

**An Annual Report for the  
Interagency Program for Assistive Technology  
June 1, 2003 through May 31, 2004**

*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 and long-term illnesses throughout North Dakota.*

*During the program year beginning June 1, 2003, through May 31, 2004, IPAT increased access to AT by: 1) providing direct consumer assistance to 3,263 individuals; 2) demonstrating AT equipment to 1,405 individuals; 3) making 511 short-term AT equipment loans; 4) training 1,625 people; 5) answering 1,383 requests for technical assistance from various state and local agencies; 6) collaborating with over 38 agencies/organizations for training delivery, and/or to increase program/system efficiency and effectiveness; and 7) developed and disseminated 17 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, 3 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 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 assistance, equipment, training, interagency coordination, advocacy, funding, and policy development for all state residents.

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 four regional offices, it is a program of North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Human Services, and is federally funded at \$305,838 through the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

The IPAT Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) provides direction and guidance to IPAT. The 12-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 Options**

**Alternative Financial Loan Program (AFLP):** IPAT, in collaboration with the North Dakota Association for the Disabled (NDAD) and Protection and Advocacy of North Dakota, applied for, and was awarded, over \$1,000,000 in federal funding to establish an Alternative Financial Loan Program (AFLP). This program will offer lower interest rates with flexible terms, making it possible for some state residents to purchase their own AT.

**IPAT Works to Increase Allowable Rates:** In the summer of 2003, ND Medicaid (ND/MA) changed its reimbursement from a percentage to an allowable for all Durable Medical Equipment (DME) to include alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices. The allowables for AAC were extremely low, and most vendors would not accept the rates.

Therefore, even though ND/MA would approve a purchase, the vendor would refuse the order, as they felt they were not getting reimbursed adequately. IPAT worked with ND Medicaid's DME administrator to increase allowable rates. As a result, the allowable rates were increased significantly leading to an increased number of devices that could be purchased.

**Technology Access Center (TAC):** IPAT developed the first comprehensive assistive technology center in the state, serving as a resource for individuals, employers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, health care providers, school systems, universities, people who provide services to the elderly, and others. In addition to housing the IPAT Equipment Loan Library, the TAC was used by IPAT staff to provide 50 AT assessments, 7 AT trainings, 18 AT demonstrations/tours, and 16 videoconferences, benefiting over two hundred North Dakota consumers and service providers.

**Pediatric Quorum Extends Medicaid Coverage for Children with Special Needs:** The ND Department of Human Services revisited Medicaid coverage in the fall of 2003, and made changes in both funded services and equipment covered. These changes took effect in January of 2004, and directly impact children with disabilities as they limit the number of doctor and therapist visits; and place previously covered equipment in on-covered categories. IPAT, as a member of the Pediatric Quorum worked with a task force to look at habilitative windows and service provision as the new Medicaid funding processes evolve. The expected outcome of the task force is to extend the utilization allowed by the

new Medicaid coverage to provide additional services to children with special needs without major difficulty on the basis of medical necessity.

**IPAT Develops Cooperative Initiatives with AT Vendors:** IPAT's involvement in three AT dissemination projects led to the development of cooperative initiatives with four private sector AT providers: Harris Communications, Dynamic Living, HealthCare Accessories, and E-Pill. As a result of these cooperative initiatives, AT dollars in ND go further, thereby increasing the number of persons able to benefit from the dissemination projects. The beneficiaries are those receiving alternative telephones, medication dispensers, and safety devices related to activities of daily living.

### **IPAT Promote Assistive Technology Use**

**Medication Management:** IPAT is partnering with the Division of Aging Services and the North Dakota Pharmacy Association to administer the Medication Management Program. This program is designed to help people take medications as prescribed to maintain health and safety. The program serves all state residents who are 60 years or older not living in a nursing facility. A partnership with the ND Pharmacy Association has made it possible to provide, at no cost to the individual, a medication management device specific to their needs. Through this program, 153 seniors have been provided medication dispensers/reminders allowing them to live at home and safely take their medication, thus promoting independence and health.

**Senior Assistive Technology Safety Program (SATS):** IPAT administers the Senior Assistive Technology Safety Program (SATS) funded by the Aging Services Division, North Dakota Department of Human Services. This AT dissemination program promotes in-home safety through the purchase of AT devices and services for state residents who are 60 years and older not living in a nursing facility. SATS is able to provide a wide range of AT equipment (i.e., grab bars, magnifiers, fire alarms, seat lifts), installation and/or set-up, and training on these devices at no cost to the consumer. SATS has served 1,344 seniors and, because of this service, the need for assisted living arrangements or institutionalization can be eliminated and/or delayed for many.

**No Place Like Home:** IPAT partnered with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and the Protection and Advocacy Project of North Dakota to submit a proposal, "No Place Like Home," to the Governor's Commission on the Olmstead decision. The grant was awarded in August of 2003. This partnership has developed a brochure, booklet, and video explaining community living options and the importance of assistive technology and advocacy when choosing where one lives. Under the grant award, IPAT will complete at least 15 AT assessments, provide assistance in procuring the AT devices, and train the individual and family members to use the devices purchased to promote increased safety and independence.

**Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP):** IPAT administers the TEDP funded by the Aging Services Division, North Dakota Department of Human Services. This program provides alternative telephones at no cost to eligible state residents. Through the use of a toll free number, individual needs can be assessed and matched to the needed features of an alternative phone (i.e., TTY, VCO, HCO, amplified, remote controlled, and others) and training provided as needed by IPAT staff. TEDP served 137 people with a variety of communication difficulties, thereby keeping them connected to friends, family and services through the provision of an alternative phone.

### **People Served**

**Direct Consumer Assistance**

IPAT provided direct consumer assistance services to 3,029 individuals. The types of assistance and breakout of consumer affiliation is provided.

*Types of Assistance*

General Information	568
Assessment Process	795
Equipment	1,405
Funding	246
Advocacy	15
Total	3,029

*Affiliation Represented*

Young Child	18
Education	469
Employment	742
DD Adult	110
Older Adult	1,186
Minority	90
Community	414
Total	3,029

**AT Trainings, Demonstrations/Exhibits and Public Awareness Activities:**

IPAT provided 11 trainings, 19 demonstrations/exhibitions, and 23 public awareness activities, attended by 3,360 individuals through regional, statewide, and outreach opportunities.

*Number of persons attending IPAT trainings by population served:*

Individuals with Disabilities	282
Family Members and/or Representative	201
Service Providers	1,360
Policy Makers	73
Community Members	1,444

Total 3,360

**IPAT Equipment Loan Library:** North Dakota has a limited number of assistive technology (AT) product vendors, resulting in few opportunities for persons with disabilities to see or explore AT. IPAT fills this void with the IPAT Equipment Loan Library, which provides AT equipment for short-term loan to state residents of all ages with disabilities. This meets the on-going need for equipment exploration, trial-use, assessment, and funding justification. There have been 511 equipment loans this grant cycle. The number of loans by population affiliation is provided:

Young Child (Part C)	20
Education	128
Employment	202
Older Adult	108
Minority	11
Community	52
Total	521 (duplicate count)

### **IPAT's Outreach Activities**

**Evaluations via Telepractice to Outreach Areas:** IPAT provides AT assessments via Telepractice to individuals across the state. The use of Telepractice has proven to be a viable means of expanding AT access and expertise. It has shown to be cost effective, has increased productivity of service providers by decreasing travel time, and benefited individuals by providing timely access to the services they need. Over \$1,700 in travel time and lodging costs was saved in the first four transmissions.

**Information Dissemination:** In an effort to increase AT awareness, the IPAT project actively develops and disseminates a wide variety of materials to increase the knowledge and skill level of the citizenship regarding AT devices and services.

The following products were added to the existing product listing: five issues of IPAT's newsletter (AT KEY), new IPAT brochure describing program activities and contact information, three new brochures describing the AT dissemination programs IPAT is administering, three new displays (IPAT, Senior AT Safety, and Medication Management), IPAT's annual report, a 15 minute video highlighting the use of AT in realizing the Olmstead decision (No Place Like Home), and articles on IPAT and AT in general for inclusion in four statewide newsletters and two newspapers.

**On-Line Used Equipment Bulletin Board:** In an effort to serve North Dakota residents looking to buy or sell used assistive technology devices, IPAT makes available a used equipment list on the IPAT website and a toll-free number.

Using these two means to promote device re-use has been effective in reaching the most rural consumers and service providers. At last count, there had been over \$148,000 worth of AT obtained through this service.

### **IPAT Builds AT Resources in North Dakota**

IPAT initiated a fee for service program on October 1, 2003. Fees are charged for the following services: AT assessments; consultation; training; product development; and the use of the IPAT Equipment Loan Library (ELL). All funds generated from fees go directly back to supporting the programs. This fee schedule creates a funding source to replace and repair equipment in the IPAT-ELL and supplements some of the costs of AT specialists to conduct assessments and training.

**The Technology Access Foundation (TAF)**, a non-profit organization, whose sole focus is assistive technology, was established by a group of North Dakota citizens. The TAF received their first grant in May of 2004; \$40,000 was awarded to them from the North Dakota Association for the Disabled. These funds will be used to support the AT activities of the IPAT Equipment Loan Library and the IPAT Technology Access Center. The TAF Board of Directors works closely with IPAT to insure collaboration.

### **NORTH DAKOTAN'S SPEAK OUT ABOUT IPAT**

The seniors out in the rural areas did not know there was a service of this nature. We need more helpful programs like this. I hope we can continue this program, because the next generation of seniors is fast approaching.

Outreach worker – Donnybrook, ND

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." All I can say is thank you.

Senior citizen – Grand Forks, ND

I am in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Baldwin School. I have a learning disability in written language, which makes reading and spelling very hard. IPAT helped figure out what assistive technology might help me. I got my AlphaSmart and Franklin Language Master in December. I use them each day to do assignments and reports. I am able to complete some of my assignments by myself and don't always need someone to write for me. Thank you IPAT program.

Elementary school student – Baldwin, ND

The SATS program helps provide safety equipment not paid for by Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance. It really makes a difference for people leaving the hospital to return to their home safely.

HCBS worker – Cass County, ND

Thank you for finding me this telephone it is fun. I can talk with people again. Sometimes my friends hang up on the operator so I give them a hard time. The operator lets me know M or F, one of my friends said talking to me again was great.  
Rural resident – Lehr, ND

Would you please pass my thanks on for the Rollator. I am 76 and it has helped me so much for the few days I have had it. Thanks to all who made this possible as I am on a limited income.  
Senior citizen – Ray, ND

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for all the work and assistance you gave Barb and I in getting a wheelchair ramp built. We feel so much more safe and independent since we have had it. We can even get out to empty our own garbage again. Thank you and your staff for the help.  
Married couple – Minot, ND



Interagency Program for Assistive Technology  
North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Department of Human Services  
1-800-265-IPAT (4728) V/TT  
[www.ndipat.org](http://www.ndipat.org)



*This report is available in alternative formats*

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 or long-term illnesses to achieve, enjoy, and prosper through the use of AT.