

IPAT Delivers AT Services via Telepractice

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

Providing assistive technology services to people in all corners of the state continues to be an ongoing challenge. North Dakota's ruralness, volatile weather, limited number of AT specialists, and shrinking dollars makes delivering and receiving timely assistive technology services difficult. IPAT has been investigating various methods of Telepractice as a means to address this problem. Telepractice brings together AT professionals with consumers needing AT services through the use of telecommunication technology.

IPAT explored a variety of potential Telepractice solutions. Initially, videophones and webcams were tried with mixed results. Next, IPAT tried a Polycom Viewstation with assistance from the University of North Dakota's School of Medicine. The equipment was easy to use, worked with a standard TV and existing high-speed Internet connection (DSL). Several brave individuals volunteered to participate in the first long-distance assistive technology assessment. The participants were located 200 miles apart, yet were able to complete an AT assessment successfully and effectively. In addition, IPAT provided an AT training for a small group using this system. The assessments and trainings conducted using the Telepractice equipment during the period of the equipment loan were extremely successful with no noted breakdowns in audio or video. The comments from both the evaluators and the participants were very positive. Its effectiveness prompted IPAT to purchase the same system, which became operational in the spring of 2003.

Telepractice is now available at the IPAT Technology Access Center in Fargo as an AT service option to individuals via a connection from a facility in their area, and may include linking to other IPAT offices and/or sites. For example, an individual can benefit from a team approach to an AT assessment with one member of the team in Fargo and the other in Bismarck. Trainings or meetings can be conducted directly from or between offices and/or transmitted to several locations.

IPAT's use of Telepractice has proven to be a viable means of expanding AT access and expertise. It has shown to be cost-effective, has increased the productivity of service providers by decreasing travel time, and benefited individuals by providing timely access to the services they need. Over \$1,700 in travel time and lodging costs was saved in the first 4 transmissions. The AT Telepractice services have proven their effectiveness and have the potential to reduce barriers to services while decreasing costs and increasing productivity.

Hints for Improved TV Viewing for Those with Central Vision Loss

Option One: Sitting closer to the television is the first option to try. This works well for many individuals. Sitting closer enlarges the image of the television in your eye, thus spreading across the peripheral retina.

Option Two: Utilize a TV screen magnifier. This device comes in 12", 16", 20" and 30" screen sizes; it sits directly in front of your television set and provides a 2-power magnification. These stand-alone devices are available from Optelec, Gold Violin and LS&S Group.

Option Three: Obtain a larger and better quality television and sit as close as needed to see. When large screen televisions are used, purchase one with high definition since this provides a clear image when the individual sits close to the screen.

Option Four: Utilize a bioptic telescope system to view television. Systems that have worked well for individuals with Macular Degeneration are the Beecher Mirage systems. They typically fit in powers of 4X, 5.5X, and 7X power. The magnification is achieved through the wearing of a lightweight head worn binocular system weighing about 3.5 ounces. The Beecher provides a bright, wide-angle field of view. Individuals using this system often note an improvement in color as well as figure recognition. Another bioptic telescope is the Zeiss G 1.8. This lower power wide-angle system is sometimes easier for people to wear than higher power telescopes.

Additional Note: Remember to consider the size and readability of television remote controls as well. For individuals with vision loss, using a big button universal remote control increases independence and ease of use. These devices are available through Gold Violin, Independent Living Aids and LS&S Group.

Hotline for Air Travelers with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Transportation has a toll-free hotline for air travelers with disabilities available from 7am to 11pm Eastern Time, seven days a week. Call the hotline at 1-800-778-4838 (Voice) or 1-800-455-9880 (TTY) for information about flying as a person with a disability, and/or assistance in resolving disability-related air travel problems.

Common air traveler requests handled by the hotline include: 1) obtaining assistance in resolving 'real time' issues involving service animals, seating accommodations, getting on and off the plane and connecting assistance, the stowage of personal equipment and other accommodations; 2) learning and obtaining written information about your rights as an individual with a disability under the Air Carrier Access Act and 14 CFR Part 382;

- 3) obtaining information to help better plan your next air travel experience; and
- 4) learning how to resolve a disability-related dispute with an air carrier.

Consumer Connection

Meet the 'movers and shakers' behind IPAT. We would like to thank the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) members, past and present, for helping to keep IPAT activities on the mark through their time, talents, energy, and unique perspectives of disability. This 15-member committee reflects the diversity of disabilities, ages, regions, and cultures of North Dakota and serves as a conduit to existing networks and support systems to keep AT on the radar for many. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a CAC member, contact an IPAT regional office directly, or call 1-800-265-4728 for further information.

Funding News

Home Choice Coalition in ND

Making homeownership a dream come true for people with disabilities.

What is Home Choice?

It is a single-family loan product designed by Fannie Mae and the ND Home Choice Coalition to help meet the homeownership needs of people who have disabilities or have a family member with a disability living with them.

What are the eligibility standards?

1. Participants must have a disability or a family member living with them who has a disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 or "handicapped" as defined by the Fair Housing Amendments of 1998.
2. Participants must be below 120 percent of median family income as determined for their geographical area.
3. Participants must have income to support a mortgage payment and must be able to qualify for a mortgage.
4. The property must be a single-family owner occupied property.

How is Home Choice different from other mortgage loans?

1. Lower down payment requirements
2. Qualifying and underwriting standards that take into account higher than average debt to income and housing ratios.
3. Use of non-traditional credit histories.
4. Support from Home Choice agencies to help you become a successful homeowner.

How do I access Home Choice?

Coalition members assist borrowers in accessing mortgage financing and in meeting the demands of purchasing and owning a home. This includes:

1. Pre-purchase Homebuyer education.
2. Post-purchase support.
3. Assistance in applying for a mortgage.

4. Help in locating grants and second mortgages, closing costs, accessibility modifications and property repairs.
5. Budget management and other support services.

Contact: Sherri Arenz (701) 255-4591 or www.ndad.com/homechoice

Equipment Spotlight

RexPlus(tm) - the electronic watch dog

This alarm system uses microwave technology to "see" through walls to detect when someone is approaching and how close they are. When someone comes within 20 feet, it will begin barking. The closer the person comes, the more frequent and threatening the barking becomes. RexPlus(tm) provides the protection of a dog without the fuss of walks or feeding, and plugs into any standard electrical outlet. The electronic barking alarm system serves as an altering device to those within the environment, while deterring unwelcome guests.

Call the IPAT Equipment Loan Library to try out RexPlus(tm) by calling 1-800-895-4728. It is available for purchase (\$89.99) from Security Planet - 404 Terrace Hill Drive - Yakima, WA 98901, 1-800-967-8133. Their website www.securityplanet.com has additional information and online ordering available.

IPAT Personnel Phone Book

Judie Lee, Project Director

1-701-239-7247 (Voice)

1-800-265-4728 (Voice/TTY)

Jeannie Krull, Coordinator

1-701-239-7228 (Voice)

1-800-265-4728 (Voice/TTY)

Peggy S. Shireley, Coordinator

1-701-328-9544 (Voice)

1-800-265-4728 (Voice/TTY)

Dud Zimmerman, Coordinator

1-701-857-8630 (Voice)

1-800-265-4728 (Voice/TTY)

Connie Rawls, Program Support

1-800-265-4728 (Voice/TTY)

Mark Your Calendar

Water Skiing

July 6 & 7, 2003

July 12 & 13, 2003

Nelson Lake

Contact: Don 701-223-8816 or www.sporting-chance.com

Plan for Achieving Self Success Workshops (PASS)

August 4, 2003

Radisson Hotel

Bismarck, ND

August 5, 2003

Minot Public Library

Minot, ND

August 6, 2003

Best Western Town House

Grand Forks, ND

August 7, 2003

Doublewood Inn

Fargo, ND

Contact: Vickay 701-328-2950, 1-800-472-2670 (Voice), 711 (ND Relay)