Our Mission
To maintain and enhance a strong, effective, and efficient national network of Statewide Assistive Technology Programs, which enables individuals with disabilities, service providers and others to learn, access, and acquire assistive technology (AT) needed for education, employment, and community living.
All 50 states, 4 US territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico receive formula grant funding under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 2004. These 56 grantees are required to carry out a continuum of specified state level and state leadership activities that promote the ability of people with disabilities to know about, have access to, and ultimately be better able to obtain assistive technology (AT). These activities also deliver a large return on investment for the small federal appropriation for this program.

Definition of Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) is 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.
AT Demonstration

Assistive Technology Demonstration Programs provide opportunities for people to learn about and become familiar with specific types of AT by comparing and contrasting the functions and features of devices through hands on exploration. Instruction is provided by knowledgeable AT professionals in a product neutral environment that does not favor one company or manufacturer.

Device demonstrations result in informed decision-making about which AT will and will not meet an individual’s disability needs and prevents wasted expenditures on “mismatched” AT. For example, if an agency/individual explores two electronic magnification devices and decides that one costing $2,000 is perfect – they have potentially saved another $2,000 by knowing the other device they explored would not meet their needs (avoided purchasing to only find the device was not a good match.)

64,668 individuals participated in 33,799 device demonstrations conducted by State AT Programs in FFY19. Projecting a modest $100 savings realized by just half of the total demonstrations conducted results in national savings of $1.7 million dollars.

Washington

Camille is very active and enjoys yoga at Blind and Low Vision Yoga Seattle. Recently she had the opportunity to try a yoga mat designed for those with vision challenges under the guidance of one of the Washington Assistive Technology Act Program’s (WATAP) staff, who also attends one yoga class each week at the studio. WATAP houses this yoga mat with Blind and Low Vision Yoga Seattle’s studio specifically so participants can try and use it at every class.

Camille found the yoga mat color particularly useful as she could easily see the bright yellow in contrast to the floor. She appreciated the mat’s raised centerline, which helped her to orient herself on the yoga mat and in class. She also liked the three-dimensional design that includes strategically placed raised and depressed features, which helped her feel where her hands, feet, and head should be placed for safe alignment in yoga poses. Camille now uses the mat regularly to practice more independently.
Missouri

Denise visited the Missouri Assistive Technology Act Program in Springfield, MO, to explore assistive devices that could help her overcome the issues she was experiencing due to Essential Tremors. Many individuals who have tremors report that eating independently is extremely difficult. Staff from Empower Abilities (the Missouri Assistive Technology Act Program) showed Denise an array of adapted eating utensils, compared their features, and let her try them out. The S’up spoon (pictured) worked PERFECTLY for Denise, who left the demonstration a knowledgeable and informed consumer.

Arkansas

On Thursday, April 18, 2019, Cris from the ALS society called the Arkansas Assistive Technology Act Program, to ask if staff could meet with Dawn. She had lost all her vocal communication due to ALS. She also had limited movement in her extremities. Her caregiver, Jesse, wanted to know if there was an option that could help Dawn communicate and have better access to her device. We explained to Dawn and Jesse about the Arkansas Assistive Technology Act Program's services and how the loan program works.

She wanted to try the Head Pointer Safe-Laser System by InvoTek. After giving her a brief training on the Head Pointer Safe-Laser System, she was typing out a few words and sentences. She was so happy that there was technology out there that could help. We also showed her Sesame’s head-tracking technology made for people who have limited or no use of their hands and are able to make small head movements. In addition, we discussed iPad options, as well. Over many weeks, she borrowed all of these items to help her determine the best solution.

Illinois

Helen is 96 and has macular degeneration. She was a former seamstress and loved making and wearing beautiful clothing. Helen scheduled a visit to the Illinois Assistive Technology Program after someone mentioned she was wearing a red blouse with a pink skirt. She vowed to never let that happen again. Helen received services from 3 programs on her visit. She tried many devices in the AT Demonstration Center and found a magnifier that she wanted to try in her own home. She borrowed that device for a 5-week loan from Device Loan, and the Reuse Program had a Color Identifier that will ensure that she never wears pink with red together again. A trifecta!
AT Loan/Borrowing

Assistive Technology Device Loan/Borrowing Programs allow individuals to borrow devices for a limited time period to use at home, school, work, etc. Device loans allow borrowers to try out devices in their own environments to determine if a device will meet their needs before a purchase is made. Device loans can also provide loaner AT while a device is being repaired, while a consumer is waiting for funding approval, or to use for training or professional development purposes.

Device loans result in informed and accurate AT purchasing decisions especially in unique contexts like a classroom or workplace. When a school or employer can borrow a device and make sure it will allow the individual with a disability to be successful, they save money by avoiding “incorrect” purchases. Device loans also allow individuals to remain functional while their device is being repaired, preventing costly loss of wages, lost school days, or the need for increased community living supports.

36,198 device loans were made to individuals or agencies with 54,018 devices borrowed from short-term device loan programs operated through State AT Programs in FFY19. Using an average savings of $1,000 per loan with more than one device associated (at least one device was rejected as being a match and a second one was borrowed) results in national savings of over $17.8 million. Projecting a minimum $10 per day rental fee for the average loan period of 35 days, results in national savings of $4.3 million for devices borrowed for accommodation (while a device is repaired or while waiting for funding) or for training since the device did not have to be rented for these purposes.

Kansas

A 97 year-old great grandmother in western Kansas with declining hearing and vision was losing touch with her family who was scattered around the globe, London, Texas, Jerusalem, Virginia, Washington DC, Missouri, Illinois, and Kansas. It had been almost a year since some of her kids were able to communicate with her over the phone. Kansas’ Assistive Technology Act Program staff demonstrated a range of magnification and hearing devices to support advanced telecommunications access.

She was interested in magnification devices but had difficulty selecting the device combinations that best met her needs, so a Kansas Assistive Technology Program staff member arranged for multiple loans of tablets, laptops, desktop systems with handheld video magnifiers, CCTVs, software and external BT speakers. Based on her loan experiences, she selected an oversized tablet, a handheld video magnifier, and CapTel 2400i, which were funded through the Kansas iCan Connect program, a program funded through the Federal Communications Commission. Her granddaughter states, “For the last five years, I have mailed cards, letters, and photos to Grandma several times a month. She has never written back, I would venture to say that during the months since Grandma has had her iPad, we have had more back-and-forth interaction than in the previous five years of asynchronous correspondence combined. Thank you!"
North Dakota

A 55-year-old North Dakota man with cerebral palsy was working with the North Dakota Assistive Technology Act Program -ND Assistive - regarding his computer access needs. He currently uses a power wheelchair for mobility, has minimal movement in his upper extremities, and at times has difficulty communicating verbally. During one of his visits, he was introduced to smart home technology to be more independent in his home. After the demonstration, he borrowed a smart home kit from the ND Assistive Loan Library to determine if he would be able to access devices by voice or through other methods. This kit containing a TP-Link Kasa smart camera, 4 GoSund smart plugs, 10” Echo Show, and Echo Dot was made possible through a grant from the Dana and Christopher Reeve Foundation. After set up, training, and a device trial, this gentleman reported that Alexa recognized his speech about half the time. With additional training, he learned how to control devices directly through the app on his smartphone, which worked brilliantly for him.

Connecticut

The Proloquo4Text app was trialed by a middle school student with Chromosome 18 Deletion. This app was selected based on Serena’s abilities, needs, and familiarity with features such as word prediction, which she uses on her Chromebook. She needed a device that looked like a phone due to social needs. The size of the 4-inch iPod Touch appealed to her and Serena enjoyed customizing Proloquo4Text to change the voice and on-screen colors to the ones she liked best. She was introduced to the layout of the word prediction choices and text-to-speech play button. Serena quickly demonstrated an understanding of the app, and she was able to use it to communicate words when listeners did not understand her voice. Without the EASTCONN Lending Library, a branch of the Connecticut Assistive Technology Act Program, this assistive technology would not have been trialed because the district would not justify purchasing it before a successful trial.

Michigan

A Michigan woman’s hearing declined, and she developed macular degeneration. She has difficulty hearing on the phone, and this makes scheduling appointments or having a general conversation over the phone a struggle. Her friend suggested that she receive an Assistive Technology (AT) demonstration from the Michigan Assistive Technology Program. While speaking with the AT Specialist during the device demonstration intake, the woman shared that she was interested in a telephone with a louder speaker and larger buttons/command keys. She specifically wanted the replacement phone to be mounted in her kitchen, as that’s the place where she spends most of her time while at home. The AT Specialist showed her a number of different telephones during the device demonstration and she preferred the phone shown that featured large buttons, a speaker function for hands free capabilities, and light that illuminates when someone is calling. With her excited consent, the AT Specialist assisted Dorothy in borrowing the phone through the Short-Term Loan program. Dorothy was thrilled to get to try the phone out in her home; it was a perfect fit in her kitchen. Dorothy shared: “It was very helpful to be able to use the device before purchasing it. This way I didn’t waste money on purchasing something for myself that didn’t work.”
AT Reutilization

Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Programs

support the reuse of assistive technology that is no longer needed or used by its original owner. Recipients usually obtain equipment at significantly lower cost or no cost. Reutilization efforts include refurbishment (previously owned devices are cleaned, repaired, and/or reconditioned and then provided to new owners) and device exchange (e.g. online classifieds). In some reutilization programs, a device is provided on an open-ended loan basis, until the recipient no longer needs it.

Purchasing/obtaining reutilized devices saves agencies and individuals a significant amount of money when compared to buying new devices.

57,588 recipients acquired 78,412 reutilized devices through State AT Programs in FFY19. A total of $30,448,542 was saved by device recipients by purchasing/obtaining reutilized AT instead of new. In addition, 86% of the reuse device recipients indicated that they would not have been able to afford the AT or obtain it from other sources if it were not for the reuse services of the State AT Program. The cost of those individuals being unable to work, learn or live in the community without the AT they need would be immeasurable.

Tennessee

Several of the Tennessee Technology Access Program (TTAP) partnering AT centers provide adapted toys throughout the year and host annual toy events each December. The 2018 adapted toy giveaway hosted in southeast TN had a great turnout! Many community members, including employees of a local Komatsu factory, occupational and physical therapy students from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Lions Club members, donated more toys to the program. They also helped to adapt the toys with instruction from AT center staff. All toys were adapted so recipients can use an external switch that suits their abilities to play independently. Purchasing pre-adapted toys and switches can be expensive, often prohibiting families from acquiring the items on their own. The AT Center has created several switch designs made at a fraction of the cost of commercially available switches.

The AT Center gave away over 140 adapted toys and capability switches as part of the event. For some children, a switch and adapted toy become the first opportunity to control something in their environment independently. These simple toys act as ambassadors for assistive technology, fostering the development of skills necessary for communication and educational opportunities.
North Carolina

During the Fall of 2018, Hurricane Florence forced some residents in eastern North Carolina with disabilities to evacuate their homes to the safety of emergency shelters. Because of rapidly rising waters created by tidal flooding, winds, and extensive rainfall, evacuations often resulted in these residents having to leave needed medical equipment in their homes.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and staff from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) requested the assistance of the North Carolina Assistive Technology (NCATP) Program in supplying durable medical equipment and other assistive technology devices to evacuees who needed to replace equipment they had to leave behind. The NCATP Equipment Reutilization Program, in collaboration with three private non-profit equipment reuse programs, several offices of the statewide North Carolina Independent Living Rehabilitation Program, and a North Carolina State Independent Living Center in eastern North Carolina, provided a total of thirty-six devices to Hurricane Florence survivors. Twenty of the replacement devices were provided during the federal Fiscal Year Ending 2019 and included such equipment as manual wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, nebulizers, an oxygen concentrator, and basic hospital beds. This replacement equipment was provided from available reutilization equipment inventories of the organizations mentioned above.

Oklahoma

Free, gently-used durable medical equipment (DME) is available through a partnership with the state’s Assistive Technology Act Program, ABLE Tech, and the state’s Medicaid agency, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA), also known as “SoonerCare.” Isaac and his caregiver contacted ABLE Tech’s Device Reuse Program and were matched with a vehicle lift and a reclining wheelchair which he can use for as long as he needs.

Although the program is free for every Oklahoman to utilize, SoonerCare members receive DME from the Reuse Program as a priority above the general public. Isaac and his caregiver were very happy with these items as they relieve the caregiver’s back pain during transport and allow Isaac to enjoy community activities. “He’s very excited to be able to go out and loves to play in his swing and pool!”

South Carolina

Riding a bike was a long-time dream for a 12-year-old girl with cerebral palsy. She uses a wheelchair to get around, but wanted to be like other 12-year-olds and ride a bike. She is very limited in what she can do outdoors, although she loves being outdoors. Her mom checked the South Carolina Assistive Technology Exchange website every day to see if someone posted an adapted bike on the site. Realizing that an adapted bike is not that common, she called the staff at the South Carolina Assistive Technology Program. An adapted bike was found by South Carolina Assistive Technology Program staff. The first day the girl got the bike, she rode for 2 hours! She said, "It's so awesome!" The smile on her face was priceless. She now feels like any other 12-year-old with her bike. This bike will help her legs get stronger, and she can enjoy being outdoors. The family plans to take the bike with them on their next vacation.
AT State Financing

State Financing Activities help individuals purchase/obtain AT through a variety of initiatives. Financial loan programs provide consumers with affordable, flexible borrowing options. Other programs provide AT directly to consumers at no cost using dollars from non-AT Act sources or save consumers money when purchasing AT.

Purchasing/obtaining devices through state financing activities saves agencies and individuals a significant amount of money and may be the only option available to them. Without the program they would go without the AT they need for work, school or community living.

945 borrowers obtained financial loans totaling $8,532,521 to buy 975 devices in FFY19. 2,724 recipients acquired 6,224 devices valued at $3,860,279 from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources. 6,638 recipients acquired 8,009 AT devices with a savings of $880,567 from other state financing activities, such as cooperative buying programs. The vast majority (97%) of recipients indicated that if the state financing activity they used was not available they would not have been able to purchase/obtain the AT due to cost or availability potentially resulting in individuals who are unable to successfully work, learn or live in the community.

Puerto Rico

Karla (not her real name) is a young woman who lives in the eastern part of Puerto Rico, an area devastated by Hurricane Maria in 2017. Due to her progressive physical disability, she needed a complex rehab wheelchair with alternate control capabilities to accommodate her when the regular joystick would no longer be viable. However, at a price of over $18,000, she could not afford such a chair, and there was no insurance or financing available. Even if she could obtain it, a wheelchair of this size would not fit through the hallways and doors of her small home. She did not have an adapted vehicle to transport the chair, and there is no public transportation in her town. Thus, a complex rehab wheelchair would confine her rather than give her independence.

Through a local supplier, she was able to acquire a $2,500 travel chair to navigate around her house that folds to fit into her caretaker’s car trunk. The supplier modified the backrest and seating to fit her needs. When Karla was no longer able to use the joystick, she contacted us to help her find a solution given that alternate controls do not exist for this kind of wheelchair.

Through the Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program’s (PRATP) Low Cost Device Design and Development (LD3) initiative, a chin control prototype was created and optimized with the help of the wheelchair supplier and Karla’s input. With the chin joystick, she could easily drive her chair. Also, her caretaker can swing the adjustable arm support out of the way to facilitate transfers and allow the wheelchair to fold. Thus, with a total cost of $130 in materials, PRATP provided an alternate control system for a low-cost power wheelchair. Such alternate control would normally cost around $1,800 and fit only complex rehab wheelchairs costing over $18,000.
California

A consumer found it challenging to purchase a home that allows for home modification and installment of a ramp due to property zoning issues. When the consumer was finally able to purchase a home that would allow for the property and home modifications, the consumer then needed support with financing the home modifications. This loan allowed for the installment of the ramp for the consumer to have the freedom and independence to access the home without having to be carried in, as well as the home modification of a roll-in shower for self-care needs.

Louisiana

Hailey, a dedicated mom to her active 9-year-old daughter, came to the Louisiana Assistive Technology Act Program to help her purchase a modified van. Hailey shared that her daughter, diagnosed with Spastic Quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy at an early age, uses a wheelchair for mobility. Before they got the van, transporting Hailey’s daughter meant she had to be taken from her wheelchair and physically lifted in and out of the vehicle. Not having a van, made going to doctor visits and other activities challenging and hectic for everyone. Hailey says the van purchase would not have been possible without the Louisiana’s Assistive Technology Act Program’s Financial Loan Program. Being able to transport her daughter in her wheelchair has made life much easier. Hailey shared, “My daughter is ecstatic. I think if she could sleep in it, she would!”

Idaho

Ken needed a loan for a swing-out scooter lift for his vehicle. He has a degenerative joint disease that necessitated five surgeries in two years. The hospital bills overwhelmed him two years ago, and his credit suffered. He has shown good fiscal responsibility in every other area and is paying off past debts to rebuild his credit. Ken is having another back surgery soon and needs a scooter to remain mobile. He was thrilled when the Idaho Assistive Technology Act Program’s Financial Loan Program was able to guarantee the loan for him in time for him to have the lift installed and ready by the time he was discharged from the hospital. This loan also represents a new connection for the Idaho Assistive Technology Act Program with a mobility vendor from whom the Idaho Assistive Technology Act program hopes to receive more applications in the future.
Leveraged Funding is frequently secured by State AT Programs and used to expand and maximize services. In FFY19, State AT Programs leveraged $23,905,738 in funding from federal, state, local and private sources. These funds were used to support all of the State AT Program authorized activities.

Collectively State AT Programs are an integral partner in federal, state and local AT activities. State AT Programs leverage a variety of funding including direct federal dollars for National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program from the Federal Communications Commission along with funding from special education, vocational rehabilitation, health, senior services, and other state agencies to provide AT services.

Small Federal Investment – Large Benefits in Return

$28 million federal investment in State AT Programs
close to 500,000 direct service recipients

Over $67.5 million in savings and benefits
that's $2.41 for every federal dollar invested

Over $23.9 million in leveraged funding
85¢ leveraged for every federal dollar invested