

Remain at Home with Assistive Technology Solutions

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

People of all ages and in all walks of life, will either themselves or through family members, experience the inability to do things the way they once did. These changes in capabilities are usually related to aging, injury, or disease. They may affect a person's vision, hearing, memory, walking, balance, and other abilities. Whatever the effect, a major concern voiced by individuals relates to where they or their family member will live. The question arises, "Can I continue to live at home and in my community?" Today, because of the advances in technology, the need for assisted living arrangements or institutionalization can be eliminated and/or delayed for many people.

Home safety, managing medication, and obtaining emergency assistance are some of the more critical concerns for families. A change in mobility can create problems for just getting inside the home and once inside, there may be obstacles in entering various rooms and/or levels of the home. A change in vision may make it difficult or impossible to answer correspondence, cook, use the phone, or read directions. Often times, these are the types of issues that initiate the investigation of alternative living arrangements. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT) is often not suggested or considered as a potential solution to the issues at hand.

AT options should be explored before a more drastic step of moving someone from their home is initiated. The advances in technology have resulted in a vast array of devices that can assist people with all types of conditions stay in their home and safely continue to cook, clean, manage their medication, communicate with family and friends, care for themselves, obtain emergency assistance, and enjoy leisure activities. AT has the potential to help individuals maintain their lifestyle and may delay or eliminate the need to move a person into an assisted living or nursing home setting. In the event an individual needs to move to an alternative living arrangement, AT should be considered in that setting as well, so their independence and capabilities continue to be maximized.

The U.S. Supreme Court said it best in its *Olmstead v. L.C.* ruling: "Confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment."

IPAT has two publications that can provide more specific information on AT devices: "[Doodads, Gadgets & Thingamajigs](#)" and "Solutions: Assistive Technology for People with Hidden Disabilities". A brochure is also available, "Maintain Your Lifestyle...Differently" describing AT devices to compensate for gradual changes in hearing, memory, vision, and mobility. Information is also available regarding home modifications. For a copy of these products or to talk to someone regarding a specific situation, contact IPAT at 800-265-4728 or www.ndipat.org.

CORRECTION

In the June 2002 edition of the AT KEY, the phone number for Bruce Hendrickson, of Handi-Cabinets Etc. Inc., of Kindred, ND was incorrect. The correct number is (701) 428-9988. Sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Have Access, Will Travel

Adapted from Maryland's Tapping Technology NL - June 2002

For most people, the prospect of traveling is both exciting and overwhelming. From deciding where to go, when to go, and making the myriad of reservations to packing and finding someone to care for the house, the experience can be daunting. But imagine doing all that and then having the added task of making sure that every hotel, every attraction, every bus and/or every flight is accessible.

In today's shrinking world, the Internet has made the task of assuring accessibility surmountable! There are hundreds of websites with information on traveling tips for individuals with disabilities, as well as sites that offer countless other tidbits of traveling information. A few places to start your web journey:

www.access-able.com - Access Able is a comprehensive resource of accessible cruise ships, world travel information, and more.

www.faa.gov/acr/dat.htm - This is the Federal Aviation Administration's guide to air travel for persons with disabilities.

www.fodors.com/traveltips/disabilities/ - Fordors.com provides extensive and helpful information for the traveler with disabilities, including insurance and lodging information.

www.ndtourism.com - The North Dakota Department of Tourism lists local events and happenings across the state along with lodging information and maps.

General tips for making travel hassle-free:

1. Make reservations in advance; ask upfront about accessibility.
2. Inform reservation clerks and airline officials ahead of time of any accessibility needs. Get the name of the person you spoke to.
3. Give yourself extra time.
4. Make sure your name, address, and phone number are on all equipment.
5. Tape any assembly/disassembly instructions onto power wheelchairs and scooters that may be put in cargo.
6. If you use powered mobility, know what batteries are required. If it is an acid battery, it will need to be removed and packed separately.
7. Be aware of your rights under the Air Carrier's Access Act. Get the pocket guide for reference and keep it handy. For a free copy send your name and address to: Paralyzed Veterans of America, 801 Eighteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20006 or call toll free 888-860-7244.

No matter where you choose to go, take time to do some research on your destination place. Give yourself time to make lists of what you will need to take and whom you will need to contact to ensure accessibility. When taking that vacation of a lifetime, a little research can save a lot of concern and trouble.

IPAT Staff in New Location

The Fargo and Valley City IPAT offices have combined and moved to a new location. The new address is 3509 Interstate Blvd., Fargo, ND. To contact the individual coordinators at the new location, call or e-mail using the information below:

1. Jeannie Krul (701) 239-7228 jmkrul@fargocity.com
2. Mike Bishop (701) 239-7247 mtbishop@csicable.net

Consumer Connection

A New Way of Communicating - Paper-free

Joey Tehle

I have been using assistive technology (AT) for the past 18 years to help with my speech impairment. During those years I had been using a device called a Canon Communicator. It had helped me out tremendously. About a year ago, I called the company that had been supplying the paper to run the communicator, so I could stock up. They told me they had discontinued the product a month before! I was horrified. This device had

been my main means of communication for years, and I felt at ease with it. I searched on the Internet for sites that carry paper, but had no luck. IPAT sent me a few extra rolls, and people everywhere were looking for the thermal tape I so desperately needed. I decided to contact Judie Lee, she referred me to Jeannie Krull, the IPAT coordinator and augmentative communication specialist.

The changes began. Ironically, Jeannie had worked with me quite a few years ago, so it was fun to work with her again. She met with me, and we got the ball rolling. I was disappointed at first, that none of the new communication devices had paper output like I was used to. Jeannie was able to get me a few devices to test out for a trial period. The one I ended up choosing, was the [LightWRITER](#). It was exactly what I needed. It has a ton of options that are easy to program and it doesn't give me a headache trying to figure it out. I miss the paper output, but not like I thought I would.



The LightWRITER is portable and compact. It has an LCD read-out, so people sitting across from me can read my conversations right then instead of waiting for me to rip it off from the Canon. Or they can wait and have the voice say it. It really is a neat device. The more I use it, the more I like it, and the more at ease I am while using it. Change can be difficult, especially after using a product for as long as I had. The Canon had become obsolete, so I needed to change devices. It was hard, but in the long run, I know I'll benefit greatly from it.

I am very pleased with my choice of the LightWRITER and highly recommend it. You'll be amazed by it's capabilities. Jeannie helped put my mind at ease when we started this device replacement hunt and throughout the long process. She made me believe that we would find something I would like, and she was right. She was a huge help!

FUNDING NEWS

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of ND & AAC Device Coverage

Dave Boeck, P&A Project

Until earlier this year, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota, Inc., (BCBSND) health insurance policies have not covered augmentative communication devices and services. BCBSND health insurance policies specifically excluded coverage of all augmentative communication devices and services.

Earlier this year, BCBSND announced that it had dropped the exclusion from its standard health insurance policies. BCBSND will now cover medically necessary, augmentative communication devices and services under its standard health insurance policies.

Please Note: If augmentative communication (or other AT) devices and services are necessary for an IDEA-covered child to benefit from a FAPE, the public school in which the child is enrolled, must provide the devices and services at no cost to the parents.

In some instances, the child may gain adequate educational benefit from a device by using it only at school. In most instances however, the child must take the augmentative communication (or other AT) device home on evenings, weekends, and school vacations to gain adequate educational benefit. In these circumstances, the public school must make the augmentative communication (or other AT) device available 100% of the time.

In a third set of circumstances it is not clear how to balance a child's educational needs and the child's medical needs for use of an augmentative communication (or other AT) device outside of school.

Whatever the circumstances, it might be foolish for the school and BCBSND to buy separate augmentative communication (or other AT) devices. The public school and BCBSND could work together to get one device that would meet all the child's educational and medical needs. BCBSND and public schools should agree to principles that will govern the purchase of augmentative communication (or other AT) devices when both may be responsible for part of the cost.

Equipment Spotlight

EasyTalk - communication device

One of our newer acquisitions, the EasyTalk is a compact, lightweight (2.1 pounds), easy to use communication device with up to 32 minutes of high-

quality digitized recording in standard play and 56 minutes in long play. With eight recording levels, EasyTalk communicators have greater opportunity for expression.



It has a highly sensitive touch panel, features 1 or 2 switch scanning (Row/Column, Linear, Vertical and Horizontal), variable length messages, a call alarm, long battery life, and you can record anyone's voice (man, woman, or child), in any language. Optional keyguards and carrying cases are available.

Call the IPAT Equipment Loan Library at 1-800-421-1181 to borrow this for a trial period. More information is available at www.greattalkingbox.com/easytalk.htm, or by calling toll free 1-877-275-4482. The base price for 32 minutes of recording is \$1299.00. Optional equipment has an additional cost.

Mark Your Calendar!

September 11,12 & 13, 2002
ND Statehouse Conference on Aging
Holiday Inn - Fargo, ND
More info - Sandy Arends (701) 298-4411

September 24, 2002
Early Childhood Conference
Doublewood Inn - Bismarck, ND
More info - Marilyn Brucker (701) 328-2714

October 10-12, 2002
24th International Conference on Learning Disabilities
Adam's Mark Hotel - Denver, CO
More info - (913) 492-8755 or www.CLDinternational.org

October 17-19, 2002
20th Annual Closing the Gap:
Computer Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation
Radisson South Hotel - Minneapolis, MN
More info - (507) 248-3294 or www.closingthegap.com

Saturday, November 9, 2002

This is the first mobility resource expo in the upper Midwest!

10 am - 4 pm

Courage Center

3915 Golden Valley Rd

Golden Valley, MN

For more information,

Tonya Kimball, Director HOPE, Inc, 866-225-4673 (toll free), 701-772-3344

Jeni Mundl, Courage Center, 888-846-8253 (toll free), 763-588-0811