

Update on Reauthorization of the Assistive Technology Act

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

One year ago, this newsletter ran an article regarding the need to reauthorize the Assistive Technology Act (ATA). It stated, "if action wasn't taken, federal funding for IPAT in North Dakota would end on September 30, 2004". Reauthorization did not take place during that year, however the Appropriations Committee kept all state AT projects alive via a one-year amendment to the appropriations bill. For North Dakota, it means funding will continue for IPAT until September 30, 2005.

Once again it is time to reauthorize the law to ensure the continuation of a state grant program in every state. With the advances in technology, the increasing number of people with disabilities, and a growing population experiencing the effects of aging, the services provided by the State AT programs are in even more demand. The US Senate and House of Representatives are both moving to reauthorize the Assistive Technology Act.

Senate Activities: In the Senate, bi-partisan work groups have been established that include a range of stakeholders from AT projects, business, private industry and disability organizations. These working groups are charged with addressing specific questions on how to strengthen the AT Act. Staff from offices of Democrats and Republicans on the HELP Committee will be working with each of the work groups. The Senate hopes to introduce a bi-partisan bill in April.

House Activities: Staff for the Education and the Workforce Committee in the House of Representatives have indicated that they too will be introducing a bill and moving it through the legislative process shortly. They hope to have work completed on the bill by Memorial Day. It will be a bi-partisan bill.

Impact on North Dakota: Without funding for IPAT the following services would be lost in our state.

- Statewide Equipment Loan Library
- Technical Assistance from trained AT professionals via phone, e-mail, on-site
- AT Evaluation and Training Center
- Statewide used Equipment Swap and Shop
- Statewide AT Newsletter
- IPAT website
- AT Publications specific to the needs of North Dakotans
- Training (statewide, regionally, and locally) on a variety of AT topics
- Interagency coordination of AT services

What is Needed: In order for a Bill to become a *reality*, Senators and Representatives need to understand its importance to you. If you have found the IPAT services valuable, you can inform your US Senators and US Representative why this program is important and that you are interested in it being reauthorized.

Magnification & Lighting Tips and Tricks

Magnification products (hand held, stand, spectacle mounted or video magnifiers) play an important role in the daily activities of many people today. Whether for commercial, professional or personal use, magnifiers allow one to perform tasks and hobbies with greater ease. So, how does magnification work and how can one get the most out of their magnifier?

As a rough and ready guide:

- ✓ The larger the size of the magnifier, the lower the magnification – with low magnification there is a large field of view, and much of an object can be seen at the same time. With low magnification, the magnifying lens tends to be large.
- ✓ The smaller the size of the magnifier, the higher the magnification – with high magnification there is a smaller field of view, and less of an object can be seen at one time. With high magnification, the magnifying lens tends to be small.

With most magnifiers the field of view can be made wider . . . seeing more letters for instance . . . by holding objects closer. But if you hold things close to your face to see, it can be awkward and tiring, especially if you use a magnifying glass. If you hold the magnifying glass further away it is often more comfortable, even if you see less of what you are looking at at a time.

Reading and working with good light helps. As people age, the need for light to do everyday tasks increases. Lights need to be positioned so that glare is reduced and shadows are minimal. If a magnifier is not internally illuminated, a lamp close to the table is usually better than a central light from the ceiling. A light with a reflector, angled on the object being viewed is the most helpful.

Transferring Assistive Technology

A problem frequently met by individuals with disabilities when transitioning is the lack of transfer of assistive technology devices and services. This problem occurs when moving between education agencies, from education agencies to the work site, post-secondary school, or to an agency providing work related services. Lack of an AT transfer plan decreases the likelihood that the needed AT devices and services will be available in a timely manner. This directly and unfairly compromises the success of the individual needing the AT.

How can my AT equipment transfer with me?

1. Develop your own AT profile by describing the devices used, device ownership, transference and associated maintenance costs.
2. Ensure that you have the assistive technology devices and services spelled out on your individual service plans - education, work and transition.
3. Bring together the key persons from the various agencies and private entities as appropriate to address your AT transfer needs.
4. Brainstorm how the ownership and transference issues can be addressed for you. Help others think about: a) adopting 'buy out' or leasing mechanisms; b) creating interagency agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOU); c) establishing formulas for determining cost and depreciated value of equipment; and/or d) equal purchase of AT equipment when appropriate.
5. Put the transference plan in writing; note timelines and individual responsibilities. Follow up on individual commitments as necessary.

By working together to assure that AT follows the individual, the likelihood of individual success increases and device duplication decreases – thereby cutting costs. When AT transfer is planned, all parties win, with the greatest winner being the AT user.

Consumer Connection

Thank you so much for the help you have given to me – 2 raised toilet seats with arms, walker basket, and the bed cane. I appreciate this so much.

I was delighted to receive the new telephone with the loud ringer. Now my friends can't say, "We've been trying to reach you for days."

I want to thank you so much for the shower chair you sent. Its perfect and really appreciate it.

Thank you for the cane, bathtub rail, reacher and toilet rails.

Would you please pass my thanks on for the Rollator. I'm 76 and it has helped me so much for the few days I have had it. Thanks to all who make this possible as I'm on a limited income.

I dearly appreciate and Thank You for all you've done for us.

It's a wonderful program and will help many stay home.

We need more helpful programs out in the rural areas than are there now. I hope we can continue this program, because the next generation of seniors is fast approaching.

It is a joy to help people obtain equipment that they need.

Funding News

AT Info for Parents & Educators: Q & A

An excerpt from *AT for Students with Disabilities: Information for Parents & Educators* by IPAT and ND Department of Public Instruction

- **Can the IEP team refuse to consider assistive technology devices on the IEP?** All IEP teams have the responsibility to consider a student's need for assistive technology devices and services, and for specifying those devices and services. Therefore, it is important that IEP teams are informed of the requirements to determine if a student needs an assistive technology device and service, and the need for an assistive technology evaluation to assist in making the determination.
- **Are schools required to pay for assistive technology devices and services?** It is the responsibility of the school district to provide the equipment, services, or programs identified in the IEP. The school district may pay for the equipment, service, or programs itself, utilize other resources to provide and/or pay for the device and/or services, or cooperatively fund the device(s) and or services. Other resources may include, but are not limited to, Medicaid, foundations, fraternal organizations, church or social groups, charitable organizations, businesses, and individuals.
- **Is a school district responsible for providing "state of the art" equipment for the student?** No. However, the school must provide appropriate technology for the student's needs to ensure a free appropriate public education. The decision as to what type of assistive technology is appropriate should be based on the assistive technology evaluation recommendations and IEP team decision. If a less expensive device would accomplish the same goal, the IEP team is under no obligation to choose a more expensive option.
- **Can the student take the assistive technology device(s) owned by the school to their home?** Yes. If the IEP team determines that the student needs access to an assistive technology device at home to implement the educational program, the student may take it home. For example, a student with a physical disability may not be able to complete homework assignments without access to a calculator at home.

This Document in its entirety is available by calling IPAT at 1-800-265-4728 or the Department of Public Instruction at 1-701-328-2277.

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

FrogPad

The FrogPad keyboard is a one-handed keyboard solution for both right and left-handed users. With its USB connection, it can work in a plug 'n play manner with either Macintosh or Windows based computers and does not require any additional software. The keyboard is 5 x 3.5 x 4 inches and weighs 4.9 ounces.

The FrogPad features full-sized keys and includes all the functions of a standard keyboard. The fifteen letters that are used 86% of the time by typists are placed in the most efficient locations on the keyboard, and require users to only press the key. The remaining letters, numbers, etc. require 2-3 button combinations. No memorization is required as all of the characters are labeled on the keys. For example: The first key on the top row has the letter "F", "Tab", and a "?" on it. To produce the "F" push the key; for "Tab" push the key and the spacebar at the same time; for "?" push and release the symbol button and then the key.

The FrogPad is available for purchase from the manufacturer at www.frogpad.com or KeyAlt.com, 365A Tesconi Circle, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, 800-953-9262, www.keyalt.com for \$169.00. You can also rent it from the IPAT Equipment Loan Library 1-800-895-4728.

For Your Information

IPAT's CAC

The IPAT program recognizes that advice and counsel of persons with disabilities and their family members provide a vital link to meeting the AT needs of the people of North Dakota. In an effort to actively forge this link, the IPAT Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) is actively recruiting additional members.

The mission and purpose of the CAC is to provide input throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation of the IPAT program. Members represent a variety of ages, disabilities interest groups and geographic regions. The CAC meets monthly via conference call and face-to-face bi-annually. If interested in becoming a CAC member, please call 1-800-265-4728 to request an application.

ND US Congressional Contacts

Senator Kent Conrad

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Senator Byron Dorgan

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Representative Earl Pomeroy

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OOPS!

The previous issue of the AT KEY newsletter was incorrectly identified as *November 2003 – Vol.8 No.5*. It should have been *February 2004 – Vol.9 No.1*, the lead article was titled “Living at Home Safely.” The editor apologizes for any confusion this may have caused.