something out there that would make walking on ice safer . . . call the SATS program 1-866-265-0450 and find out.

MD.2 – medication management device

The MD.2 is an automatic pill dispenser. It is about the size of a coffeemaker and holds 60 medication cups. The MD.2 will dispense up to 6 cups per day, and more than one pill can be placed per-cup with a capacity equal to 50 aspirins. The lockable cabinet keeps medications safe, and it comes with a built in power back up should there be a power failure.

It can store 3-4 weeks of medication for most people, and has an early dose feature, which allows for flexibility when needed. It reminds people to take their medication in three ways: 1) a recorded voice message; 2) a text message

displayed on the built in LCD screen; and 3) a blinking light. The MD.2 comes with a videotape, which provides step-by-step directions on set-up.

Call the IPAT Equipment Loan Library at 1-800-895-4728 to rent the MD.2 for a trial period. More information is available at www.epill.com/md2.html or by calling toll free 1-800-549-0095. The base price is \$749.95 with optional monitoring services available at \$29.95 per month to alert caregivers when medication is missed.

If you are a North Dakota resident 60 years or older, there is a program designed to help you obtain a medication device free of charge, call 1-800-265-4728.

For Your Information . . .

- ✓ Low-income households currently utilizing Section 8 Housing Choice Rental Vouchers to meet monthly rental expenses can now use the voucher program to purchase a home. Program participants must be on Section 8 Housing Assistance for a minimum of one year and have been employed for a minimum of one year (except in the case of disabled households). For more information contact the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency at 1-800-292-8621.

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- ✓ Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation offers Quality of Life Grants to nonprofit organizations. The grant awards are in amounts up to \$25,000 and submission deadlines are April 1 and October 1 annually. For more information go to <http://www.christopherreeve.org/QLGrants/QLGrantsList.cfm?c=11>

- ✓ **Regional AT Expo!**
April 15, 2004
Fargo Civic Center
Contact the ARC: 1-701-293-8191