

**An Annual Report for the
Interagency Program for Assistive Technology
June 1, 2000 through May 31, 2001**

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The effort to find, fund, and implement assistive technology solutions for all individuals with disabilities in North Dakota is the responsibility of 1 director, 4 regional 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 Dakotans with disabilities behind at work, school, home and in their community.

Judie Lee, Director

IPAT Project Structure

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) is the only program in North Dakota specifically funded to ensure that people with disabilities – regardless of age or disabling condition – have access to the technology devices and services they need to be independent and productive members of society. IPAT is building an assistive technology (AT) infrastructure within the state that increases access to AT awareness, information, technical assistance, training, interagency coordination, advocacy, funding, and policy development for all North Dakotans.

IPAT leads the state in assistive technology solutions, helping hundreds of residents with disabilities to achieve, to enjoy, and to prosper. IPAT engages in a variety of innovative initiatives carried out by five regional offices, is a program of North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Human Services, and is funded at \$611,675 through the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

The IPAT Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) provides direction and guidance to IPAT. The 15-member committee reflects the diversity of disabilities, ages, regions, and cultures of the state and is a conduit to varied linkages to existing networks and support systems. Its members are either individuals with a disability or have family members with a disability.

IPAT Bridges the AT Gap

Partnerships for Assistive Technology

State, public, and private entities IPAT has coordinated the development of a statewide coalition, Partnerships for Assistive Technology (PAT), which is comprised of individuals in decision-making positions representing 21 public and private entities. PAT's mission is to advance the use of AT by developing resources and promoting partnerships within and between private and public sectors. Activities supporting the PAT mission over the last five years are designed by and continue to be carried out through collaborative efforts of the PAT members.

AT 3 – Year Plan Now in Place

Education There was a lack of planning for AT within school systems. IPAT developed a planning guide, *Technology for all: A guide to solving the puzzle*, and provided training to implement this planning process. A large school district in the state adopted the process, developed a 3-year AT plan, thereby increasing student access to AT devices/services, and district-wide fiscal responsibility.

AT Included in ND Medicaid Waivers

Community Living/Human Services/Social Services IPAT staff serves as a resource to Medicaid personnel on the need for, and benefits of, assistive technology use for individuals. ND Medicaid currently includes AT within their waivers, resulting in more people receiving funding for, and using AT services and devices.

AT Use Increases within Medical Settings

Health Care Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) within medical centers lacked AT training and equipment resources in the areas of augmentative communication, environmental control, and recreation. Through a collaborative effort with IPAT, training was provided to SLPs specific to AT devices/services in these areas, as well as the availability of the IPAT Equipment Loan Library. This resulted in patients, who were not previously considered, having increased access to AT devices/services.

Rural AT Resource Room Available for All

Vocational Rehabilitation A rural Vocational Rehabilitation Center lacked local access to trained AT professionals, AT devices for demonstration, and timely trial use of AT devices for individuals seeking employment accommodations. IPAT facilitated the establishment of an AT lab and provided technical assistance in the planning, set-up, and training for staff on the equipment use. People in that region now have access to AT demonstrations/training, and VR staff are considering the implementation of an AT screening tool to eliminate the potential for presumptive denial of the need for assistive technology.

Electronic and Information Technology (E&IT)

As the electronic age revolutionizes the way we access government, business, and the service industries, we must make sure that people with disabilities aren't left on the outside looking in. IPAT is a member of the ITD taskforce whose mission is to identify accessibility issues in E&IT within state government. This taskforce will write policies addressing website development, telecommunications, and procurement of

hardware and software within state government. They will design a training and technical assistance plan for the IT Coordinators within each department of state government. The taskforce has adopted the Federal 508 standards as a criterion goal for ITD policies to meet within state government in North Dakota.

Assistive Technology Financial Loan Program

As more individuals become aware of assistive technology (AT) options that can provide opportunities for work, learning, independent living, and recreation, the reality of insufficient funding alternatives remains. IPAT has applied for federal grant dollars available under Title III of the 'Tech Act' to expand the existing AT loan program. To prepare for the grant, IPAT conducted a survey by mail, specific to the need for alternative financial loan options for the purchase of AT. With approximately 500 people responding, IPAT facilitated a statewide stakeholders meeting to gain input and direction on the establishment of a "new and friendlier" AT Financial Loan Program. Fifty participants received training and shared information via an interactive videoconference. Ten of the participants volunteered to be a part of a workgroup to write a policy/procedural manual and to meet with financial institutions to garner support for the program. This workgroup has representation from IPAT, Independent Living, North Dakota Association for the Disabled, Vocational Rehabilitation, Bank of North Dakota, and AgrAbility. This collaborative effort is a work in progress and will result in increased financial options for people in North Dakota to purchase AT.

State and Regional AT Services at a Glance

Technical Assistance The four regional coordinators provided technical assistance services via telephone to over 2,931 individuals. The types of calls and breakout of caller affiliation is provided.

Types of Calls

Funding	465
Equipment Technical Assistance	888
General AT Information	1016
Referrals	490
Advocacy	72

Affiliation Represented

Young Child (Part C)	83
Education	574
Employment	648
Older Adult	606
Minority	67
Community	953

Training IPAT provided 102 training sessions attended by 3,828 individuals through statewide, regional, and outreach opportunities. The training sessions were conducted

in 26 different cities representing 22 counties. Training topics covered equipment, policy/funding, AT awareness, learning disabilities, AT resources and strategies for implementation.

Number of trainings provided by IPAT for population served:*

Young Child (Part C)	6
Education	29
Employment	42
Older Adult	14
Minority	5
Community	42

*Note: some IPAT trainings were attended by individuals from more than one population group hence the discrepancy between 138 and 102.

Number of persons attending IPAT trainings by population served:

Young Child (Part C)	11
Education	668
Employment	252
Older Adult	1459
Minority	63
Community	1375

AT Device/Equipment Use The IPAT Equipment Loan Library provides AT equipment for free, short-term loan to state residents of all ages with disabilities. This meets the need for equipment exploration, trial-use, assessment and funding justification. There have been 1,499 equipment loans this grant cycle. The number of loans and population affiliation is provided.

Young Child (Part C)	83
Education	459
Employment	316
Older Adult	153
Minority	84
Community	404

AT Outreach Identified

All North Dakotans have access to assistive technology information through a free, 24-hour, 7 day a week AT Help-Line service. IPAT sponsors this service and continues to provide training and resources to the AT Help-Line staff. During the last grant cycle, over 917 people have contacted the Help-Line in their search for AT devices and services.

The IPAT Equipment Expo! was created as a direct result of consumer requests for hands-on experiences with, and demonstration of, a variety of AT devices. The

Expo! is a traveling demonstration center and, during the last grant cycle, provided opportunities for over 690 individuals to explore a range of AT devices in their communities. The Expo! highlights hands-on adapted living aids and/or environmental control, augmentative communication, and adapted computer access. It also includes an information center with fact sheets, service provider and vendor information, newsletters, brochures, guides, and videotapes.

Through IPAT's collaboration with the Adaptive Equipment Services program, consumers in rural/remote areas of North Dakota receive fabrication and customization services otherwise unavailable to them. This service utilizes a mobile van, which goes directly to the remote sites with its fabrication equipment and staff on-board. A total of 279 consumers have received services from this program in the last 12 months. Services range from adapted grab bar installation to the creation of custom seating systems.

The IPAT website was developed to provide ready access to current AT information to all North Dakota residents, especially those residing in rural communities. It was designed and is maintained by a member of the Consumer Advisory Committee with support from the IPAT staff. The site is Bobby Approved and accessibility monitoring is on going. The website provides an avenue to all of IPAT's products, services and resources along with links to national AT information. During the current grant cycle, www.ndipat.org received 36,500 hits, providing individuals in search of AT information ready access to that information.

What's New? AT Products

In an effort to increase AT awareness, the IPAT project actively develops and disseminates a wide variety of informational materials to increase the knowledge and skill level of our citizenship regarding assistive technology devices and services. Within this grant cycle 24 new products were developed; a sampling is provided:

- Six issues of IPAT's free bi-monthly newsletter:
The AT Key
- Four guides/manuals:
Information Technology Accessibility: A Guide for Assuring Equal Access for People with Disabilities
Assistive Technology Funding Avenues in North Dakota
Doodads, Gadgets & Thingamajigs 2nd Edition
IPAT Equipment Loan Library Manual 2nd Edition
- Videotape:
Stop! Take a look! Assistive

Technology is all around you!

Available in both closed caption and descriptive video formats

- Three surveys:
Survey of North Dakota Developmental Disabilities (DD) Assistive Technology Practices
IPAT Equipment Loan Library Survey
AT Financial Loan Program Survey
- Training module:
Solutions: Assistive Technology for Individuals with Hidden Disabilities

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DID YOU KNOW...

FACT: While technology benefits us all, it is especially useful to people with disabilities or advancing age that want to be productive and independent. **FACT:** Since 1993, the IPAT program has helped hundreds of people in North Dakota with disabilities to find, get, pay for, and use technology in their daily lives. **FACT:** There is a huge amount of technology "out there." But abundant technology does not necessarily translate to easy access to technology. In fact, for people with disabilities, getting technology is often anything but easy. **FACT:** Over 70 public and private entities look to the IPAT program for leadership in improved understanding of, access to, and acquisition of AT for the individuals they serve. **FACT:** People with disabilities want to work and technology is the key. Employers need assistance in identifying the technology solutions that will preserve or enhance their workforce. **FACT:** No other agencies or organizations duplicate the range of services and supports offered by the IPAT program. **FACT:** With assistive technology, more people are living independently, working, participating in school, contributing to their community, and enjoying recreational opportunities. **FACT:** Parents, students, and educators look to IPAT for assistance in identifying AT solutions

to promote school participation and learning. **FACT:** There is still much work to be done to ensure that those who design, create, distribute, regulate, and fund technology will do so with all end users in mind.

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) is North Dakota's only program with the single mandate and mission to ensure that people with disabilities are not stranded on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Interagency Program for Assistive Technology
1.800.265.IPAT (4728) V/TT
www.ndipat.org

This report is available in alternative formats.