

Making Assistive Technology An Integral Part of the Early Childhood to 12 System

Audrey Busch, ATAP

Allyson Robinson, OK State Assistive Technology Act Program

Todd Loftin, OK State Department of Education



2023 OSEP LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE





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(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3 and 3474)

Agenda

1. Overview of the Assistive Technology Act of 2022
2. How AT Act Programs can work with SEAs
3. How the OK AT Act Program is working with the OK SEA from both the perspective of the OK AT Act Program and the OK SEA



Overview of the Assistive Technology Act of 2022



Assistive Technology Act Defines AT

- AT Act defines AT as any item, device, or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functionality of people with disabilities, allowing them to be more independent in education, employment, and community living activities (as defined by the Assistive Technology Act).
- Includes no/low-tech, mid-tech, and high-tech



Assistive Technology Act

- Reauthorizes the AT Act of 2004 – 18 years since last reauthorization
- Section 4- State Assistive Technology Act Grantees
 - Operate in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and four Territories
 - Available for persons with all types of disabilities, all ages, in all environments (education, employment, community living and information technology)



Assistive Technology Act (cont.)

Grants for State Assistive Technology Programs:

- State-Level activities:
 - Device Demonstrations
 - Device Short-Term Loans
 - Device Reutilization
 - Financial Loans
- State-Leadership activities:
 - Information & Assistance
 - Training
 - Public Awareness
 - Technical Assistance



State-Level Activities

Core Programs Related to AT



Device Demonstration

See, touch, and try AT devices to help aid you in the decision-making process.



Device Short-Term Loans

Borrow AT to determine if a device meets your needs before making a purchase.



Device Reutilization

Receive gently used AT devices and durable medical equipment to use for as long as you need.



Financial Loans

Purchase your own AT device or equipment with a low-interest loan.



Device Demonstrations

- Device Demonstrations let people explore different types of AT. They can try out and compare various devices. They can see the similarities and differences between devices to assist them in making an informed decision before acquiring the needed device(s).
- AT Act Programs have an entire library of different categories of devices that trained staff can demonstrate for individuals to decide which ones work best for them.

FY 2022 National Data: 28 percent of AT demonstrated to consumers was used for education.

FY 2022 OK Data: 41 percent of AT demonstrated to consumers was used for education.



Device Short-Term Loans

- Device Short-Term Loans let people borrow AT for a limited time. By borrowing a device, people see if it is a good fit for them in their customary environment. Loans let people “try before they buy” to use in any environment (i.e., education, employment, community living).
- Most programs have an online library where you can see what specific devices are available to borrow.
- While programs differ, individuals can typically borrow a device for 5-7 weeks.

FY 2022 National Data: 35 percent of Device Loans were utilized for education.

FY 2022 OK Data: 56 percent of Device Loans were utilized for education.



Device Reutilization

- Reutilization provides new homes for used AT and durable medical equipment (DME). When an original owner no longer needs AT/DME, the donated, gently used AT/DME is retrieved, repaired, refurbished, and reassigned to someone in need who cannot otherwise afford the needed equipment.
- Reutilization programs also provide for the exchange of AT devices. This program is a person-to-person exchange, which functions like a free classified online marketplace.
- Most programs have an online library of AT/DME available for reutilization.

FY 2022 National Data: 3 percent of AT acquired through device reutilization programs was for education.

FY 2022 OK Data: 1 percent of AT acquired through device reutilization programs was for education.



State Financing Activities

- State Financing Activities help people procure AT. Through non-AT Act Program dollars, grants, or cash loans, people can get the AT they need. In some instances, people get AT for free (i.e., 3D printing, AT fabrication).
- Most AT Act Programs provide lower interest financial loans to purchase needed AT for vehicle modifications or home modifications. AT Act Programs are aware of other types of funding and free services to help individuals get needed equipment.

FY 2022 National Data: 11 percent of AT acquired through state financing activities was used for education.

FY 2022 OK Data: 2 percent of AT acquired through state financing activities was used for education.



State-Leadership Activities: Information & Assistance (I&A)

- Information and assistance (I&A) activities are those in which AT Act Programs respond to requests for information or put individuals in contact with other entities.
- These other entities can provide individuals with information and intensive assistance on AT devices/services or AT funding.

FY 2022 National Data: A total of 248,878 individuals received I&A – Out of those 16 percent were representatives of education.

FY 2022 OK Data: A total of 399 individuals received I&A – Out of those 3 percent were representatives of education. NOTE: Other individuals helping/serving students may be captured in other categories (family member/caregiver, health/allied health, etc.)



State-Leadership Activities: Training

- Training activities are instructional events for a specific purpose or audience that are designed to increase participants' knowledge, skills, and competencies around AT. Examples include large or small group classes, workshops, and presentations, and training can be delivered in person or via a variety of distance education mechanisms (ED, 2011). f

FY 2022 National Data: Out of 90,201 trainees, 24% were representatives of education.

FY 2022 OK Data: Out of 3,597 trainees, 31% were representatives of education. NOTE: Other individuals helping/serving students may be captured in other categories (family member/caregiver, health/allied health, etc.)



State-Leadership Activities: Technical Assistance

- Technical assistance (TA) is provided by AT Act Programs to help public agencies and other organizations improve their, policies, programs and outcomes. As a result of TA and other activities, some AT Act Programs report improved outcomes with policy, practices, or procedures that resulted in increased access to and acquisition of AT in the state/territory.

FY 2022 National Data: The 56 grantees reported providing a TA for education agencies (30 percent).

FY 2022 OK Data: Oklahoma ABLÉ Tech reported providing a TA for education agencies (46 percent).



Important Changes in AT Act of 2022

- Section 4:
 - Federal Partner Collaboration (new language):
 - Every AT Act Program must attempt collaboration with the following state agencies:
 - 1) **State Educational Agency receiving funds through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**
 - 2) Vocational Rehabilitation Agency;
 - 3) State Medicaid Agencies;
 - 4) Any other agency in a state that funds assistive technology.



How AT Act Programs Can Work with SEAs



How AT Act Programs Can Work with SEAs



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Defines AT Device

- Section 300.5
 - Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Defines AT Service

- Section 300.6
 - Assistive technology service means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.



Section 504 and the Rehabilitation Act – Services, Benefits and Auxiliary Aids

- Students not eligible under the IDEA may be eligible under Section 504 and qualify for services, benefits for auxiliary aids (which includes AT).
- The services, benefits and auxiliary aids provided must ensure students have equal access to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities.

www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Effective Communication – Auxiliary Aids and Services

- People who have vision, hearing, or speech disabilities (“communication disabilities”) use different ways to communicate.
- The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.
- Covered entities must provide aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication/



Primary State-Level Activities

- Provide **demonstrations** and **short-term loans** of AT to Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel, parents, and other stakeholders – AT Act
- These activities assist LEAs in comprehensively considering and assessing students' needs for AT devices and services/auxiliary aids and services.



Primary State Leadership Activities

- Provide **information and assistance** (including consultations), **education/professional development**, and **technical assistance** to Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel, parents, and other stakeholders
- These activities assist LEAs in systematically and comprehensively considering students' needs for AT devices and services.
- These activities also assist LEAs with the selection, acquisition, and use of AT devices, documenting AT in the IEP, transitioning AT with the student, and more.



Scenario 1: Student has difficulty communicating independently

- A student with autism does not use speech to communicate and displays disruptive, sensory-seeking, and sometimes harmful behaviors at school.
- State and Territory AT Act Programs have information about:
 - augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) options that would help this student communicate independently;
 - weighted/compression, fidget, and other sensory items to help this student self-regulate behaviors.
 - And more!



Scenario 2: Student has difficulty reading and writing independently

- A student with reading disabilities is not reading or writing on grade level and is being removed from the mainstream classroom to receive additional instruction with read-aloud and scribe accommodations from a school aid.
- State and Territory AT Act Programs have information about:
 - Hardware and software solutions to assist with reading digital textbooks, hard-copy worksheets, and other;
 - Software, apps, and extensions to assist with brainstorming, writing, and editing assignments.
 - And more!



Additional Partnerships to Support Students with Disabilities

- AT Act Programs partner with many different types of agencies and organizations to synergize resources and increase quality AT services to students with disabilities.
- Oklahoma ABLE Tech partners with the following:
 - The Department of Rehabilitation Services - Expands transition services and digital accessibility supports
 - The National AEM Center (CAST) – Expands AEM services
 - The Medicaid Agency – Provides additional support for acquiring needed AT and DME
 - And more!



How the OK AT Act Program is Working with the OK SEA



SEA Contracts with AT Act Program

- 2009: Contracted to provide services related to Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) – Part B
- 2013: Expanded contract to provide AT and Information Services (including AEM and digital accessibility) – Part B
- 2018: Expanded contract, again, to include services for Part C



SEA Benefits

- Increased participation and expertise synergized in targeted areas – extension of (not duplication of) services:
 - Assessment
 - Data
 - Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)
 - Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
 - Transition Council
 - Procurement and Textbook Adoption
 - State Education Advisory Panel
 - State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
 - And more!



LEA Benefits

- Targeted supports focused on the Quality Indicators for AT (QIAT) Service Delivery in the Schools:
 - Consideration of AT Needs
 - Assessment of AT Needs
 - AT in the IEP
 - AT Implementation
 - Evaluation of Effectiveness of AT
 - AT in Transition
 - Administrative Support for AT
 - AT Professional Development



LEA Benefits (cont.)

- Targeted supports focused on the Quality Indicators for provision of AEM and Technology in the Schools:
 - A Coordinated System
 - Timely Manner
 - Written Guidelines
 - Comprehensive Learning Opportunities
 - Data Collection
 - Data Use
 - Allocation of Resources



AT Act Program Benefits

- Contractual deliverables perfectly align to AT Act Program activities:
 - State Level
 - State Leadership
 - Collaboration Initiatives
- More students, school personnel, families, and other service providers are served in a comprehensive way working at both the systemic level (SEA) and the local level (LEA).



Partnerships Enhance Supports

- Through partnerships and contracts, AT Act Programs can more fully support SEAs and LEAs in meeting legal requirements for serving students with disabilities.
- When students have needed devices and services, they function more independently and participate more fully – making progress towards academic standards and working towards competitive, integrated employment.



Contact Your AT Act Program

Search for your AT Act Program at:
www.at3center.net/state-at-programs



Questions and Discussion



Resource Spotlight

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website
 - Brings together IDEA information and resources from the Department and its grantees.
 - <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- IDEAS That Work
 - For information from research to practice initiatives funded by OSEP that address the provisions of IDEA and ESSA. This website includes resources, links, and other important information relevant to OSEP's research to practice efforts.
 - <https://osepideasthatwork.org/>





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