

Assistive Technology Questions & Answers



Who is Responsible?

Assistive Technology (AT) is a shared responsibility, but the process is facilitated collaboratively by each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. It is important to have at least one member of the IEP team with AT knowledge and experience. If the team feels it is needed, they will seek additional information, resources, and support.



What is AT?

Assistive technology is **defined** in the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to include:

Devices - **any** item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child *with a disability*.

Services - directly assist a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.



What Does the Law Require?

Each public agency shall ensure that AT devices and services...are made available to a child with a disability if **required** as a part of the child's - Special Education; Related Services; or Supplementary Aids & Services. (IDEA 2004 Section 300.105)

District policies and procedures regarding AT vary across the country and statewide among districts but they must comply with the law and ensure students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE).



What is AT Consideration in the IEP?

The IDEA requires IEP teams to **consider whether AT is needed** for **each** student with a disability as part of the IEP process (AT may ***also*** be considered at other times). As appropriate IEP goals and related tasks are developed, teams consider interventions/supports that might be needed for the child to make reasonable progress toward desired outcomes, such as:

- Specially Designed Instruction or Related Services?
- Accommodations or modifications to environment, curriculum, instruction?
- Assistive Technology devices and/or services?



When and How is an AT Assessment Conducted?

If a team decides that more information is needed to decide about AT, there are various ways to gather such info. An AT assessment is only one possible option. Others include:

- If in agreement, the team may decide to informally try AT options, write this plan in the IEP, and then see if student progress improves.
- The team may document in the IEP that they will seek other resources about the use of AT for similar needs. Reliable info may be gathered from observation, colleagues, the internet, or other means.
- **AT assessment** is a process whereby team members may agree to seek additional reliable data more formally via a "functional assessment in the student's customary environments". This involves:
 - Gathering info about specific skills in order to match needs to tools
 - 'Trialing' one or more AT options for an extended period of time
 - Working together to gather specific data to assess AT impact



***Note: Key points about AT Consideration & Assessment**

- To ensure equity and consistency both should be part of a systematic process that is reliably known and applied by all IEP teams
- This process is for **every** student, not only those w/ strong advocates
- AT Consideration and/or Assessment are more than an IEP checkbox
- There are no federal or state guidelines for AT assessment
- AT Assessment is **not** part of the evaluation process for eligibility
- Although documentation is required, a formal report for AT is not



How are AT Decisions Documented in the IEP?

Any AT decisions determined through the consideration/assessment process must be documented in the IEP. The relevant choice must be indicated in the section on 'Team Considerations'. If AT is determined as 'not needed at this time' for a student, a rationale for this decision (such as 'reasonable progress on IEP goals') must be noted in comments.

Additional, common locations to document use of AT in the IEP include Present Levels, Goals and Objectives, Supplemental Aids and Services, and Related Services.



AT Decision Making is an Ongoing Process

AT Consideration/Assessment are not 'one-time' events. The effectiveness of AT must be continuously assessed. Ongoing data collection about impact is critical. Did it help the student to achieve goals/objectives and did it improve access to and progress in the general education curriculum? Changes to skills, environments, and technology should prompt IEP teams to review the effectiveness of the AT in use by the student.