

An Annual Report for the Interagency Program for Assistive Technology October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007

IPAT PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Interagency Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT) was established in 1993 as North Dakota's Statewide AT Program. IPAT's purpose is to provide opportunities for people of all ages and with all types of disabilities to learn, try and get the assistive technology they need for home, school, and work. This is accomplished through the following services: Alternative Financial Loan Program; Assistive Technology Swap 'n Shop; Equipment Loan Library; Equipment Demonstration Sites; Training; Technical Assistance; Public Awareness; and Coordination & Collaboration.

The IPAT Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) provides direction and guidance to IPAT. The 16 member Council reflects the diversity of disabilities, ages, regions, and cultures of the state and is a link to existing networks and support systems. Its members are either individuals with a disability or family members of an individual with a disability, along with representatives from the Department of Public Instruction, Protection & Advocacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Investment Act, and Centers for Independent Living.

IPAT is funded with federal dollars through the Assistive Technology Act and with state funding appropriated by the 2007 ND State Legislature. In July of 2005, IPAT changed from being directly administered by the Department of Human Services within state government to being an affiliate of the North Dakota Association for the Disabled, Inc.

IPAT EXPANDS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION

The **Alternative Financial Loan Program (AFP)** was established in North Dakota to make it easier for people with disabilities to get financial loans to purchase assistive technology. Loans can be used for a range of AT such as; adapted vans, home modifications, environmental controls, communication devices, scooters, low vision equipment and hearing aids. The program is designed to offer lower interest rates and flexible terms, making these loans more affordable for people. The AFP is administered by the North Dakota Association for the Disabled, Inc., in partnership with Alerus Financial and IPAT. The funding is made possible through a federal award to the State.

In FY '07, the AFP granted 9 loans, for a total of \$145,635. The average interest rate was 5.6%; the average loan amount was \$16,182; and the loans ranged from \$2,531 to \$36,682. During this program cycle, loans were made for the purchase of home and vehicle modifications and mobility, seating and positioning devices.

The Alternative Loan Program made a huge difference. We would not have been able to get the van without it. It made it possible for us to afford the van that we needed to meet Macy's needs, and she absolutely loves being in the van because it is so easy for us to get her in and out and she is comfortable. She has leg room. She can sit anywhere in the middle part of it, and she can look out the windows. It has been a great adventure for us because now that we have a van, it is easier for us to be on the go, and there's just no stopping us!"

Tammy Stuart – Fargo

The **Assistive Technology Swap 'n Shop** offers an opportunity for AT acquisition. There is a demand for pre-owned AT equipment and there is also a supply of it in North Dakota. IPAT has been connecting this supply and demand since 1996 through the operation of the AT 'Swap 'n Shop' program. This program allows individuals to buy, sell, swap, donate or request AT equipment through a statewide, online used equipment database. IPAT expanded the AT Swap 'n Shop services in 2007, by partnering with Cross Country Courier (CCC), an over-the-road trucking company located in Bismarck. Through this IPAT-CCC partnership, transporting the equipment exchanged through the AT Swap 'n Shop is now at **NO** charge for North Dakota residents. This partnership eliminated the cost of shipping, which had been identified by users as a barrier to obtaining AT through this program.

Used equipment with a retail value of \$194,315 exchanged hands through the AT Swap 'n Shop during FY '07. There were 29 new listings of available equipment and 68 exchanges, saving users \$95,057. Equipment exchanged included lift chairs, closed-circuit televisions, wheelchairs, bath chairs, vans, stair lifts, hospital beds, stairway elevators, canes, over-the-bed tables, standing frames, scooters, platform lifts, and bedrails.

My mother's name is Gertrude Dunham and she has Macular Degeneration. In the last year she has lost the ability to enjoy some of her favorite pastimes such as sewing. Most importantly she was no longer able to read the newspaper and the small print on her medicine bottles. She had looked at purchasing a CCTV locally but there was only one used one available and it was too expensive. With the help of her granddaughter-in-law, we were put in contact with IPAT's AT Swap 'n Shop.

My mom was able to find a used CCTV in East Grand Forks at an affordable price and IPAT organized the shipping through Cross Country Courier at no cost. This is a very heavy machine, at approximately 50 pounds; it would have been very expensive to ship. My mom is now able to enjoy reading the newspaper and be sure that she is taking the right medicine. The CCTV will give her back some of the freedom she has lost because of Macular Degeneration.

Thank you to IPAT for helping us find the CCTV and organizing the free shipping. We are very grateful for your help. Michelle O'Kelley, daughter of Gertrude, Minot

AT Delivered through “Rebuilding Together®”: *a national nonprofit with the mission to preserve affordable housing by bringing volunteers and communities together to rehabilitate homes.* In an effort to keep low income elderly and disabled persons living in their own homes, IPAT staff serves on the Rebuilding Together Affiliate board for the greater Bismarck/Mandan area. In addition to board duties, IPAT staff inspects each home slated for rehabilitation and interviews the current resident(s) to determine assistive technology (AT) needs. The focus of the AT is to promote independence and safety within the home environment. IPAT then works with the Rebuilding Together team captain at each home to order, install and teach the resident how to use the AT. Ten homes were rehabilitated during this grant cycle and AT recommendations and purchases included but were not limited to; alternative telephones, visual smoke alarms, grab bars, offset hinges, an uplift seat assist and a toilelevator.

North Dakota Job Services Adds AT to Service Locations: In April 2007, IPAT provided technical assistance to ND Job Service, Fargo Office, to aid them in decision making for a major equipment purchase for all ND Job Service locations. A needs analysis was conducted, and assistive technology equipment ideas were presented for all areas noted. Purchasing information was also provided. According to a representative from ND Job Services, they subsequently selected, purchased, and distributed the assistive technology equipment to all Job Service locations.

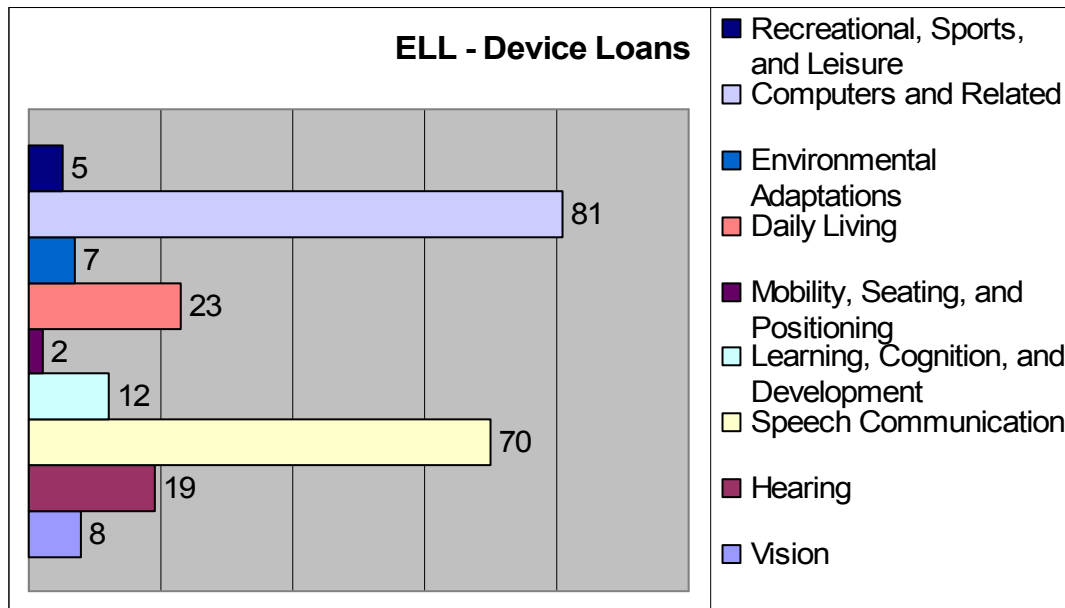
Telecommunications Distribution Services Places AT Devices throughout the State: IPAT administered the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Services program, funded by a telephone surcharge through the North Dakota Aging Services Division, Department of Human Services. The purpose of the program was to provide telecommunications services for the communications impaired. During FY '07, 300 North Dakota residents residing in 41 different counties were served through this program, with IPAT distributing 296 phones and 34 telephone accessories. This distribution effort supplied 26 different types of telephones including but not limited to: amplified; hands-free; picture; large button; or captioned; and 15 types of telephone accessories including voice dialers and visual signalers. In addition, IPAT staff set-up 19 exhibits specific to telecommunications equipment at events throughout the state, and has placed displays at hearing aid centers and in audiologists' offices to promote alternative telephone use.

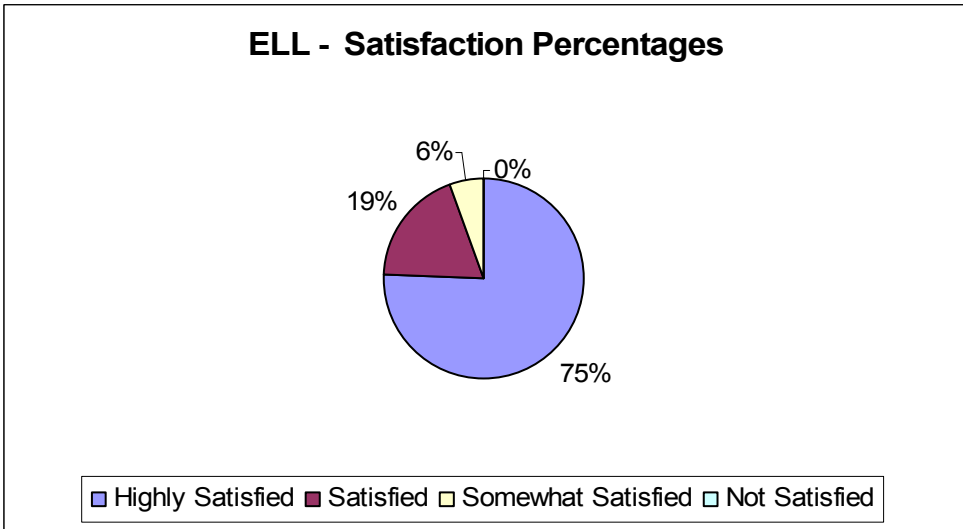
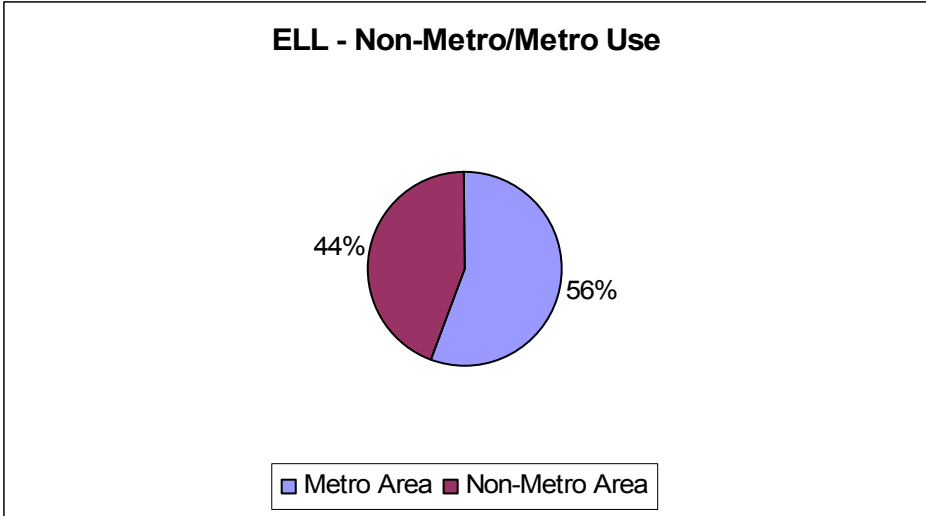
IPAT PROVIDES ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

IPAT established the statewide **Equipment Loan Library (ELL)** in 1994 in direct response to an identified need for users to have an opportunity to try one or more pieces of assistive technology (AT) before purchasing. The ELL is housed in the Fargo Technology Access Center and contains an inventory of over 1,200 pieces

of AT equipment. The types of equipment available for short-term loan include: augmentative communication; telecommunication; computer access; educational accommodations; vision aids; assisted listening devices and environmental control. The ELL is available to all state residents of all ages with disabilities and/or those family members and professionals that support them. IPAT staff actively research a range of devices then purchase and inventory them annually to meet the AT access needs of individuals at school, at work, at home and in the community.

IPAT's continued operation of the ELL meets the on-going statewide need for: 1) equipment exploration; 2) try before you buy; 3) equipment availability for AT assessments by clinicians and educators; 4) access to temporary replacement devices; and 5) AT funding justification documentation. There were 227 equipment loans made during FY '07, of those 126 were made by people living in a metropolitan area and 101 were made by people living in a non-metropolitan area. Devices borrowed from the ELL help to ensure that an individual finds a device that; has the capabilities to accomplish the identified tasks, fits the person's functional abilities, fits the individual's personal characteristics, works in their environment, and is compatible with other AT devices they may be using. ELL survey results reveal that 100% of ELL users were satisfied with this program and the level of service provided, and no one reported dissatisfaction.





In late summer, a high school student's family contacted IPAT with a major AT problem – a broken augmentative communication device. A new communication device was an immediate need, but the device funding source required an evaluation and the filing of corresponding paperwork before even considering purchase. Timeliness was not looking good; fortunately, IPAT's Equipment Loan Library had the communication device needed. The family opted to rent it from the Loan Library and use it to complete the evaluation and device trial period required by the funding source. Due to the availability of this device, the student was able to keep communication lines open and fulfill the requirements for the purchase of a new communication device – all before the first week of school!

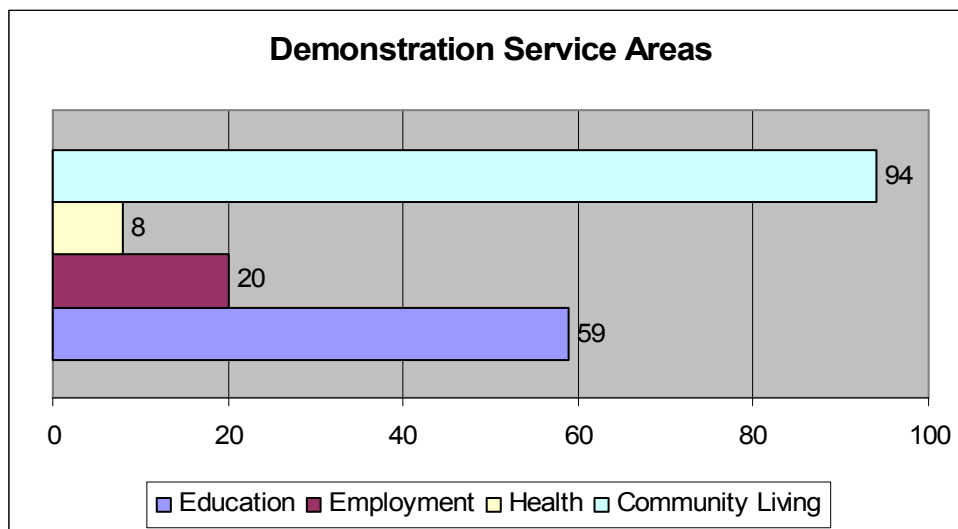
West Fargo

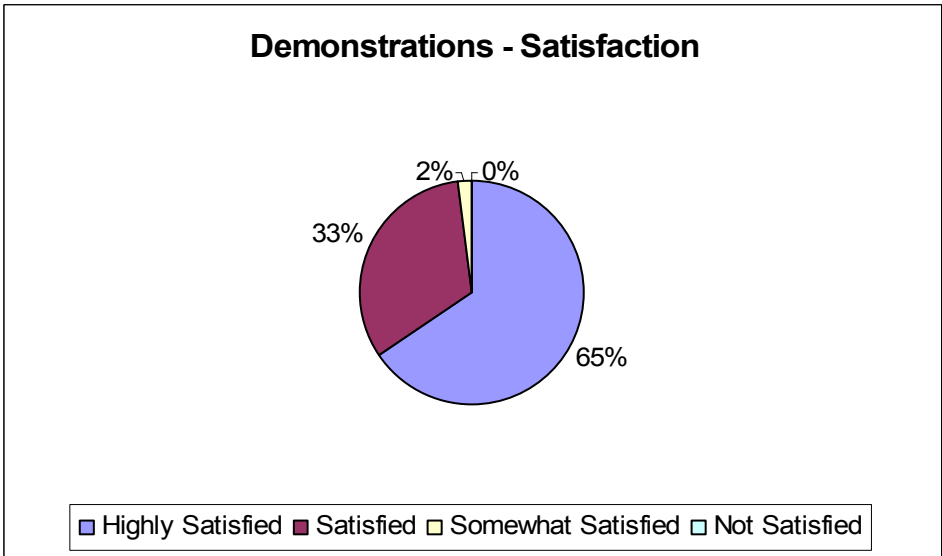
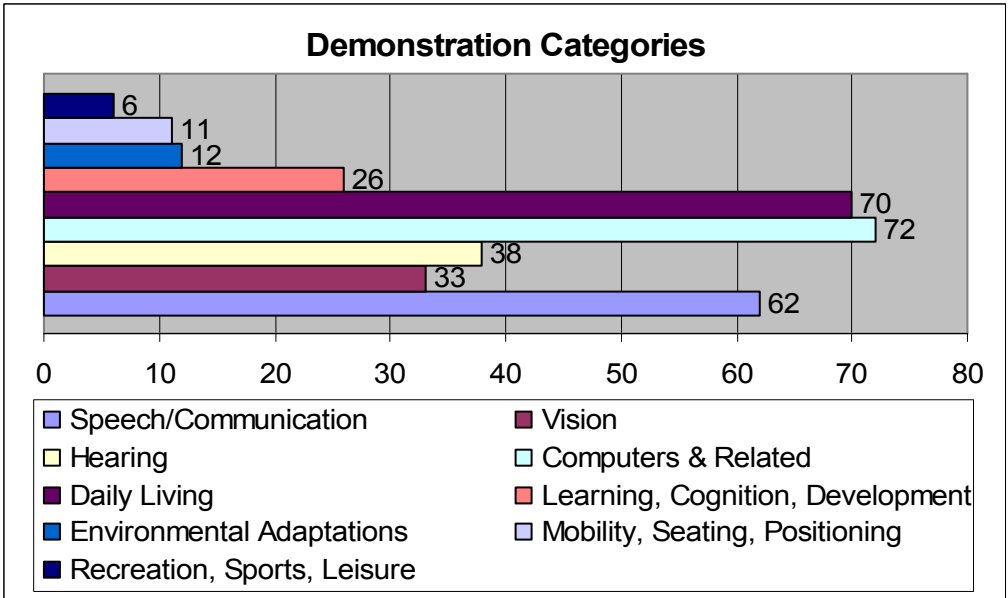
Access to AT Devices and Services: The **IPAT Technology Access Centers** are demonstration and evaluation sites located in North Dakota's two largest cities, Fargo and Bismarck, and serve all state residents. The Centers showcase

assistive technology in an interactive setting and allow anyone in the state an opportunity to explore the full spectrum of AT devices – either on their own or by using the expertise of IPAT staff.

The Centers house a variety of AT devices that promote independence and function at home, school, work and in the community. Each Center has over 200 devices covering a wide range of needs, including; computer access, environmental controls, augmentative communication, hearing, vision, learning, memory, organization, telecommunication and aids for daily living. Both TAC sites have video conferencing equipment, which allows demonstrations to be done at the TAC and viewed at offsite locations, with interaction between both parties. In FY '07 IPAT demonstrated 330 devices to 181 people with disabilities, family members, service providers and others. TAC survey results show that 98% of individuals were either highly satisfied or satisfied with this program and the level of service provided.

WHO CAME, WHAT DID THEY EXPLORE





An older gentleman with vision loss was steered to the Fargo TAC by his daughter in hopes of finding a device that would help him read. After exploring devices specific to reading, he stated that he really wanted to be able to input and manipulate financial information from the newspaper into his computer. As a result of this revelation, IPAT staff switched gears and demonstrated a number of built-in features to enhance vision available in Microsoft Office and Internet Explorer, programs he already had on his home computer. The gentleman was then given time to manipulate the built-ins that met his needs and they were found to be a good solution. He was then shown how to scan a newspaper, enlarge and save the scanned document, and use a split screen for ease of

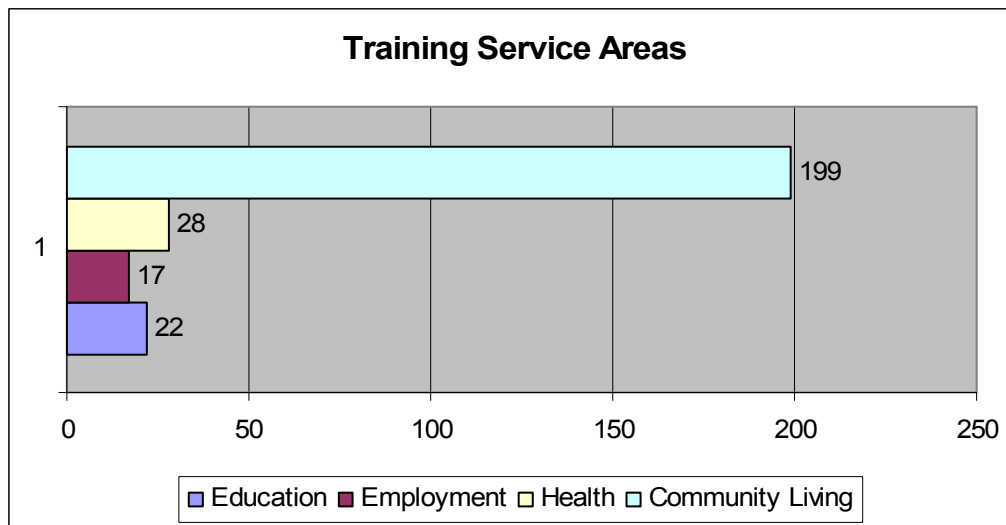
information transfer. As a result of his visit to the TAC, he discovered how to better use the equipment he already owned (computer, scanner and internet service) to do the tasks he desired, even with his existing vision loss – and at no cost!
Fargo

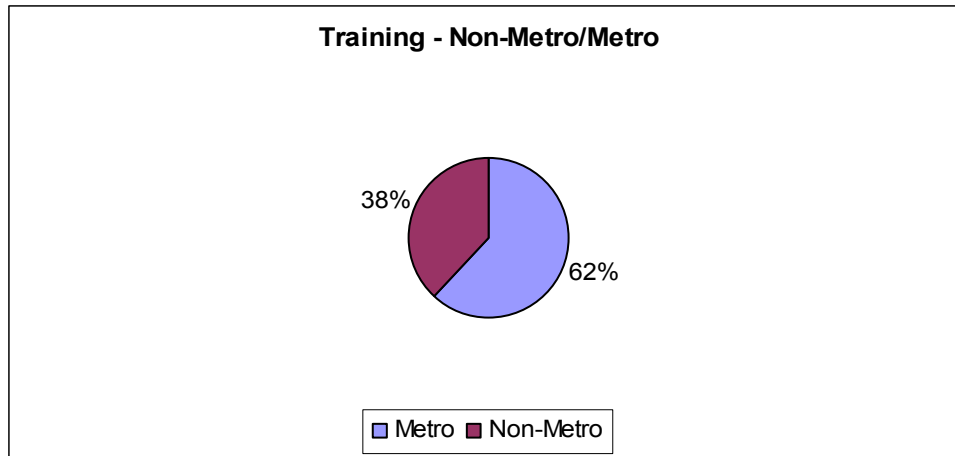
Access to AT assessments: IPAT staff conducts AT assessments for people with disabilities across the state when the entities serving them do not have the AT expertise needed. In FY'07, IPAT conducted 15 such AT assessments; 7 specific to individuals in school, 6 for persons specific to employment and 2 for people residing in the community.

TRAINING

IPAT staff is looked to as the assistive technology (AT) leaders within the state, and are asked to present at many established regional, statewide, area and local events. The need for training on specific AT equipment, AT products and services, and AT funding, policy and practices is ongoing. IPAT conducts AT training within conferences, as stand alone sessions, as part of staff-in-service, at parent support groups, college classes, and/or special venues. IPAT also conducts training for individuals, family members of an individual with a disability and service providers specific to individual needs such as the use of environmental control, computer access and specialized phone use.

During FY '07, IPAT provided 10 training sessions attended by 266 individuals with disabilities, family members and/or service providers. Training topics included but were not limited to: *“What Does IPAT Do?”*, *“Beyond the Traditional Telephone”*, *“AT for Computer Access”*, *“How Can IPAT Assist in Transition?”*, and *“AT for Aging”*.





One training IPAT staff conducted provided instruction to increase skills and competency in using AT for computer access. The training was developed to highlight AT products for a college bound, high school senior with cerebral palsy. It focused on writing and reading tools to increase productivity and independence across academic environments. There were five people in attendance; the student, his parents, his vocational rehabilitation counselor and an additional AT consultant. The impact of the training was positive and resulted in participants seeing the need for: 1) changing the students current keyboard layout to a Dvorak layout for efficiency; 2) requesting further training on features previously unknown on the Kurzweil 300 software program – word prediction and the scan and read features; 3) using electronic/digital versions of textbooks and online books; and 4) purchasing a book and copy holder.

Bismarck

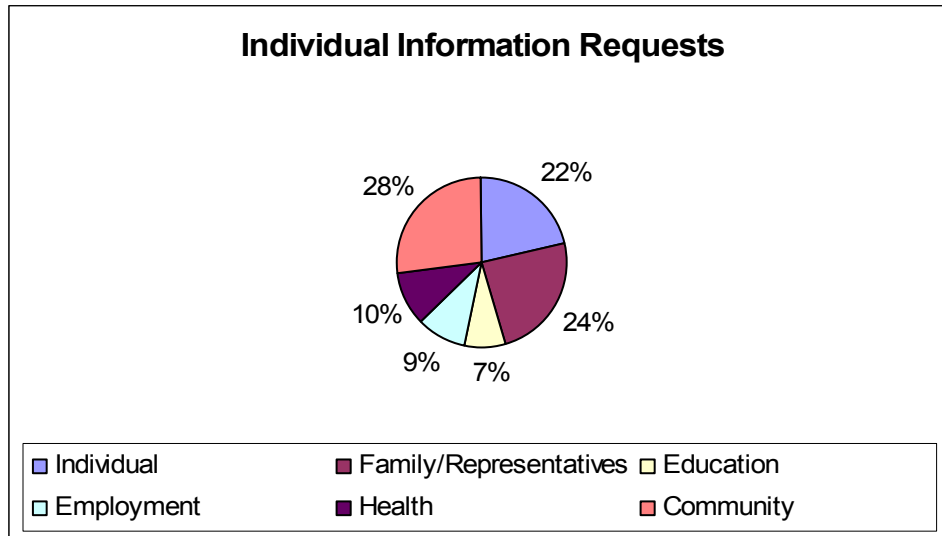
AT for Dementia Project: IPAT partnered with the North Dakota Protection & Advocacy Project in December of 2006, to provide education, device demonstration and AT assessments. The targeted populations were individuals living outside of institutional settings who were either experiencing the effects of dementia, or had a disability and were in need of an AT assessment for daily living and major life activities. IPAT carried out nine AT assessments, and provided education and device demonstration specific to AT for dementia and daily living to 107 people. IPAT developed a resource document as part of this partnership, “*Assistive Technology Solutions for Dementia*” which identifies devices for memory, safety and wandering issues, as well as, price and purchasing information.

AT INFORMATION & PUBLIC AWARENESS

AT Information: Through IPAT’s toll-free telephone lines, e-mail and video-conferencing, staff provided information about the benefits, range, funding options, and regulations/policies specific to obtaining assistive technology devices and services. In FY '07 IPAT answered 1,281 AT inquiries from people with disabilities, family members, service providers, employers, educators, health

care personnel and others. Of those requests 29% were from individuals residing in a metropolitan area and 71% were from those living in a non-metropolitan area.

SNAPSHOT OF INFORMATION REQUESTS



AT Public Awareness: In addition to fielding requests, IPAT staff frequently travel to conferences, health fairs, senior centers, schools and various events around the state to promote assistive technology through displays, device demonstrations and media distribution. In FY '07, IPAT participated in 39 exhibits reaching 4,476 individuals with disabilities, family members of an individual with a disability, service providers and others. Of those exhibits, 28 were held in a metropolitan area and 11 were held in a non-metropolitan area.

The **AT KEY**, IPAT's free bi-monthly newsletter continues to be popular with a reading audience of approximately 3,000.

AT EXPO – Statewide Assistive Technology Conference: IPAT continues to play a vital role in planning, advertising, sponsoring and presenting at the Assistive Technology Expo, held annually in Fargo, North Dakota. The AT Expo is the premier assistive technology event in the state. The 4th Annual AT Expo, held in FY '07 attracted 50 vendors and over 400 participants.

"I found a locked medication dispenser to help my mom stay in her home longer."

"The AT Expo is an excellent event, I look forward to coming every year – it grows and gets better each and every time I attend it."

"I found a device that just might work for my son!"

Website: www.ndipat.org

IPAT continues to maintain a website specific to IPAT services, publications and AT news and events. In addition, the website provides information on AT laws and regulations, links to national AT resources and IPAT staff. In FY'07 IPAT's website had 1,607,926 visits averaging 133,994 visits per month.

AT COORDINATION & COLLABORATION

Committee on Emergency Preparedness & Vulnerable Populations Includes AT in Statewide Planning Activities: Over the last year, IPAT has been actively involved in technical assistance activities at the state level related to emergency preparedness for special needs populations. IPAT has taken a leading role in educating committee members about assistive technology and the need to plan for it in emergency sheltering situations for persons with disabilities. The committee has worked to define vulnerable populations, develop a volunteer registry form, and create a website for voluntary registration of special needs populations statewide.

IPAT staff serves as a member of the **Pediatric Quorum** whose focus is to share information and issues pertinent to health care coverage for children with disabilities. During FY '07 the Pediatric Quorum reinstated a work group with the largest insurer in North Dakota, Blue Cross/Blue Shield; the purpose of the work group is to educate decision makers on the necessity of assistive technology, durable medical equipment and support services for this population.

IPAT is a member of the **North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium** (NDDAC) and actively participates in board meetings, annual conference and disability awareness activities to champion the importance of assistive technology (AT) for persons with disabilities. During this grant cycle, IPAT, within the framework of NDDAC, helped to coordinate a Disability Awareness Day at the State Capitol which included 22 disability organizations and was attended by over 300 legislators and consumers; provided training specific to computer access at NDDAC's annual conference and identified consumers to provide testimony on various legislative actions specific to disability under consideration at the state level.