

Solutions for Individuals with Hidden Disabilities

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

Assistive technology is often not considered when people are experiencing functional limitations as a result of a disability that is less obvious or familiar. There are many assistive technology solutions that are available to address problems people experience with hidden disabilities related to: memory, attention, safety, task completion and others.

There are many ways in which problems resulting from forgetting to complete an activity or task can be avoided. Discount and hardware stores carry a variety of automatic shut-off appliances, alarms or simple timers designed to be worn around one's neck that can be set to remind a person that the stove is on, it is time to take medications, or to call someone at a designated time. Some devices are designed for a specific task such as those to turn water on/off automatically when the presence or absence of a person's hands in the sink is sensed, or a pill dispenser/alarm which can be set to buzz at pre-set times and dispense the correct medication.

Assistive technology solutions are available for individuals who have disorientation and confusion difficulties. These solutions can provide information about time and place, decrease the likelihood of mixing reality with fantasy and allow individuals to continue participating in activities they enjoy and those that are necessary for living. There are a variety of aids that assist individuals to keep track of time such as talking clocks and calendars or specially designed telephones and telephone services.

Safety and security are critical issues for everybody. There are numerous devices available for people who experience poor equilibrium and dizziness, involuntary muscle movements, shuffling, drowsiness or blurred vision. These devices can be used to create environments which limit the potential for accidents and reduce the consequences when accidents do occur. Examples of such devices include: seat lifters which help maintain balance while getting out of a chair, keyless locks that utilize a coded card, wall mounted soap and shampoo dispensers, and a variety of wireless personal pagers/locators which enable people to call for assistance in case of an emergency.

First, one needs to identify the task to be done and the problem that is making it difficult or impossible to do, and then, an assistive technology solution is sought. Many of the devices are fairly inexpensive and are

available through local retail outlets or catalogs. Other items can be costly and it is important to know available options for funding assistance. Whether you are looking for a specific device, an idea, funding options, or other information, a good starting point will be the AT Help Line or an IPAT Coordinator.

Calling All Kits

Thank you for the success of the assistive technology (AT) awareness kits launched by IPAT and distributed statewide through volunteer trainers. To date, the kits have found their way to over 60% of North Dakota's counties and have been shared around coffee tables, in day care centers and at fairs in cities and small towns alike. The kits offered an opportunity for individuals to discover a variety of low-tech AT solutions for either young children or those experiencing the effects of aging.

With success has come growth, and the need for IPAT to call all kits home so we can revamp and expand them. Please contact your IPAT Regional Coordinator to make arrangements for kit return, or call 1800-265-IPAT and Connie will get you connected. We appreciate all those volunteers who made this outreach activity work and will keep you posted on the expansion project.

The Essentials of Ergonomics

IPAT is sponsoring a workshop on Friday, July 16, 1999 at the Bismarck Kelly Inn from 8 AM - 4 PM. Leonard Anderson, MS in Engineering Mechanics and Dr. Thomas J. Armstrong, Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering will introduce participants to the science of ergonomics. The focus will be the arrangement or design of workspace for efficient, non-fatiguing use by people. Participants will discover how to analyze physical work requirements, how to design work stations to ensure employee health, how to create adaptations and alter the environment to facilitate the return of injured workers.

Expand your horizons to include an understanding of workplace ergonomics. Contact the AT Help Line at 888-214-2780 to register. Cost: \$10. All are welcome but space is limited, so respond today. On-site registration is not an option. There are a limited number of stipends available for consumers. If interested, contact the AT Help Line. Reserve your spot now to discover the what, why and how of ergonomics.

IPAT Equipment Loan Library

The IPAT Equipment Loan Library was established in 1994 in direct response to consumer and service provider demand. The library provides

equipment for short-term loan to state residents of all ages with disabilities at no charge, except the return postage/UPS fees. This loan library service provides an opportunity for individuals to explore a variety of equipment to best determine feature match.

We have an excess of 300 assistive technology items representing several categories, including: alternative/adaptive computer access, environmental control, adaptive living aids, augmentative communication devices, mobility/seating/positioning, technology for the young child and devices unique to the aging population.

Each year we include monies in our budget for new purchases and also receive funding from other sources specifically to keep abreast of the developing technology.

If you are in need of something that may not be in the loan library, let us know. We evaluate the feasibility and universal need of all requests. Your input is one of the methods we use to increase the inventory of devices available for loan.

Consumer Connection

Escape to the Lake!

Come one, come all to the 6th annual adaptive water-skiing extravaganza. This two-day event provides an opportunity for individuals of all ages with physical disabilities to water ski. Clear your calendar for July 17th and/or July 18th to discover the thrill and excitement of water-skiing. Specialized water-skiing equipment and coaching from professional instructors will be available free of charge on-site. So, grab your swimming gear, camera, family and friends and head to beautiful, warm Nelson Lake near Center, North Dakota (approximately 45 miles northwest of Bismarck).

The North Dakota Association for the Disabled, Inc. (NDAD), Texas Adaptive Aquatics and Sporting Chance of Bismarck are sponsoring this event, and extend an invitation to participants from all around the state. The event is free and lunch will be provided to skiers and volunteers. Registration begins at 9:00 AM Mountain Time (10 AM Central Time) on both days right at the lake. For additional information, contact Heather Lang at 701-795-6607 from 9:00AM - 5:00PM, Monday through Friday.

CAC Welcomes New Members

The IPAT Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) welcomed 3 new members this month, Karen Schelinder, Grand Forks; Charlet Bohl,

Rugby; and Mabel Dever; Bismarck. The thirteen members of CAC represent all regions of the state and people of all ages with disabilities.

The CAC provides advice to IPAT personnel which is vital to assure that the project's goals and activities are responsive to the needs of the people in North Dakota. The Committee is well informed on a wide range of assistive technology issues and is committed to supporting the efforts of IPAT to strengthen the state's capacity to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages with their assistive technology needs.

Current [CAC](#) members are: Terese Coverstone, Fargo; Heather Edwardson, Minot; Craig Fahlstrom, Dickinson; Ron Gibbens, Grand Forks; Nora Haugen, Williston; Jack Malusky, West Fargo; Stacie Metelmann, Walhalla; Bob Puyear, Bismarck; Ron Sandness, Fargo; and Fay Weatherly, Bismarck.

FUNDING NEWS

AT Coverage via Workers' Compensation Insurance

Workers' Compensation is insurance coverage for employees who have a work-related illness or injury. In North Dakota, this insurance is required when a person, company, or corporation has full or part-time employees. Employers have come to learn that an efficient Workers' Compensation program minimizes the amount of money spent on non-productive medical expenses and increases the timeliness of employees' return to productivity.

This is accomplished through effective Workers' Compensation programs which consider and invest in medical treatment, rehabilitation, **and assistive technology devices and services** for employees who have a work-related illness or have been injured on the job. When maximal rehabilitative improvement is limited or when long-term rehabilitation interferes with one's ability to complete job related tasks in the same manner as before the injury or illness, assistive technology may provide the necessary option enabling a return to work.

If assistive technology devices are required as a result of the illness or injury, the treating physician must verify the medical need. In addition, it will be important to talk to the insurance adjuster or service provider to determine whether or not prior approval is required for durable medical equipment or other assistive technology.

An assistive technology assessment will be necessary to determine what kind of AT devices will be needed. Therefore, it is advisable not to be hasty in settling a claim or signing any waivers or release forms.

For more information, contact the Workers' Compensation Bureau of North Dakota at (701) 328-3800 voice, or (701) 328-3786 TT.

EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

E.A.S.I. Dialer II is an electronic daily living aid that uses a single switch to dial a telephone. The scanning speed and switch closure time



can be adjusted to meet the need of individual users and up to 60 numbers can be stored in memory and dialed with the activation of a single switch. The E.A.S.I. Dialer II has a built in speakerphone with volume control and a privacy mode option. As well, with the addition of X-10 modules, this electronic daily living aid can control up to 16 on/off functions for appliances. It runs on AC but has battery backup in case of power failure. It is available for loan through the IPAT Equipment Loan Library 800-421-1181 and/or can purchased from TASH International, Inc. at 800-463-5685. Base Cost \$800.

Mark Your Calendar!

Working Together for Infants
And Toddlers

June 14-16, 1999
Radisson Inn & U of Mary
Bismarck, ND
Disability Services 701-328-8935

Escape to the Lake

July 17 & 18, 1999
Lake Nelson
Near Center, ND
Heather 701-795-6607

Essentials of Ergonomics

July 16, 1999
Kelly Inn
Bismarck, ND
Karen Pearson 888-214-2780

IPAT Equipment Expo! Sites

June 25, 1999
MedCenter One
9 AM - 5 PM
Bismarck, ND

Sponsor: MedCenter One

August 18, 1999
Doublewood Inn
1 PM - 7 PM
Bismarck, ND

Sponsor: Burleigh-Morton School Boards Assoc.
Burleigh County Spec. Ed. Unit

Call Mike Bishop 800-265-4870 for information about the IPAT Equipment Expo.