

**AT Connecting Points**

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

Young children utilizing technology in an early childhood program to accommodate functional needs/or child development activities need a plan for the transition of this equipment. Family members and professional personnel should work together in planning for the program change as responsibility for the child's services shifts to different agencies at pre-determined ages. Transition issues to consider:

- What technology is being used today and what will be needed in the next program?
- Who owns the equipment?
- Will the equipment be immediately available in the next program?
- What plans need to be made to insure equipment availability across programs?
- If the equipment is child specific, can the two agencies work together for a seamless transition, i.e., the receiving program purchase it from the earlier program at an adjusted cost?
- Is training needed by the receiving staff to insure uninterrupted use of the equipment?
- Who is responsible for reviewing the child's ongoing changing technology needs? Addressing these and other pertinent questions during long term planning will help insure device use continuity and prevent the loss of valuable learning time.

Students with disabilities who are in high school actively using assistive technology must plan for the transition of that technology to post-secondary environments; school/employment. This plan should include a review of their potential technology needs as they look at changing their living arrangements, community participation, job and/or education opportunities, and recreation/leisure activities. Considerations include:

- Will the device follow me, if not, how can it be replaced?
- Is the technology I am currently using adequate for my changing needs/environments?
- What information will be helpful to provide my future instructors/employers?
- What are the resources and services available to support me throughout this process?
- Where do I find them? Transition services are available to support youth and adults with disabilities in the planning process and it is critical to

include assistive technology as part of this plan. Only with planning will the use of devices to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities connect to make a difference in the life of an individual.

### **'Selecting an Insurance Plan'**

If an individual with disabilities is not enrolled in a private health insurance plan and is considering enrollment, it would be wise to consider the following aspects of the plan, particularly if funding for assistive technology might be desired:

- Coverage of durable medical equipment or assistive technology is in the plan.
- Exclusion for pre-existing conditions. Look for the length of time for the exclusion, whether it is permanent and whether it is automatically renewed.
- Policy renewal. Is the policy guaranteed renewable or could coverage be dropped at the option of the insurance company?
- Is there a "lifetime cap" on the amount the policy will pay?

Funding for assistive technology devices and services in the health care systems conforms to the requirements of the funding source, not the functional needs of individuals with disabilities. Coverage by insurance companies will differ on a policy-by-policy basis. For assistive technology to be fully or partially covered by an insurance company, it usually must meet the following basic criteria:

- The condition is the result of illness or accident and is not a "pre-existing" condition prior to the effective policy date.
- The services required to instruct and assist the individual with a disability must be prescribed by a physician.

Questions About Funding Options? Become your own best resource!  
Contact the IPAT Central Office 1-800-701-265-4728 and request a copy of the "Guide to Policy and Funding for Assistive Technology in North Dakota."

### **Consumer Connection**

Inga Stromme - Rugby, ND

I have Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and have been dependent on a wheelchair for 43 years. About the only thing I can't do is climb stairs.

Some time ago, my back became a problem, affecting my balance and causing exhaustion and pain. I was referred several places and then I met

Don Olson, "The Miracle Worker," as Steve Sattler of Vocational Rehabilitation called him.

An appointment was set up and Don and his co-worker, Byron, came from Grafton, ND, to my home in Rugby and began plans for my new chair. They also made plans to adapt my three-wheeler.

In the year and a-half since then, with my improved posture, I have been pain free and have more strength and stamina than I ever believed possible. It has been wonderful! Not only can I be comfortable and useful in my home, but my 3-wheeler allows me to wheel down the streets of Rugby (weather permitting and sometimes not so permitting).

I have attended church often and also several special events, a friends funeral, a banquet, the inspiration, a dear friends' 50th anniversary and occasionally lunch with a friend with MS at a nearby convenience store.

My caregiver, Connie, gets up at 6:30 Sunday morning to get me ready for church. She uses my Hoyer Travel Lift to put me on my 3-wheeler or in her car.

After living with MS for 50 years I believe that self-pity is the most destructive force. My faith in God is my greatest blessing - and my inherited optimism keeps me trucking on.

### **Staff**

- Judie Lee, Director - 1-800-265-IPAT - <mailto:lee@pioneer.state.nd.us>
- NE Coord. -
- Mike Bishop SE Coord. - 1-701 845-8626 - <mailto:mikebishop@valleycity.net>
- Peggy Shireley SW Coord. 1-701-328-9544 - <mailto:shireley@btigate.com>
- Dud Zimmerman NW Coord. 1-701-857-8630 - <mailto:dud@minot.com>

### **Ready to Go**

Judy Sannes  
Assistant Director/Disability Specialist  
Disability Support Services - University of North Dakota

It is a well-known fact that to achieve meaningful employment, high school graduates will need some type of post-secondary training. For all students, post-secondary training requires planning and self-questioning: What do I want to study? How large a school is comfortable for me? How far away from home do I want to be? What are the entrance

requirements? For students with disabilities, the process is identical with the addition of one more question - Will the accommodations I need be available?

It is important not to choose an educational program solely on the basis of which school has the 'best disability supports services.' All schools must, by federal law, provide academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Therefore, make post-secondary training decisions based on individual need, ability and career goals first and then make sure the specific academic support services are available.

Know what awaits you, schedule a campus visit. Call the Admissions or Enrollment Services Office to organize a campus tour. Also ask to meet with a staff person in the disability support services (DSS). When meeting with the DSS staff, students need to be prepared to describe their disability in functional terms and name the needed academic support services (assistive technology accommodations, notetakers, adapted testing, electronic text, etc.).

DSS eligibility criteria may differ among schools, so ask for an explanation, and be ready to provide current documentation of a disability. Once a school is chosen, contact the DSS office and complete an application no later than a semester before admission. This allows the DSS staff to organize accommodations and insures that services are available when classes begin.

Vocational/technical training is an important step in a young adult's life. The presence of a disability does not have to be a 'handicap,' forcing a student with a disability to settle for less than their classmates without disabilities. Effective educational planning is the key to success.

### **Used Equipment Bulletin Board Update**

Karen Pearson, AT Info-Line

The AT Info-Line assisted with a nice link-up of caller and donor this month. An individual from eastern North Dakota called looking for a wheelchair for his mother-in-law. Finances were a stated concern, as she lives on a fixed income. AT Info-Line staff provided the listing of chairs currently in the database. Unfortunately, most listings were too far away geographically or went beyond the identified budget.

Fortunately, few days later, a Bismarck resident called to donate an electric wheelchair. AT Info-Line staff then contacted the individual from eastern ND. He expressed interest in the donated chair and as luck would have it, he had an upcoming business trip in Bismarck. The donor was

leaving town, so the AT Info-Line staff made arrangements to pick up the chair. Blizzards interfered with our pick-up, but the donor was kind enough to drop the chair by the office. The electric wheelchair will be off to its' new home soon. We love it when a match is made!

A sampling of other items available through the AT Used Equipment Bulletin Board are: youth wheelchair & walker, superprint TDD, telecaption decoder, lift chairs, adapted tricycle, telescoping ramp, Dodge Caravan with lift, and bathroom safety equipment. To locate, sell or donate equipment call

1-800-451-8693 - we'll be happy to provide any assistance we can.

### **Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) workshop**

The Communication Aid Manufacturers' Association (CAMA) is sponsoring an Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) workshop on Tuesday, May 13, 1997, at the Doublewood Inn - Fargo, North Dakota from 8:30 am - 4:00 pm. Representatives from 12 of the world's leading manufacturers of AAC technology will demonstrate their products and explain the benefits for individuals facing a variety of communication barriers.

Individuals with communication needs, their family members, speech pathologists, teachers, and rehabilitation professionals are all welcome. Participants will leave with an increased awareness of the diversity of AAC hardware and software, be able to distinguish between the types and products offered, understand their functional application and identify how individuals with disabilities might benefit from using these devices. For more information, contact Shana Johnson at the CAMA office.

### **Mark Your Calendar!**

- May 7-9, 1997, ND Association of Community Facilities, Doublewood Inn - Bismarck
- May 13, 1997, Augmentative Alternative Communication, Double Inn - Fargo
- June 9-12, 1997, Teachers and Technology, Civic Center - Bismarck
- June 26-28, 1997, International Conference on Aging & Disabilities, Holiday Inn Riverside - Minot
- August 6-8, 1997, Keys to Independence: AT for all Generations, Anne Carlsen Center - Jamestown

### **Equipment Spotlight**

The Alertmaster AM-6000 is a visual/tactile notification system designed for individuals with hearing loss to signal a telephone, doorbell, or alarm clock ringing. The system includes a console, doorbell transmitter and bed shaker. It notifies the user by flashing a lamp using a distinct flashing pattern for each action and shaking their bed. This device is available for trial use through the IPAT Equipment Loan Library at 1-800-421-1181. Or it may be purchased from Ameriphone, Inc., 1-800-874-3005. Base Cost: \$180.