

**An Annual Report for the  
Interagency Program for Assistive Technology  
June 1, 2004 through May 31, 2005**

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) increases access to assistive technology in North Dakota by engaging in activities that raise awareness, disseminate information, provide training and assessments, work with policy makers, loan equipment for trial-use, and demonstrate assistive technology (AT) devices to individuals of all ages with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging throughout the state. IPAT increases AT acquisition by making available a used equipment bulletin board and an alternative financial loan program specific to the purchase of AT devices and services.

During the program year beginning June 1, 2004, through May 31, 2005, IPAT increased access to AT by:

1. providing direct consumer assistance to 4,550 individuals;
2. demonstrating AT equipment to 133 individuals;
3. making 444 short-term AT equipment loans;
4. training 214 people;
5. setting up displays and demonstrating equipment at exhibits and fairs attended by 908 people;
6. delivering public awareness talks to 1,141 residents;
7. answering 1,069 requests for technical assistance from various state and local agencies;
8. collaborating with over 19 agencies/organizations for training delivery, and/or to increase program/system AT efficiency and effectiveness; and
9. developed and disseminated 10 new products.

Ensuring that all people with disabilities in North Dakota - regardless of age or disability - are supported in their efforts to find, fund, and implement assistive technology solutions is the responsibility of 1 director, 2 coordinators, and 1 support person. IPAT is the AT leader in the state, insuring that the rapid advances in technology are not leaving hundreds of North Dakotan's with disabilities behind at work, school, home, and in their community.

Judie Lee, IPAT Director

**IPAT PROJECT STRUCTURE**

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) is the only program in North Dakota specifically funded to ensure that all people with disabilities have

access to the technology devices and services they need to increase their independence and quality of life. It serves people of all ages, incomes, and disabilities residing throughout the state.

IPAT leads the state in finding assistive technology solutions, thus, helping hundreds of residents with disabilities to learn, work, and live independently. IPAT engages in a variety of innovative initiatives carried out by three regional offices, and is federally funded at \$305,838.

The IPAT Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) provides direction and guidance to IPAT. The 11-member committee reflects the diversity of disabilities, ages, regions, and cultures of the state and serves as a way to link to existing networks and support systems. Its members are either individuals with a disability or have family members with a disability.

## **IPAT EXPANDS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION**

### Alternative Financial Loan Program (AFLP)

IPAT, the North Dakota Association for the Disabled, and Protection and Advocacy of North Dakota implemented a federal grant award of over \$1,000,000, to establish an Alternative Financial Loan Program (AFLP) in North Dakota. The purpose of the AFLP is to expand the personal financing options for state residents with disabilities to purchase assistive technology devices and services. A North Dakota resident is eligible if they can demonstrate the ability to repay the loan and show it will be used to purchase assistive technology. The AFLP partners used this grant cycle to develop an application process, draw up agreements with a lending institution, draft policies, procedures and assurances, and have started making AT loans to qualified North Dakotans.

### AT Through Real Choice Grant: "No Place Like Home"

In August of 2003, IPAT partnered with the Independent Living Centers to implement a 'Real Choice' grant through the Department of Human Services. IPAT's role was to promote placement in less restrictive settings for persons with disabilities, those experiencing the effects of aging, or long-term illnesses through exploration of assistive technology options. IPAT was granted funding to provide AT consultations, procure AT devices for individuals within a designated dollar amount, and deliver the necessary training on the devices for a minimum of 15 people. At the conclusion of the grant award, there were 23 people who received AT devices and services through IPAT's involvement in this project at an average cost of \$1,260. They lived in communities or on farms scattered throughout the state, presented with a variety of disabilities, and represented a wide range of ages. It is expected, that those individuals receiving AT devices through this project will remain safely where they are rather than having to move to a more restrictive environment; thus fulfilling their desire to live in place.

### Christmas in April (CIA) Delivers AT

IPAT collaborated with the Christmas in April (CIA) project serving the cities of Bismarck and Mandan. IPAT serves on the CIA board of directors in an effort to increase the awareness of assistive technology (AT) devices and services as a viable solution to home rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging. During this grant cycle, four low-income, elderly individuals selected by CIA for home repair assistance were provided AT assessments through IPAT to help them remain safe in their homes. Following the assessments, a variety of AT devices were purchased specific to individual need (amplified phone, electric jar opener, EZ step, remote control deadbolt, over the tub grab bar) with funds from local individuals, businesses, foundations, grants, faith based groups and civic organizations. This collaboration not only provided devices to the recipients of CIA services, it also increased the awareness of AT products to over 400 volunteers and local businessmen involved in the home rehabilitation project.

#### Augmentative Communication Devices Based on Medical Necessity Sought

IPAT is a member of the Pediatric Quorum, which is working directly with a task force of therapists, parents, vendors and physicians established by request with the ND Department of Human Services and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Dakota (BC/BSND) to look at medical services for children. Discussion was held and work groups were established to review: 1) the current habilitative window; 2) to add language in the BC/BSND policy to provide augmentative communication (AAC) devices on the basis of medical necessity; and, 3) to include pediatric therapy peer review for therapy services requested. The expected outcomes of the task force are to provide AT services for children in a more timely fashion, provide AAC devices based on medical necessity, and streamline paperwork and phone contacts in an effort to better serve the AT needs of children.

#### On-line Used Equipment Bulletin Board

In an effort to serve North Dakota residents looking to list or locate used assistive technology devices, IPAT hosts a used equipment bulletin board on their website for anyone to look for and state residents to list used AT devices. As host, IPAT posts used equipment listings submitted via mail or phone, and makes a toll-free number available to all. During this grant cycle, IPAT improved this acquisition service by updating all listings and implementing a new process to keep the listings current. Using the combination of electronic telecommunication and a toll-free line to promote device reuse in North Dakota has proven to be an effective way to reach the most rural consumers and service providers. At last count, there had been \$155,000+ worth of AT acquired through this IPAT service.

#### AT Equipment Dissemination Programs

IPAT administers two assistive technology (AT) dissemination programs funded by the Aging Services Division, North Dakota Department of Human Services.

The first is the Senior Assistive Technology Safety Program (SATS), which promotes in-home safety through the purchase of AT devices and services for state residents aged 60 years and older. SATS provides a limited range of AT equipment (i.e., grab bars, Collators, reachers, and raised toilet seats), installation assistance, and training on device-use through a toll-free number and IPAT staff to assist in equipment selection, ordering, set-up, and training. This acquisition service keeps seniors living at home safely longer, thereby decreasing the length of time spent in a nursing facility. During this grant cycle, 1,303 people over the age of 60 acquired AT devices and services through IPAT's involvement with the SATS program.

Another component of the SATS program includes the distribution of medication dispensers. This component serves all state residents who are 60 years or older (not living in a nursing facility) by providing, at no cost to the individual, a medication dispenser specific to their needs (i.e., locking, vibrating, audible alarm, spoken message). In addition to the dispenser, training for care givers and individual recipients on device use is provided by IPAT staff on an as-needed basis. During this grant cycle over 300 medication dispensers were provided to ND seniors; showing a fifty percent increase over the number provided in the previous year. It is anticipated, that those receiving dispensers will continue to live at home and safely take their medication as prescribed by their physician, thus promoting independence and health.

The second AT dissemination program is the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP), which provides alternative telephones at no cost to eligible state residents with hearing, physical or speech related impairments. The TEDP acquisition program sends out a wide-range of telephones (i.e., TTY, VCO, HCO, amplified, remote) at no cost to the recipient, and teaches them how to use them through a toll-free number and IPAT staff. This service keeps people with a variety of communication difficulties connected to friends, family, and services, through the provision of an alternative telephone. During this grant cycle, 255 state residents acquired telecommunication devices and services through IPAT's involvement with the TEDP program.

## **IPAT PROMOTES ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS**

### Access to Equipment

North Dakota has very few vendors of assistive technology (AT) products resulting in limited opportunities for persons with disabilities to access AT. IPAT fills this void by making available two distinct AT access programs for state residents.

The first is the IPAT Equipment Loan Library (ELL), housed in the Fargo Technology Access Center (TAC). The ELL consists of an inventory of over 800 pieces of AT equipment, ranging from mobility aids to augmentative communication devices, which are used specifically to provide short-term

equipment loans to state residents of all ages with disabilities and/or those entities supporting them. This IPAT equipment access program meets the ongoing need for individuals and entities to pursue equipment exploration, trial-use, assessment, and funding justification activities. There have been 444 equipment loans made during this grant cycle, helping people to make an informed decision about AT as a result of this service.

*The Number of IPAT Equipment Loan Library Loans by Population Affiliation*

Young Child, birth – 3 years:	12
Education, 3 – 12 years:	111
Employment, 18 – 55 years:	217
Older Adult, over 55 years:	60
Minority:	16
Community:	43

Numbers reflect a duplicated count

The second AT access program is IPAT's demonstration site located in Fargo, and housed in the TAC. The demonstration site serves as a resource for all individuals with disabilities, their family members and all entities providing education, employment, community, and information technology services. The demonstration site has over 200 AT devices on hand for the purpose of individual exploration and/or demonstration, AT assessments, training sessions and general AT awareness activities. The four main domains represented at the demonstration site are; telecommunications, computer access, augmentative/alternative communication and environmental control. During this grant cycle, the demonstration site was used by IPAT staff to provide 30 AT assessments, 20 AT trainings, 9 AT demonstrations/tours, and 16 video conferences/video tours, benefiting over 240 consumers and service providers.

Access to Information

In an effort to increase AT awareness, the IPAT project actively develops and disseminates a wide variety of materials to increase the awareness, knowledge and skill level of the citizenship regarding AT devices and services. Methods employed include, but are not limited to: electronic and postal mailings, maintaining and updating IPAT's website, physical set-up and manning of a variety of IPAT displays, increasing the inventory of the AT video lending library, adding to the informational component within IPAT's Technology Access Center, delivering information via video-conferencing, and maintaining two toll-free information numbers.

Access to Technical Assistance

Persons with disabilities, their friends and family members and/or the entities that serve them can contact the IPAT program through the website (ndipat.org), e-mail and toll-free phone lines. IPAT staff provide assistance in helping people identify the assistive technology they need, determining AT device funding

sources, accessing IPAT programs, obtaining an AT assessment, referral, and/or gaining disability policy knowledge. During this grant cycle, IPAT staff handled 5,621 inquiries and requests for assistance, showing an increase of over 2,000 from the previous year.

*Technical Assistance Calls by Type and Population Affiliation*

Type of Assistance:

General Information:	475
Assessment Information:	572
Equipment:	4342
Funding	230
Advocacy	2

Population Affiliation

Young Child:	20
Education:	224
Employment	576
DD Adult	68
Older Adult	4331
Minority	18
Community	385

Access to AT Trainings, Demonstrations/Exhibits and Awareness Activities

All North Dakotans can request an IPAT training, demonstration/exhibit, or presentation specific to assistive technology devices or services. During this fiscal year IPAT provided 18 trainings, 14 demonstrations/expos, and 17 public awareness activities attended by 2,396 individuals. Training was provided on topics including but not limited to; assistive technology for adults in the workplace with attention deficit disorder, an overview to medication management devices, where to find funding for AT, overview to computer access, AT for sensory impairments; a statewide AT Expo was held in Fargo, with 35 vendors and over 300 participants in attendance; and IPAT staff engaged in public awareness activities at senior centers, schools, and in the community at large.

*Number of Persons Attending an AT Event  
by Population Served*

Individuals with Disabilities:	48
Family Members and/or Representatives:	276
Service providers:	603
Community Members:	1423
Employers:	46

Access to AT in Transition

IPAT is a member of the Southwest Assembly on Transition (SWAT), which is made up of representatives from the following entities; education, vocational rehabilitation, disability services, student services, developmental disabilities,

protection and advocacy, job service and independent living. The goal of SWAT is to combine resources and expertise to better serve individuals with disabilities living in the most rural part of the state (southwest) as they transition from secondary school to a post-school environment. The expected outcome is to develop a transition awareness day for parents and students, thereby increasing an understanding of options, including AT, for those in transition to yield a positive and planned post-secondary experience.

#### Technology Access Foundation (TAF)

The Technology Access Foundation (TAF) is a non-profit organization that was established by a group of North Dakota citizens for the sole purpose of promoting assistive technology access. In 2004, IPAT and TAF collaborated to submit a grant application to a community based organization to support purchasing equipment for the IPAT Equipment Loan Library and IPAT's demonstration site in Fargo. The grant application was successful and a \$40,000 grant was awarded to purchase AT devices for the respective purposes. The devices have been purchased with the TAF acting as the fiscal agent, and IPAT now either loans and/or demonstrates the equipment purchased to all state residents.

**The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) is the only program in North Dakota specifically funded to ensure people with disabilities, and those experiencing the effects of aging, have access to the technology devices and services they need to be active participants in society.**

**IPAT leads the state in assistive technology solutions, assisting hundreds of residents with disabilities and those experiencing the effects of aging to achieve, enjoy, and prosper through the use of AT.**

#### NORTH DAKOTANS SPEAK OUT ABOUT IPAT

"I got in touch with IPAT via videoconferencing to explore my options for a new communication device. I have had brainstem dysfunction since birth and can only speak a few words. I rented the Palmtop Portable IMPACT for a month. I used it to talk on the phone, keep myself organized, and talk face-to-face. It worked so well I got my own device, it is small and I take it wherever I go. It changed my life."  
Sarah Rush, Bowman

"Thank you so much for the help you have given me - 2 raised toilet seats with arms, walker with a basket, and the bed cane. I appreciate this so much.  
Jenny Jensen, Kramer

"IPAT introduced me to the HeadMouse for my computer. Since I am unable to use my hands, this device allows me to independently operate my computer

through an infrared dot placed on my hat. With this I am able to keep in touch with all my buddies through e-mails. IPAT also helped me get a remote controlled phone and let me try out an environmental control device for my television. A HUGE thank you to the IPAT team for introducing me to these devices."

Todd Miller, Bismarck

"It's a wonderful program and will help many to stay at home."

Ray and Marilyn Fetsch, Milton

"Norma has many health issues, she has trouble walking about in her home, and she is in a lot of pain. She called me yesterday so excited that she received her Rollator (walker with wheels, brake, basket and seat) from your program. She stated it has given her more freedom in her movements and activities."

Karen Froysland, Williston

"I was delighted to receive the new telephone with the loud ringer. Now my friends can't say, 'We've been trying to reach you for days.'"

Mary Margaret Frank, Grand Forks

"IPAT helped me find ways to better myself in my job. By using a keyguard on my keyboard my typing has improved a lot. I don't bump into other keys, which eliminates many mistakes and saves me time in correcting them. I thank IPAT for their support."

Shirley Brennen, Minot

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[www.ndipat.org](http://www.ndipat.org)

This report is available in alternative formats.