



Assistive Technology for Early Childhood

What is assistive technology (AT) for children?

Assistive technology is any item that helps increase the independence and functioning of a child. This item can be adapted or purchased off the shelf and includes thousands of items from simple adaptations such as thick-handle utensils to more sophisticated devices such as wheelchairs, standers, communication devices, and many others. Toys purchased at local stores are also often adapted to help children with vision, hearing, communication, or motor difficulties play more independently.



Communication Devices

Assistive technology may also be any service that assists children and their families to select, acquire, and implement appropriate adapted equipment. These services are available from a variety of sources discussed later. Services include the assessment process, selection of AT and the training after the technology is acquired.



Adapted Utensils

What children benefit from AT?

Children who benefit from AT are those with communication, motor (fine and gross), hearing, vision, and/or cognitive challenges. AT can facilitate the major areas of development that include cognitive, social-emotional, communication, and sensorimotor domains.



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Will AT solve all of a child's challenges?

Assistive technology is a powerful tool that helps a child realize his/her potential but there are several factors in the successful use of AT. Some of these include:

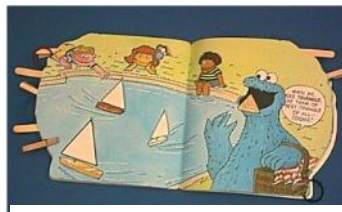
- Quality interaction with the child
- Support and training on how to use the AT
- Motivation to use the AT

Why use AT with young children?

Some of the many benefits of using AT with young children include improving self esteem, reducing child and adult frustration, and enabling independence in daily life. In addition, AT can change the expectations of others for a child's abilities and enable active play, rather than passive, which is crucial to child development.

Is AT expensive?

One myth about assistive technology is that it is expensive. However, this is not necessarily true. There are a variety of adaptations in assistive technology that use common household objects. For example, some inexpensive solutions include putting a foam hair curler on a spoon to enable a child to grasp more easily or gluing tongue depressors on a board book to enable a child to turn the pages independently. It is important to match the technology with the needs of the child. A team assessment is recommended in order to identify the most appropriate piece(s) of assistive technology.



Adapted book



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Who is on an AT assessment team?

The AT assessment team is made up of, first and foremost, the parent(s) and the child, and can include some or all of the following: speech-language pathologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, early childhood special educator, assistive technology specialist, psychologist, physician, and audiologist. In addition, other important people in the child's life such as siblings, a bus driver, and/or a neighbor can provide useful insight of assistive technology needed in different areas of the child's life.

Where do I get AT services in Colorado?

Information is available about how to obtain assistive technology services by accessing one or all of the following organizations.

Assistive Technology Partners

(800) 255-3477

(303) 315-1280

www.uchsc.edu/atp

The Children's Hospital Audiology & Speech Pathology Clinic

303/861-6800

www.tchden.org

The Children's Hospital Assistive Technology Clinic

800/255-3477

303/315-1280

Community Center Board (CCB)

303/832-1618

www.caccb.org

Early Childhood Connections Part C Network

888/777-4041

The Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)

For Medicaid eligible children

303/692-2324



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Local Public Health Department
303/692-2370

SWAAAC

In Colorado, the Assistive Technology team at a local public school is called a SWAAAC team.

303/315-1276

800/255-3477

What are some resources to fund AT?

Funding assistive technology for a child depends on what organizations the child or family is involved with. Some typical funding sources are insurance companies, Community Center Boards, Medicaid, Part C network, community organizations and others. Typically an evaluation needs to take place and paperwork specific to the organization needs to be submitted.

When it comes to funding assistive technology, it is important to examine the organizations the family is currently involved with, know what adaptations or equipment they will fund, and identify other organizations that the family is eligible to access. See our Fast Fact, *Funding Sources by Age* for more information.



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Resources

The Alliance for Technology Access
www.ataccess.org/resources/wcp/default.html

Provides information on how to adapt toys for children with disabilities.

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601 E. 18th Ave., Suite 130
Denver, CO 80203
303/315-1280 Main
800/255-3477
303/837-8964 TTY
303/837-1208 FAX
www.uchsc.edu/atp

Assistive Technology Partners
Western Slope Technical Assistance
Center (WesTAC)
2897 North Ave., Module 3A
Grand Junction, CO 81501
970/248-0876 Main
970/248-0877 FAX/TTY
www.uchsc.edu/atp

Provides information about various AT applications and resources regarding how and where to receive AT services.

The Center for Best Practices in Early
Childhood Education

www.wiu.edu/users/mmacp/wiu/ACTIVETech.html

Lists articles regarding using technology with children in the classroom.

Closing the Gap
526 Main Street
P.O. Box 68
Henderson, MN 56044
507/248-3294
507/248-3810 FAX
www.closingthegap.com

Has interactive forums and provides information on alternative communication products.

Let's Play Project
cosmos.buffalo.edu/letsplay/AT/at.html
Offers ideas about enhancing play opportunities to children including assistance with positioning, mobility, communication and toys.

Simplified Technology
www.lburkhart.com

This site provides useful information about assistive technology from hands on information to web and vendor resources.



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For more information contact:

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Also available in: Braille, large print, audio tape, disk and alternate language formats

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