

Equipment EXPO: See It! Try It!

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

People like to have options when they go shopping. Most of us prefer to handle several selections, look over the choices, compare the various traits, and then make a purchase. This type of hands-on experience when 'shopping' for assistive technology devices within North Dakota can present a challenge because of the limited number of vendors of certain types of equipment in our state and lack of Assistive Technology Demonstration Centers. Questions often heard are: "What kinds of options are there for someone that can't use a computer mouse?" or "Is there something that can control the channels and volume on a TV without using ones' hands?" Items such as these are available in the IPAT Equipment Loan Library for people to use for a free trial. However, often people would like to see and handle a variety of equipment before they are comfortable requesting a loan from the Equipment Loan Library.

In response to this need, IPAT is initiating its EQUIPMENT EXPO: See It! Try! The EXPO will visit every Human Service Center Region by the end of December. It will provide an opportunity to explore simple to complex assistive technology devices in the areas of: Adaptive Living Aids/Environmental Controls; Augmentative Communication; and Adaptive Computer Access. The EXPO is designed for people to drop in for hands-on exploration and demonstration at no charge. IPAT staff will be on hand to answer questions and give more in-depth demonstrations for those that request it. Special arrangements can be made for consultations to address specific individual needs.

The EXPO is designed for everyone interested in gadgets, doodads, computers and other technology used by people with disabilities. People with disabilities, parents, family members, educators, service providers, senior citizens, advocates and employers are encouraged to attend.

The EXPO is a work in progress. We welcome your comments, requests and ideas so the EXPO will meet your needs. For details on the Equipment EXPO in your region, to request your own EXPO or organize a specific consultation at the EXPO in your region, call 1-800-265-4728 voice/TTY, or visit our website at <http://www.ndipat.org>.

Power Mobility – Sooner is Better

Don Olson, RPT

Today, children as young as one year are using power mobility devices effectively and safely, eliminating some of the debilitating effects of immobility. Independent mobility is an important achievement for developing human beings.

Be moving independently, children are able to explore the world and interact with things and people around them. They develop perceptual skills, and make cognitive gains that influence language development. When a child cannot move to explore their surroundings, opportunities for learning are lost. Some children may simply give up after repeated failures, leading to a feeling of helplessness and incompetence.

Most disabling conditions have a motor component that can interfere with the development of mobility. Neuromuscular conditions, such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida prevent normal motor development because of injury to the immature brain and spinal cord. Sensory disabilities, such as blindness and deafness, reduce input from the world that is the motivator, or catalyst for initiating movement.

We must find a way to introduce, stimulate, and maintain some form of independent mobility. Scooterboards, trikes, manual wheelchairs, walkers, battery-powered vehicles, and power wheelchairs are a few of the many options available to children.

Advances in power wheelchair technology have made it possible for children with significant motor impairment to be independently mobile. Prior to 1980, children with limited arm function were not able to operate standard power chairs, and special controls were only in the development stage. Along with technological barriers, negative attitudes existed regarding the use of technology with children. Issues surrounding cost effectiveness, safety, and possible loss of self-propelled mobility have been settled in favor of powered mobility use (Butler 1988).

A key component in the process of providing powered mobility is an assessment. Assessment of motor control, positioning, vision, cognition, and language are necessary to identify potential problems with sensory perception, judgment, motor planning, and training.

Often, the main focus of the assessment is determining an access method. Does the child have adequate hand/arm function to operate a joystick? If not, what other voluntary, reliable control sites are available? How is the child's seated position affecting their ability to use the arms or head? Unfortunately, the scope of this article does not allow a description of all possible options. Beyond standard hand joystick control, multiple switches, single switch scanning, and head controls are a few options. It is important that equipment be available in order to access a number of control options. These options can then be evaluated in terms of ease of use, reliability, safety, cost, compatibility with other technologies and user acceptance.

As with most assistive technologies, support for the user in the areas of training, adjustment, and repair must be provided to ensure a successful outcome. This support often comes from different sources, such as suppliers, therapists,

teachers and families. Children should be reassessed often to determine the appropriateness of the access method, fit of supportive seating, adjustment of driving parameters (speed, acceleration, etc.) and need for repair.

For information regarding mobility suppliers in your area, or to organize a short term loan of mobility devices available through the IPAT Equipment Loan Library, contact Don Olson, Adaptive Equipment Services at 701-352-4583 or e-mail adapt@polarcomm.com.

Consumer Connection

An interview of Jeannie Pederson, DCIL Peer Supporter, Bismarck

Practice, determination and grit find Jeannie behind the wheel again after a 20 year hiatus. Her new-found freedom to cruise the main arteries and side streets of Bismarck and beyond (no semis please), are the result of personal readiness, family support, a mix of support services and the evolution of assistive technologies enabling an individual with quadriplegia to drive independently.

The road to driving again for her, was similar to the road we all travel to become licensed drivers. First hurdle, obtaining a permit! After reviewing and learning the rules of the road, she made an appointment to take the written exam. The exam is offered in two formats, paper-pencil or computer. Selecting the computer option allowed her to take and pass the exam, no accommodations needed. However, the next step, "behind the wheel" training was not as simple. It required much planning, an assessment, service provider collaboration, vendor identification and lots and lots of patience, as her van needed to be modified and remodified in order for her to begin driving. However, rounding up people to go out on the road with her was easy, as family and friends were eagerly waiting in line.

Working with her physician, vocational rehabilitation counselor, driver rehabilitation specialist, and vendor of adaptive devices, the process of "fitting" her van began. Amidst a storm of paperwork, an evaluation was completed, needed accommodations for driving were identified, funding was secured and a local vendor to purchase and install the assistive technologies were engaged. After months of waiting, adjusting and taking a few parking lot spins (under the watchful eye of her instructor), Jeannie was ready to practice in earnest.

After many weeks of practice, it was test-time, it was also blizzard-time! The test was scheduled, and even though the ground was sporting three new inches of snow, Jeannie was ready. With her E-Z lock system, addition trunk support strap, hand-controlled gas and brake system, extended key holder, enlarged rearview mirror, steering wheel adapter and adapted control panel for heat, air, cruise and lights, she could do it – and she did!

Funding News: Mobilizing for Mobility

Adaptations which make vehicles easier for drivers and passengers with disabilities to use are many and varied. Such devices include automatic doors, lifts and lift controls, ramps, keyless entry systems, right-handed turn signal levers, adaptive brake or accelerator systems, adaptive steering devices, foot control steering, reduced/zero effort and joystick steering systems, raised roofs/doors, pedal extenders and wheelchair carriers. To increase the availability of these accommodations, the Chrysler Corporation, the General Motors Corporation and the Ford Motor Company offer programs to assist in paying for much of the cost of these and other types of adaptive equipment.

Maximum reimbursement amounts through these programs generally range from \$750-\$1000.

General Motors has recently expanded its equipment eligibility list to include alerting devices for people with deafness and hearing loss and also provides reimbursement for items such as special seats for people with chronic pain.

For further information about these programs, contact a Chrysler, General Motors, or Ford automotive dealership in your area.

Mark Your Calendar

IPAT Equipment Expo!

October 8 & 9, 1997
South Central Human Service Center
520 3rd Street NW
Jamestown, ND

October 13 & 14, 1997
Southeast Human Service Center
2624 9th Avenue SW
Fargo, ND

November 3 & 4, 1997
Northwest Human Service Center
316 2nd Avenue West
Williston, ND

November 6 & 7, 1997
North Central Human Service Center
400 22nd Avenue NW
Minot, ND

November/December
Call for dates and location

Grand Forks, ND

December 3 & 4, 1997
Lake Region Human Service Center
Highway 2 West
Devils Lake, ND

December 11 & 12, 1997
West Central Human Service Center
600 South 2nd Street
Bismarck, ND

December/January
Call for dates and location
Dickinson, ND

For details, or to be placed on the IPAT Equipment EXPO! mailing list call, 1-800-265-4728.

Turns On A Dime...The B.O.S.S.

Fun...Safe...Durable...Quality Built...Motivational...Educational...

Did you know that the IPAT Equipment Loan Library has mobility devices available for short term loan? One such device is the B.O.S.S. It is a battery powered play vehicle designed specifically for children with mobility limitations. It is easy to operate by means of a steering wheel, proportional joystick, head or other body-site switches. Best of all, it can be fully operated by remote control for optimum safety. Due to the nature of this device, the loan must be overseen by an individual certified to address mobility needs (physical therapist [PT], occupational therapist [OT]), as well as be a desire of the child's family.

To set up a loan, have your child's PT or OT call IPAT's Equipment Loan Library, 1-800-421-1181, or for pricing information call Innovative Products, Inc., 1-800-950-5185.

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Mail Order Discovers Diversity

It May Be the Fastest Way to Get That Unique Item You've Always Wanted

No matter our ages or lifestyles, autumn has the timeless ability to rekindle 'the child' in us again. When the air turns brisk and the leaves crunch underfoot, holiday anticipation seems to build...and before you know it, turkey dinner is over and making Christmas wish-lists becomes a national pastime. If there is a person on your list who is hard to buy for due to changing needs or differing abilities, visiting the world of mail order catalogs may be a trip worth taking.

Specialty catalogs have mushroomed over the last few years. A variety of mail-order businesses cater to diverse populations (elderly, individuals with hearing or vision loss, young children with disabilities) filling the void for items needed but often not available at the mall. The catalogs listed on the reverse of this sheet offer a range of items for individuals with special needs (clothing designed for people in wheelchairs, large print playing cards/games for individuals with vision loss, kitchen gadgets to make living with arthritis easier, a variety of toys for children with movement limitations, etc.). If you are looking for that something special for that special someone, chances are good that one of these catalogs will have it. Call to request a catalog or two that catch your fancy and let your fingers do the shopping. Before you pick up your VISA and reach for the speed dial, note a few rules of thumb for the mail order world:

1. Never send cash by mail. The safest way to go is plastic. Should any problems arise with the items ordered, you usually have recourse through the credit card company. Most catalogs also accept personal checks. Paying by check may increase shipping time due to check processing.
2. Always look into the catalog's return policy before placing your order. When the order arrives, be sure to check it thoroughly and notify the company immediately of any defects or damages. Always keep receipts and invoices as well as original packing material in case merchandise must be returned.
3. Mail order companies offer a variety of shipping methods. Many companies have overnight delivery and second-day air for most items. For an additional charge, hand delivery and home set-up are also options. The standard shipping time on most orders is now two to four weeks.
4. Each company has its own sizing system, so refer to individual order forms for information on specific measurements. When in doubt don't be afraid to call – customer service staffers work 24 hours a day simply waiting to talk hip sizes. Remember the mail order golden rule: return if not completely satisfied.

**Quick Reference Guide to Catalogs
Catering to Individuals with Disabilities.....**

Clothing

Dunmar Products, Inc. (free catalog)
1-800-783-1998

Fashion Ease (free catalog)
1-800-221-8929

Geriatric Comforts (free catalog)
1-785-726-3366

Special Clothes (free catalog)
1-508-896-7939

Support Plus (free catalog)
1-508-359-2910

Wardrobe Wagon (free catalog)
1-800-992-2737

Children

Attainment Co., Inc. (free catalog)
1-800-327-4269

Flaghouse (free catalog)
1-800-793-7900

Imaginart Comm. (free catalog)
1-800-828-1376

Special Designs, Inc. (free catalog)
1-908-464-8825

Special Clothes for Kids
1-508-896-7939

Toys for Special Children (free
catalog) 1-914-478-0960

Personal Care Items

A+ Medical (free catalog)
1-800-241-4636

AdaptAbility (free catalog)
1-800-288-9941

Altimate Medical, Inc. (free brochure)
1-800-342-8968

The Braun Corporation (free info)
1-800-THE-LIFT

Bath-Mate (free catalog)
1-800-282-4928

Best Prices Products (free catalog)
1-800-824-2939

Columbia Medical Mnft. (free
catalog) 1-800-454-6612

Consumer Care Products (free
catalog) 1-414-459-8353

Crestwood Company (free catalog)
1-414-352-5676

Dunmar Products, Inc. (free catalog)
1-800-783-1998

ETAC USA (free information)
1-800-678-3822

Sunrise Medical (free catalog)
1-800-333-4000

Handi-Ramp, Inc. (for home or van)
1-800-876-RAMP

Homecare Products (free catalog)
1-800-451-1903

Maddack, Inc. (free catalog)
1-201-628-7600

Independent Living Aids (free
catalog) 1-800-537-2118

Open Sesame (free catalog)
1-800-673-6911

Lifestand (free catalog)
1-800-782-6324

Sammons Preston (free catalog)
1-800-266-8856

Miles Kimball Company (free
catalog) 1-800-546-2255

Walk Easy, Inc. (free catalog)
1-800-441-2904

Assistive Technology Info-Line 1-800-451-8693

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Alternative Formats Available – Call 1-800-265-IPAT