

**An Annual Report for the
Interagency Program for Assistive Technology
June 1, 2001 through May 31, 2002**

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) raises awareness, disseminates information, conducts training and assessments, works with policy makers, and provides access to trial use and demonstration of assistive technology (AT) equipment to individuals of all ages with disabilities throughout North Dakota.

During the program year beginning June 1, 2001, through May 31, 2002, IPAT increased access to AT by: 1) providing direct consumer assistance to 2,915 individuals; 2) demonstrating AT equipment to 302 individuals; 3) training to 2,957 people; 4) loaning AT equipment to 1,409 individuals; 5) answering 1,549 requests for technical assistance from various state and local agencies; 6) collaborating with over 70 agencies/organizations for training delivery, and/or to increase program/system efficiency and effectiveness; and 7) developed and disseminated 18 new products.

Ensuring that all people with disabilities in North Dakota – regardless of age or disabling condition – are supported in their efforts to find, fund, and implement assistive technology solutions is the responsibility of 1 director, 4 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, 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 have access to the technology devices and services they need to be independent and contributing members of society. IPAT is building an assistive technology (AT) infrastructure within the state that increases access to AT awareness, information, consumer and technical assistance, equipment, training, interagency coordination, advocacy, funding, and policy development for all North Dakotan's.

IPAT leads the state in assistive technology solutions, thus, 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 federally funded at \$459,000.00 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 existing networks and support systems. Its members are either individuals with a disability or have family members with a disability.

IPAT Helps Build An AT Infrastructure for North Dakota

ND Stakeholders Work on Accessible Electronic and Telecommunications

Information The Information Technology Department (ITD) organized an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Workgroup to identify the accessibility issues as they pertain to information technology and develop state assistive technology policy. The members of this group represent Protection & Advocacy, ADA Consortium, consumers, state personnel, IPAT, and ITD. The Workgroup is developing policies for telecommunications, website design, and hardware and software purchases. These policies will be adopted by state government agencies. The Workgroup is also planning the training for state Information Technology (IT) coordinators within each government agency regarding policy implementation. IPAT has a critical role on this committee as an AT consultant and training coordinator.

AT Screening Tool Adopted by ND Vocational Rehabilitation The IPAT director was asked to assist in the development and implementation of an AT plan for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in collaboration with the central office staff and regional directors. As a result of this plan, IPAT developed an AT screening tool specific to the needs of those individuals seeking employment. The screening tool was distributed, piloted by VR counselors, and subsequently altered, based on counselor input. The final tool, Screening for Assistive Technology, was then rolled out statewide through an IPAT developed training session delivered to all eight regional centers via interactive video. As a result of IPAT and VR collaboration, the Screening for Assistive Technology tool has been adopted statewide and made part of the intake process for all VR clients. The adoption of this screening process provides a systematic, consistent method for VR counselors to identify a potential need for AT, eliminates the potential of presumptive denial, and reduces discrepancy in AT services within the division.

AT Equipment Provider Added to North Dakota Many manufacturers of assistive technology (AT) are not vendors for North Dakota Medicaid, Medicare, and/or private insurance. IPAT worked with Advanced Orthotics and Prosthetics, a medical equipment vendor in North Dakota, to be an equipment provider for consumers in need of more specialized AT equipment. Applied O&P will now bill Medicaid, Medicare, and insurance for individuals in ND in need of AT, and has also applied to become a qualified service provider for ND Medicaid under the Medicaid Waiver Program. Consequently, people living in ND will be able to have access to AT through wider representation of manufacturers/vendors. An example: an individual in a ND nursing home in need of a LightWRITER from Zygo was able to obtain it through North Dakota Medicaid via Advanced O&P, even though Zygo is not a vendor for ND Medicaid.

Education Plans for AT Service Delivery The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT), in collaboration with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI), provides an on-going support to school districts across the state in

developing and implementing assistive technology services for their districts. Support includes: 1) training; 2) access to equipment; 3) information dissemination; 4) technical assistance; and 5) direct student assistance.

ND Workers Compensation Bureau Looks to AT as Reemployment Option

IPAT collaborated with the ND Workers Compensation Bureau to promote assistive technology as a means to employment for injured workers. Through increase AT awareness and collaboration, Workers Compensation has identified an assistive technology point person within the bureau. This person heads up the newly launched preferred workers program, and is looking to use the analysis and review teams currently in place to identify AT solutions as a means to increase the number of injured workers returning to work. This will be accomplished through continued collaboration with IPAT in the areas of technical assistance, training, consultation, and work-site assessments.

AT Funding Realized Under Medicaid Waiver Program IPAT worked with the “Home and Community Based Services, Medicaid Waiver for the Aged and Disabled Program,” to obtain funding for an individual needing an environmental control unit and corresponding accessories to promote health and independence in his home. Medicaid approved his request for a voice-activated unit to control a variety of devices and appliances. He was the first person in ND to receive funding for Specialized Equipment under the Medicaid Waiver for the Aged and Disabled Program. Now, other North Dakotans with disabilities who are eligible for the Medicaid Waiver will have an AT funding source available to assist in keeping them in their own homes with increased independence.

Focus on AT and Employment Enhanced through New AT Lab The south central region of North Dakota lacked any assistive technology (AT) device centers, labs, or lending libraries for individuals with disabilities and/or employers to try-out AT devices for potential worksite accommodation purposes. IPAT worked with the Department of Human Services and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to help develop an AT Lab in Bismarck to eliminate this void. As a result, the Bismarck and Mandan Rotary Clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, numerous small businesses, ND legislators, and the ND Workers Compensation Bureau have joined many state agency staff and consumers in a variety of AT Lab activities promoting AT in the workplace.

Statewide Coalition Promotes AT Across Agencies, Ages, and Disabilities IPAT continues to facilitate the activities of a statewide coalition, Partners 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 are designed and carried out through collaborative efforts of the PAT members. PAT activities include: 1) promoting public awareness of AT at the state level; 2) providing training and education about AT for stakeholders, including the human service and business organizations, educators, members of insurance and health care industry, and public office holders/policy makers;

and 3) promoting interagency collaborations to address policies, practices, and organization structures that promote the advancement of AT.

IPAT Services Provided June 2001 – May 2002

Direct Consumer Assistance The four regional coordinators provided direct consumer assistance services via telephone to over 2,915 individuals. The types of calls and breakout of caller affiliation is provided.

Types of Calls

General Information	887
Assessment Process	641
Equipment	1,030
Funding	335
Advocacy	22
<i>Total (2,915)</i>	

Affiliation Represented

Young Child	44
Education	687
Employment	686
DD Adult	163
Older Adult	610
Minority	82
Community	643
<i>Total (2,915)</i>	

Training IPAT provided 59 training sessions attended by 2,957 individuals through statewide, regional, and outreach opportunities. The training sessions were conducted in 17 different cities representing 17 counties. A sampling of topics includes, but was not limited to: AT equipment, policy/funding, AT awareness, augmentative communication, information technology, learning disabilities, worksite accommodations, and alternative alarm systems.

Number of persons attending IPAT trainings by population served:

Individuals with Disabilities	366
Family Members and/or Representative	194
Service Providers	1,088
Employers	307
Policy Makers	90
Community Members	912
<i>Total (2,957)</i>	

IPAT Equipment Expo! and AT Display Set-up IPAT provided five demonstration/display opportunities in four different locations throughout the state,

which were attended by 302 individuals, almost evenly split between consumers and service providers. These opportunities highlighted hands-on adapted living aids and/or environmental control, augmentative communication, adapted computer access, and an information center with fact sheets, service provider and vendor information, newsletters, brochures, guides, and videotapes specific to AT delivery in North Dakota.

IPAT Equipment Loan Library 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 1,409 equipment loans this grant cycle. The number of loans and population affiliation is provided.

Young Child (Part C)	43
Education	507
Employment	250
Older Adult	86
Minority	23
Community	500
<i>Total (1,409)</i>	

IPAT's AT Outreach Activities Identified

On-Line Used Equipment Bulletin Board: With the collapse of the AT Help-Line services due to decreased funding, IPAT changed the method used to link consumers with used AT equipment for trade, sale, or giveaway. Knowing the importance of this service to all North Dakotans, IPAT altered the delivery of this service by placing the Used Equipment Bulletin Board inventory on-line as a component of IPAT's website. For those without on-line access, a toll free number for this service is also available.

Mobile Service Project: 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 304 consumers have received services from this program in the last 12 months. Services range from work-site accommodations to adapted seating systems.

AT Traveling Picture Show: North Dakota has a number of rural and remote rural residents who have had limited exposure to assistive technology devices and services. In an effort to promote assistive technology use within this segment of our population, IPAT created the AT Traveling Picture Show. This highly portable, easy-to-assemble display features North Dakota residents of all ages using AT devices across environments. The display was designed for easy transportation among and between rural communities for use in their senior centers, libraries, banks, and/or schools, thereby promoting AT use and providing contact information.

Public Awareness and Information Dissemination Activities

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 North Dakota citizens regarding assistive technology devices and services. Methods employed include but are not limited to: electronic and postal mailings, maintaining and updating IPAT's website, www.ndipat.org, physical set-up and manning of three different IPAT displays, AT video lending library, information center, and database of used AT equipment. Within this grant cycle, the following products were added to our existing product listing:

- * Six issues of IPAT's free bi-monthly newsletter: The AT Key
- * Brochure on the IPAT Program
- * Two displays – AT Traveling Picture Show; IPAT Team and Services
- * Annual Report plus insert
- * Survey & Analysis – Survey of North Dakota Developmental Disabilities: AT Practices
- * Descriptive Videotape – Stop! Take a Look! AT is all around you!
- * Screening Tool – AT Screening for Vocational Rehabilitation
- * AT Training Manual – AT Leadership Institute 2001
- * Two Training Modules – An Overview to AT and an update of An Assistive Technology Assessment Process

How Does IPAT Help?

Education: Every student must master technology skills in order to succeed and be productive. It is essential that the technology used in our schools leave no one behind. But preparing teachers to integrate and use technology to support students with disabilities in the classroom is a formidable task. Parents, students, and educators are looking for assistance in identifying technology solutions that will promote full participation in school. IPAT is in place and provides this service.

Employment: People with disabilities want to work. They want to contribute to society, enjoy personal fulfillment, and earn a living. The state needs workers and assistive technology is the key. Employers need assistance in identifying the technology solutions that will preserve or enhance their workforce. IPAT is in place and provides this service.

Health: People with medical problems need technology to improve or maintain their health and ward off secondary and/or progressive disabilities. But hundreds of people with disabilities – both children and adults – are uninsured, or have insurance coverage that limits access to medically necessary technology and professional assessment and therapy. Policymakers need an increased understanding of the medical necessity of assistive technology in improving and maintaining health. IPAT is in place and provides this service.

Aging and Independence: Even when age or disability limits functioning, people want to be independent, mobile, and productive. They want to be self-sufficient, live in homes of their own choosing, and maintain control over their lives. To remain

independent, technology becomes a critical tool for the aging population. Many individuals and service providers are unaware of assistive technology solutions and need help in identifying and using them. IPAT is in place and provides this service.

Information Technology: As the electronic age revolutionizes the way we access government, business, and service industries, we must make sure that people with disabilities aren't left on the outside looking in. There are many ways to give people the access they need, but awareness of why it's needed and how to do it lags far behind. Information technology personnel need assistance in understanding the impact of disability as it relates to information technology access and how to comply with federal and state standards. IPAT is in place and provides this service.



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This report is available in alternative formats

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) is North Dakota's only program with the single mandate and mission to ensure that all people with disabilities have access to the assistive technology devices and services they need for employment, community living, telecommunications, education and health care.