



IN THIS ISSUE....

AT Funding: An Expert Forecasts a Mixed Future

Politics is often defined as the allocation of scarce resources. In an era of federal budgetary constrictions that annually grow more severe, and with no lessening of the budgetary pressures on the horizon, resources that have been dedicated to assistive technology programs are becoming scarcer, and there is growing fear that the programs themselves, including Medicaid, which helps provide AT to low-income families, may gradually approach extinction during the next decade or two as responsibility for maintaining those programs passes from the nation's capitol to state capitols.

Nevertheless, funding for needed assistive technology remains available, thanks to federal legislation, including IDEA 2004. The funding process can be difficult, though, and families can find themselves at odds with school authorities who may be responsible for both providing AT information and funding the inevitable requests that stem from having provided the information.

For families seeking funding in an era of scarcity and for school officials administering shrinking budgets and swelling educational mandates, the road ahead will be a shared journey involving contentiousness and collaboration. This issue examines funding for assistive technology and identifies resources currently available to understand the funding process and to successfully facilitate it.

Edward L. Myers III Speaks

An attorney with a disability – *osteogenesis imperfecta* – brittle bone disease – Ed Myers has dedicated his adult life to providing legal representation and advice to families seeking AT funding for their children with disabilities. A policy and funding specialist with the Arizona Technology Access Program – AzTAP – he calls himself a “techno geek” who walks on crutches, uses a wheelchair, scooter, hand controls and has a lift in his car. With tongue firmly embedded in cheek, he admits, “I’m both a user and an abuser of technology.” He adds, with seriousness, however, “If it weren’t for the invention of the personal computer I would never have made it through my undergraduate years or law school.”

Mr. Meyers has been involved in AT legal issues since 1994. He was an assistive technology attorney for the Montana Advocacy Program and the Arizona Center for Disability Law. Earlier, he was a law clerk for the Montana Supreme Court. In addition to serving as AzTAP policy and funding specialist, Mr. Myers, as an adjunct professor, teaches disability law and education as a distance learning course at Northern Arizona University. He recently received an award from the Arizona Council for Exceptional Children for his efforts in obtaining passage of Arizona’s accessible textbook legislation. He is a graduate of the University of Montana and its law school.

Supporting our interview with Mr. Myers are resources to assist parents and others in obtaining funding for assistive technology. We also feature members of our **Knowledge Network**. The members spotlighted this

month focus on various aspects of AT funding. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.



AT Funding: A Difficult Process Will Likely Get Tougher

*An Interview with Edward L. Myers III:
Assistive Technology Policy and Funding
Specialist*

"The extraordinary pressures on the federal budget will begin to put a lot of strain on funding for AT and the strain will increase as the years pass" says Myers. For individual families, for now, the prime sources for AT funding remain constant: the school system, Medicaid and private insurance. Nevertheless, among these prime funders, new trends are emerging, Mr. Myers explains.

For children in special education who have AT in their IEPs, schools continue to bear the ultimate responsibility for picking up the tab. "What we're seeing, though, in terms of the law, is the attempt to make a more collaborative process in ensuring that when other agencies have funding responsibilities, along with schools, that those agencies step up to the plate."

Medicaid Can Step Up to the Plate

Medicaid is one of the agencies, he says, that can cover such things as occupational therapy and physical therapy services even

though those services are being provided at the school level.

Augmentative communication devices are another example of devices or services that can be covered by Medicaid even when they are covered at the school level. "In some states, if a school purchases a device then that device belongs to the school. That's true here in Arizona, for example." However, he adds, "if another entity, like Medicaid, helps to purchase the device, then that device belongs to the child, in most cases, or it might belong to the purchasing agency." In such situations, when the school is not the purchaser, the child is often more free to work with the device at home and to use it in other areas of life activity, he says.

If it's determined in an IEP that the child needs to take the AT device home then the school must permit the device to be brought home even if the school is the device's purchaser, Mr. Myers explains.

Insurance Questions

However, he adds, "There are questions regarding insurance on this issue. To avoid complications, I advise schools and families to work out who pays for the insurance in the IEP."

Most of the time, he points out, "the school's policy ought to cover purchase of the device even if the device is taken home for use there. If the coverage is not there, then there needs to be some sort of arrangement where the school provides a portion of the insurance and the parents pay for the rest."

It's often surprisingly easy to formulate such an agreement, he claims. "The school offers to pay for the deductibles and premiums should something happen to the device and let the parents' insurance cover it." When he did legal representation for families seeking AT funding, he recalls, "I saw parents offering to do this. I then explained to the parents that it is considered a cost to them but they go ahead and do it because the cost does not come directly out of their

pocket. This doesn't apply to the poorer families, of course, because they simply cannot afford insurance."

Mr. Myers strives to encourage further collaboration on these issues in Arizona, "and the current trend certainly favors increased collaboration."

A Funding Tip: Trained Professionals Should Evaluate

He offers a tip for getting devices and services funded. In special education, "get adequately trained personnel to do the evaluations. That's key."

He often sees evaluations that are not well prepared, that speak in broad generalities and that fail to address the issue of how the device might be needed in the education environment.

"A good evaluation should analyze the device and how it can benefit the child in the child's educational program," he notes.

"Addressing those two issues effectively will go a long way toward getting funding implemented in an IEP."

Pitfalls in the Funding Process

There are several pitfalls looming for families in the AT funding process. The first pitfall, he says, is the failure to try out the device before purchasing it. Having a trial is not good enough, he warns. "It has to be a healthy trial, of some length, where the device is used in diverse environments."

He's not referring to a trial that lasts only a couple of hours or for one day. "To me, a good trial is about two weeks. If a trial does not take place and the device is purchased, the device can end up not being used – and the funding process is wasted."

Inadequate training on the part of school staff, the student and family members is a third potential pitfall, he cautions. "I hear of more and more cases where a device just sits on the shelf, unused but paid for.

Usually, a teacher or another professional gets an idea about a device that might be effective, but rather than go through an evaluation process that involves a significant trial, the device is simply purchased."

The Advantages of a Two-Week Trial Period

Given the amount of money at stake in AT purchases, and the potential frustration on the part of families, children and school officials when a device isn't used, does it surprise him that a two-week trial period has not yet been made a mandatory part of the funding and purchase process?

"Interestingly, no one has ever talked about making such a trial period mandatory," he says. However, he points out, while IDEA does not mandate a trial period, the law's AT Services section does require that training must be provided in evaluation and assessment. "Common sense says that trying the device out ought to be part of that process, but it amazes me how many times people decide not to do a trial."

Why don't parents opt for a trial? "I think they're seduced by the excitement over the technology itself," he says. "They say, 'This is going to work fine.' Then they buy it. Lo and behold, it doesn't work. And they're stuck. There's no return."

Such an outcome is very frustrating for school personnel, he notes. "I get stories about this all the time. I ask, 'How long did you try out the device? Did you try it out?' The response is, 'It really worked well in the afternoon.' Or, 'Junior was really on track that day, so we bought it.' I tell them over and over, 'Give the technology a good, healthy evaluation before you buy. Take it home, use it there. Live with it for a week or two. See how it's being used.'" But, too often, he claims, "they don't do any of those things."

Vendors, he says, often support a lengthy trial period, considering it a reasonable request. "There are some good vendors out there who will leave a product demonstration

device with the school and the child for at least a week, or a few days. They'll do it especially if they think they have a sale going."

A lengthy trial period is among the requests parents need to make of vendors more often, he declares. "Schools need to be more insistent, when they purchase a device, about also purchasing training for the device, and not just have the vendor come to the school once, show everyone how it works, and then everyone who was there forgets a week later what was learned in that one session. Even if it costs an extra \$100, it's worth it if the device is used."

Heightened Consumer Interest in State Loan Programs

Recently the federal government decided to withdraw its support of state AT Act Projects, in lieu of supporting state-based AT alternative financing programs. The programs provide consumer-type loans, Mr. Myers says. "Usually these loans have an affordable-to-low interest rate depending on which alternative financing program has agreements with a family's bank. The loans, he explains, can be 100% guaranteed or 50% guaranteed or not guaranteed at all and can have interest buy-down options. "I've seen interest rates ranging from 2% to just below a credit card rate, depending on the state."

The alternative finance program has generated much curiosity among families seeking AT funding. "We try to tell people that the loan is not a grant and it must be repaid. It's not a gift, and it helps individuals in reestablishing credit, if they need to. It puts a lot of the onus on the consumer to go and find the desired equipment."

Arizona's AzTAP Loans

In Arizona, some families get AT loans from the non-profit AzTAP program, which has created AzLAT, Arizona Loans for Assistive Technology. AzLAT is a collaborative

partnership between AzTAP and a consortium of public and private organizations. It sometimes cost-shares with state agencies and private insurance. For example, says Mr. Myers, "Let's say an individual wants to get a nice wheelchair, but insurance will only cover 75% of the price; we'll pick up the 25% difference. The consumer can then pay that back as a loan."

It's a good program, he explains, "because it has a lot of flexibility to it." The devices funded by it are not typically funded by other programs, he adds. Items funded include hand bikes and car lifts for children. "There are no programs that will separately fund those," he says. "We're here for consumers in their time of need."

Another option for families seeking AT financing is the telework program, which provides loans for individuals with disabilities who want to work from home. That program is broader than the alternative financing program in that it not only emphasizes AT, but can also be used to purchase business equipment. The program is primarily for adults.

With the federal government's alternative financing program, he explains, any consumer who is a parent or guardian of a child with disabilities who requires AT is eligible for a loan.

Will Technology Convergence Enhance AT Accessibility at Lower Cost?

A developing trend, whose full emergence and impact may not occur for several years, and which may make some AT more accessible to special education students at less expense, is the convergence of general education technology with AT. That trend, Mr. Myers concedes, has probably been accelerated by the popularity – and the necessity – of universal design.

As this convergence accelerates, some computer software programs created for general education might be made available to special ed students as part of the general

ed budget, resulting in cost reductions for schools and enhanced accessibility for those with special needs.

IDEA 2004, Mr. Myers points out, marks the first time that universal design has been inserted into special education law, which means that schools now must utilize universal design principles to maximize the accessibility of a child with a disability who has an IEP. "Maximize accessibility" is pretty strong language," Mr. Myers admits, and it applies to implementation of the curriculum and to statewide testing. "That's a lot of potentially positive impact," he notes.

What he is discovering, however, "is that when I do my training on universal design and accessible information technology there is a lot of ignorance in the schools." The challenge, he explains, is persuading schools to build their knowledge base about the implications of the IDEA universal design stipulations for children with disabilities.

Overall, he declares, "what it means in the long term, is that software programs are going to be accessible to individuals with disabilities in the future. Part of the cost of these programs could, in fact, come out of the general ed budget."

Not an Overnight Process

"Educating school staffers will not be an overnight process by any means." He cites Section 508, the federal government's universal design statute requiring that federal agencies purchase accessible information technology, which still has not been fully implemented after 15 years on the books. "This will be a long, long haul on universal design," he predicts.

However, he continues, "software publishers are already adopting NIMAS (National Instructional Materials Access Standards) for accessible textbooks." Arizona, he adds, passed an accessible textbooks law in 2005 "and I hope to help get that part of the law implemented."

In terms of accessible textbooks, he says, CDs, DVDs are going to be able to talk to you if you're using a screen reader, but the videos will be close captioned. There probably will be some sort of video description for the blind and vision-impaired that will be encompassed in the CD-ROM and DVD, he predicts. "I've seen a couple of these textbooks," he adds, "and they are pretty amazing."

Medicaid on the Chopping Block?

With a movement afoot in Congress, specifically in the U.S. Senate, aimed at tinkering with Medicaid provisions, how will poor, disabled kids obtain AT? "It depends on how Congress tinkers with it," he observes. "If they cut a significant amount of funding then that just reduces the dollars available for everybody which means that everybody will get less."

In his eyes, Medicaid's most positive attribute in terms of AT funding and accessibility for children is its early periodic screening diagnosis and treatment program, "which means that if poor kids need AT they should get what they need."

Tinkering with Medicaid, he insists, "might disturb both AT funding and accessibility for families in desperate need of both. "It will be harder to obtain higher-end, more complex equipment for kids with complicated needs," he alleges. "The more complex a child's needs are, the higher the costs will be, and that may not work in the child's favor as it has in the past."

A Push Toward Mediation

There can be an inherent tension when parents rely on schools for AT funding information while schools provide the funding, Mr. Myers points out. Given the budget pressures on school systems, schools tend not to seek expenditures they might not otherwise incur, he says.

"There is both tension and a conflict," Mr. Myers notes, "and IDEA might even exacerbate it, which would be ironic since the legislation contains mechanisms designed to nudge the parties to negotiate and to discuss more." IDEA 2004 pushes parents to pursue mediation in place of more formal due process hearings. Will that approach work for or against parents who are trying to get AT funding?

"It's hard to say," says Mr. Myers. "Until this law actually goes into effect, I try to encourage the parties to at least try to sit down and talk their issues through before resorting to due process. Once due process commences, no one has control. The decision can come down badly either way." Congress' concept of a required resolution session, he says, "will force the parties to sit down and talk at least once."

Of course, he adds, the parties can agree not to meet, "but if the parent doesn't bring an attorney then the school doesn't have to bring an attorney." At that point, in theory, he points out, the parties should be on an equal footing. "But parents, in reality, are not on an equal footing because the school is a much bigger institution. And that, right there, is the problem. Therefore, I don't know if it's going to work."

In some ways, he admits, this inequality can lead to significant intimidation. "What we're seeing is that, thanks to the alterations regarding attorneys' fees in IDEA 2004, is that schools can go after parents and parents' attorneys for attorneys fees for a variety of reasons which might, in fact, act to dissuade due process hearings." It will be interesting, he adds, "to see how this plays out once parents know that they might be on the hook for attorneys' fees if they lose the case."

All of which, he notes, puts parents seeking AT funding at a further disadvantage when squaring off against schools. This pattern, he fears, will continue to take shape and harden as Congressional pressure bolsters disabilities legislation in some ways but

continues to dilute it in ways that can directly and adversely impact families' leverage in their battle to make AT affordable and accessible for all who need it.

The Trend: A Tighter Funding Environment

This trend, says Ed Myers, is likely inescapable. "Entitlement programs began to be unraveled during the Reagan Administration," he notes and that unraveling has continued through the ensuing three administrations, including that of President Clinton.

Congress, he predicts, will continue to send funding to the states as block grants, with less funding and with fewer strings attached. "We'll see more inconsistent funding nationwide. How much you get depends on where you live." In some ways, it already works that way. "Developmental Disability Services is a program that's hit and miss, depending on the state. There's very little uniformity."

"I could be wrong in my prediction," he concludes, "but this trend appears to be in place for the long haul, with no end yet in sight."



Developing a Funding Strategy

Parents will find it useful to begin collecting information on all potential sources as early as possible. The chances of persuading people or organizations to provide funding increase with the parents' ability to meet their criteria, to follow their procedures, and to use their language. Parents should research potential funders thoroughly. Funding sources will have different and sometime complex sets of selection criteria that should be carefully reviewed.

- ❑ Research technology and funding options on the Internet or at a local information center. Make a list of the opportunities that you want to pursue first, second and third. In many instances, particularly when several components are involved, funding will not come entirely from one source or all at one time. Components may include a computer and peripherals such as printers, assistive devices, or software.
- ❑ Make a budget of all your family's expenses. This will help you determine what funds you can put towards the purchase of a device and help you determine if you will seek loans or grants.
- ❑ Gather your family's income documentation, such as a copy of your W2 tax statement. Your income may be an eligibility requirement and being aware of your financial situation will help you make the strongest possible case for funding.
- ❑ Identify people in your life who can help you with the funding process, such as friends, relatives and coworkers. They may have organizational contacts or valuable proposal writing skills. Share with them your goals and keep them up to date on your progress.
- ❑ Keep good records of your funding progress. Use a notebook and folder to keep funding and AT-related information in one place. This will be especially useful if you are working with more than one potential funder or if you need to appeal a case.

Your funding plan should both identify and prioritize potential resources so that you will approach them in the most appropriate order. Establishing an order of approach is important because a number of sources consider themselves "payers of last resort," meaning they won't pay until all other sources have either agreed or refused to fund. It is therefore critical to document the results even when denied funding.

The language you use with different funding sources should reflect the orientation of the source.

Medical. In medical settings, stress the therapeutic nature and "medical necessity" of the equipment.

Educational. In educational settings, the technology needs to help a child with a disability achieve academic and educational goals.

Vocational. In vocational settings, the goal and potential for self-sufficiency are crucial elements. Again, it is important to research and understand the language preferred by the potential funder.

The cost of the AT device is important to many potential funders, so naturally, opportunities to cut costs should be explored. As parents, you should think of your child's AT needs not in terms of a specific model of a certain device, but in terms of the functional abilities you are trying to make available to your child.

For more information about assistive technology funding and about AT in general, please read the Family Center's *Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology*, from which these suggestions were taken. The guide can be accessed online and print copies may be ordered at www.fctd.info.



RESOURCES

Information Guides

Family Information Guide to Assistive Technology

By J. Hess, A.M. Gutierrez, J. Peters, A. Cerreta
Family Center on Technology and Disability,
2005

The Family Center's recently released guide features a section on the funding of AT. Funding sources that are discussed include the public school system, Medicaid and Medicare, Section 504 plans, and community-based organizations and foundations. Included are suggestions for developing a funding strategy and links to additional resources. The guide can be accessed online, in both pdf and html formats. Print copies can also be requested. For more information, contact:

Family Center on Technology & Disability
Academy for Educational Development
1825 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
Phone: (202) 884-8068
Fax: (202) 884-8441
Email: fctd@aed.org
Website: www.fctd.info

ARTICLES

Assistive Technology: Legal Issues for Students with Disabilities and Their Schools

By Janice Neibaur Day and Dixie Snow Huefner
Journal of Special Education 2003

Funding issues are addressed in this article, which provides a detailed analysis of federal policy, legislation and adjudication related to AT. The article reviews IDEA, Section 504, Section 508 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Detailed descriptions of the laws are offered. (This was, of course, prior to the 2004 IDEA re-authorization.) The

definition of what constitutes "AT devices and services" is discussed. There is a comprehensive explanation of how the laws are interpreted to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE). Procedures for evaluating the need for AT, and training on equipment and use are also addressed.
<http://jset.unlv.edu/18.2/day/first.html>

Funding Assistive Technology with Medicaid

Vermont Parent Information Center 2001

This brief article explains the ways in which Medicaid can be used to fund AT and provides basic, concise information about the steps necessary to apply for precertification, the letters of medical necessity needed and the steps required for evaluation and appeal. While many of the specific contacts listed apply only to Vermont residents, much of the general information is applicable to other states.

Phone: (800) 639-7170 (toll free)
http://www.vtpic.com/downloads/at_fund_medicaid.pdf

Funding Assistive Technology

Vermont Parent Information Center 2001

Providing basic information on how families can obtain AT funding, this article, though short, offers an accurate overview of the various methods available to fund AT, including Medicaid, the IEP process, private insurance, vocational rehab and local service organizations.

http://www.vtpic.com/downloads/at_funding.pdf

The Public Schools' Special Education System as an Assistive Technology

Funding Source: The Cutting Edge

By Ronald M Hager
Neighborhood Legal Services 2003
Originally published for an audience of attorneys and AT advocates, the focus of this booklet is on IDEA and Section 504 as funding sources. The booklet's objective is to provide the reader with a working knowledge of the laws, regulations and interpretations, as they relate to a school's

obligation to provide AT devices and services. The booklet is written for professionals. Those who are new to the field, especially families, may prefer to read materials that are more user friendly. Nevertheless, the booklet contains valuable information, including examples of AT that have been funded and citations of successful court cases. This is a valuable resource for professionals to have available when acquiring AT for school-age students.

<http://www.nls.org/specedat.htm>

Informed Consumer's Guide to Funding Assistive Technology

By Anjanette Daigle, Stephen Lowe, Katherine Belknap and Lynn Halverson
Abledata 2001

The authors provide background for consumers seeking AT funding for the first time. They strongly recommend that consumers gather information about the disability, including the time of its onset, its cause, family gross income, monthly expenses, health insurance information and the names of dependents. However, the authors identify only two AT funding sources: vocational rehabilitation and the local district before referring readers to their state's Tech Act project and Protection and Advocacy agencies. No information is provided on how to assemble a justification statement. Readers seeking such information must look elsewhere. For further information on this article, contact:

Abledata

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 930

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: (800) 227-0216

Fax: (301) 608-8958

TTY: (301) 608-8912

http://www.abledata.com/abledata_docs/funding.htm

AT Funding Issues

Assistive Technology Strategies, Tools, Accommodations and Resources (ATSTAR)
2002

Presented in a question-and-answer format that is easy to follow, the article describes the AT funding process for school age children. In addition to FAQs, the author

provides links to websites focusing on AT funding issues. These sites include information about government funding, private foundations and grants.

http://www.atstar.org/info_funding.html

Nine Steps to Funding

By The South Carolina Assistive Technology Project

Adaptivemail.com 2002

This is a compact guide to the process of obtaining funding for AT products. The article does not contain funding resources but instead provides practical tips, i.e. maintaining accurate records of phone conversations and contacts. The guide is especially valuable for parents of children with disabilities.

<http://www.tumbleforms.com/bergeron/9stepstofun.html>

Fact Sheets

Funding for Assistive Technology

South Carolina Assistive Technology Project
2000

The SCATP developed a brief fact sheet covering various aspects of AT funding. The sheet defines AT and then describes and defines the steps families that seek AT funding must take. Much of the sheet's information is not South Carolina-specific and is useful to a general readership. The third section lists organizations that may be useful during the funding application process. The sheet's final section deals with the appeal process.

<http://www.sc.edu/scatp/fundingfact.htm>

Funding Tips

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) 2000

JAN has compiled a non-inclusive list of AT funding resources. This article summarizes funding search tips and describes several organizations that provide funding. The document is a compilation of basic suggestions and things to remember during a search for AT funding. The article also

offers suggestions on advocacy, how to obtain assistance from advocates and how to appeal a denial of funding. For more information contact:

Job Accommodations Network
Phone: (800) 526-7234 (voice/TTY);
(800) 232-9675
(304) 293-7186 (voice/TTY –
worldwide)
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/Funding/GeneralInfo.html>

Websites

Iowa Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT)

This well-organized website is an excellent source of information, both for individuals just learning about AT and for those already familiar with the subject. It offers a basic definition of AT and excellent information regarding funding sources. Many of the funding resources are for Iowa residents but others are applicable to those who live elsewhere. The Funding Strategies Brochure with "The Rules" of funding is especially helpful because it explains the role of key players, discusses eligibility, and provides links to funding sources such as Medicare, Veteran's Administration, and state Tech Act Projects. The web resource section provides the reader with links to general AT resources, such as ATA, RESNA and NIDRR; disability resources; web accessibility resources; computer resources; and Iowa resources. The website is the source of information for UERS (Used Equipment Referral Service), a listing of AT needed or for sale. For more information, contact:

Iowa Program for Assistive Technology (IPAT)
Center for Disabilities and Development
100 Hawkins Drive, Room S295
Iowa City, IA 52242-1011
Phone: (800) 331-3027 (voice/toll-free)
(877) 686-0032 (TTY/toll-free)
(319) 356-0550 (voice)
To request information, please complete the

IPAT/InfoTech Feedback Form or email IPAT at infotech@uiowa.edu.
<http://www.uiowa.edu/infotech/Funding.htm>

Institute for Human Development Website

Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP)
Northern Arizona University

This website was developed by the Arizona Technology Access Program, and is a source of information for persons in Arizona about types of technology and where they can receive assistance. The site examines funding issues and has a questionnaire that aids in pinpointing reasons for the funding success and failures of Arizona residents. There is a library of fact sheets that are easy to read and topic-specific, although the content is limited in scope. The site features links to other regional centers if specific information is needed. The website is Bobby-approved website and can be viewed in a text-only format.

<http://www.nau.edu/ihd/aztap/factsheets.shtml>

Newsletters

Medicaid, Assistive Technology and the Courts

AT Advocate Newsletter 2003

This newsletter summarizes landmark court decisions made in the funding of Durable Medical Equipment and Assistive Technology 1996-2003. It includes some key concepts and definitions of AT and DME as viewed by the courts, samples of Medicaid denials and rationales, Medicaid resources on the National AT Advocacy Project's website, and other websites for people looking for Medicaid funding.

The newsletter cites pertinent cases that were either denied or approved, and reasons why. This is helpful in pursuit of funding for devices as it may provide groundwork for advocates based on precedent.

<http://www.nls.org/av/spring03.htm>

Brochures

Assistive Technology and Rural Life

Oklahoma ABLE Tech 2004

This brochure addresses the unique set of challenges faced by members of rural communities when accessing, selecting, funding and maintaining AT devices and services. A variety of AT solutions that might help a person with disabilities work and live more independently in a rural setting, such as hydraulic and computerized control systems, are briefly described. The brochure also provides a list of AT services and resources for people with disabilities who live in rural settings. For more information, contact:

Oklahoma ABLE Tech

1514 West Hall of Fame

Stillwater, OK 74078

Phone: (405) 744-9748 (V/TDD)

(800) 257-1705 (toll free)

Fax: (405) 744-2487

<http://okabletech.okstate.edu/pubs/atrural.html>



KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS



Utah Assistive Technology Program (UATP)

UATP provides funding information on Medicaid programs, Utah's Children's Special Health Services agency, the state's early information program, special education imperatives, IDEA provisions, Head Start, and state schools for the blind/visually impaired and for deaf/hearing impaired students. The program also provides funding training. A list of AT funding organizations is arranged alphabetically and

by applicant age. A four-step AT funding process is outlined.

In addition to finding information, UATP provides information sheets and other resources pertaining to AT issues.

For more information on UATP funding activities, contact:

Utah Assistive Technology Program (UATP)

Utah State University

6855 Old Main Hill

Logan, UT 84322-6855

Phone: (800) 524-5152 (toll free)

Fax: (435) 797-3944

<http://uatp.usu.edu/>

Assistive Technology Partnership



The partnership provides numerous AT-related informational services, including funding programs. The organization cautions that funding program guidelines and eligibility requirements vary widely and are often overlooked as potential resources for those who are unfamiliar with them. The partnership's funding coordinator researches funding programs statewide to determine a person's eligibility. In addition to providing information on funding sources, guidelines and policies, the partnership provides the following services:

- Home purchase and remodeling for accessibility
- Identification of accessible and affordable homes and rentals
- Onsite assessments for home modifications
- Onsite assessments for worksite modifications
- Information on specialized or adapted vehicles and mobility devices
- Technology solutions, costs, availability, and manufacturers
- Technology adaptations and repairs
- Web site assessments for accessibility

- Training for accessible website design
- Used equipment
- Use of AT including demonstrations
- Equipment available for free, short-term loans

For additional information on the partnership, contact:

Assistive Technology Partnership
 5143 South 48th Street, Suite C
 Lincoln, NE 68516-2204
 Phone: (402) 471-0734; (888) 806-6287
 (toll free)
 Fax: (402) 471-6052
 Contact: Cathy Hayes, Funding Coordinator
 Email: atp@atp.state.ne.us
<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ATP/>

People Achieving Change Through Technology (PACTT)

In providing AT services to individuals with disabilities, their caregivers and the professionals who work with them, PACTT also offers comprehensive assessment and consultation services that include workshops on AT funding alternatives. PACTT is a program of the Ability Center, a non-profit rehabilitation facility located in Rochester, MN.

Other PACTT AT assessment and consultation services include: adaptive computer solutions, school and workplace accommodations, simple alternative and augmentative communication and environmental control systems; training for individuals or groups regarding recommended AT; customized workshops and presentations on AT topics that include adaptive computer technology, switch access, educational or vocational AT options. An equipment loan library provides access to AT evaluation services.

For further information on PACTT, contact:

People Achieving Change Through
 Technology (PACTT)
 1911 14th Street NW

P.O. Box 6938
 Rochester, MAN 55903
 Phone: (507) 535-7101
 Contact: Kim Moccia, Technology Resource Specialist
 Email: pact@abcinc.org
<http://www.abcinc.org/pactt/>

Wisconsin Assistive Technology Program (WisTech)

WisTech provides information on funding, selecting, installing and using AT. WisTech coordinators provide assessments of individual needs and maintain a loan closet of AT items for testing by individuals. Most WisTech services are provided free of charge.

The WisLoan AT program assists individuals in purchasing hearing aids, modified vehicles, ramps and wheelchairs. The program is open to all Wisconsin residents with a disability. There are no income requirements and individuals are not required to exhaust personal or public funding. Under the program, banks provide loans at prime-plus-2% to qualified borrowers. Loans amounts depend on the item purchased and an individual's ability to repay the loan.

For more information on WisTech, contact:

Wisconsin Assistive Technology Program (WisTech)
 1 West Wilson Street, Room 450
 P.O. Box 7851
 Madison, WI 53707
 Phone: (608) 266-0421 (TTY); (608) 267-9880
 Fax: (608) 267-3203
 Email: webmailddes@dhfs.state.wi.us
<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/wistech/>

North Carolina Assistive Technology Project (NCATP)



NCATP does not have the funds to purchase AT but provides information on AT funding sources and equipment acquisition strategies. The NCATP website features a "Funding Overview" section that describes the step-by-step AT funding process and highlights funding resources for families of your children with disabilities.

NCATP promotes awareness of AT and acts to educate individuals about their right to AT accommodations and to share AT information resources with families, professionals, consumers, agencies and businesses. Other services include:

- Equipment trials
- AT training and awareness activities
- Short-term loans
- Equipment demonstration
- Regional staff for consultation
- Information and referral
- Advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families
- Two staff members statewide for consultation with individuals who are deaf/hearing impaired or blind/vision impaired
- Formal written computer evaluation for purchase by organizations
- Assistance to agencies in developing AT services

For more information on NCATP, contact:

North Carolina Assistive Technology Project (NCATP)

1110 Navaho Drive, Suite 101

Raleigh, NC 27609

Phone: (919) 850-2787

Fax: (919) 850-2792

Contact: Annette Lauber, Funding Specialist

alauber@ncatp.org

<http://www.ncatp.org>

Oklahoma ABLE Tech

Affiliated with Oklahoma State University, the organization seeks to improve AT accessibility and funding for state residents and the established Assistive Technology Lending Program that makes low interest loans available, via BancFirst of Oklahoma, to purchase AT devices. In addition, Oklahoma ABLE tech collaborated with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to secure budgetary and policy changes that enabled Medicaid recipients age 21 or over to obtain durable medical equipment.

Oklahoma residents can access the ABLE Tech Info Line that provides free AT information via:

- A statewide computer database
- A statewide equipment loan inventory
- National AT inventory
- An in-house collection of catalogues
- Product literature

The Info Line also provides AT funding information.

For more information on Oklahoma ABLE Tech, contact:

Oklahoma ABLE Tech

1514 West Hall of Fame

Stillwater, OK 74078

Phone: (405) 744-9748 (voice/TTY); (800) 257-1705 (toll free); (888) 885-5588 (Info Line)

Fax: (405) 744-2487

Contact: Linda Jaco, Program Manager

mljwell@okstate.edu

<http://okabletech.okstate.edu/>

Oklahoma Assistive Technology Center (OATC)



Housed in the University of Oklahoma's College of Health Science, OATC provides information about public and private AT funding sources. In addition, the organization provides professional and community training and education, technical

assistance and AT research. OATC offers the following services:

- AT need assessment
- Short-term loan equipment
- Completing individual consumer requests to public and private funding sources
- AT equipment adaptation and modification
- Consumer education on how to use, support the use of and maintain AT devices

For further information on OATC, contact:

Oklahoma Assistive Technology Project
1600 North Phillips
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
Phone: (405) 271-3625
Fax: (405) 271-1707
Contact: Tara Warwick
<http://www.ah.ouhsc.edu/oatc/>

New Hampshire Assistive Technology Partnership Project



The project is developing an alternative finance system for AT while supporting the formulation of state legislation to expand the use of AT services. The project's ongoing projects include an AT low-interest loan program, a refurbished equipment marketplace, expanded information resources, a Technology Exploration Center (TEC) and an annual AT Access Expo.

The project is working to expand AT access in the state's extensive rural areas via mobile service units, distance learning and training. The project is affiliated with the University of New Hampshire.

For further information on the partnership, contact:

New Hampshire Assistive Technology Partnership Project
#14 Ten Ferry Street (The Concord Center)

Concord, NH 03301
Phone: (603) 224-0630
Fax: (603) 228-3270
Contact: Mary Schuh, Associate Director
mcschuh@unh.edu
http://iod.unh.edu/projects/nh_assistive_technology.html

Assistive Technology of Ohio



A Tech Act project housed at The Ohio State University, AT of Ohio promotes AT accessibility via funding information, low interest loans, computer exchange and refurbishing programs.

The projects' low interest loan program, called Access for Individuals, is an alternative financing program that funds the purchase of AT devices and services. The program has no loan origination fee, no minimum or maximum income requirements and is unaffiliated with any state entitlement program, including Medicaid. The program is designed to offer assistance when third-party payers – insurance, Medicare, Medicaid – do not cover needed AT. Loan amounts range from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Items financed include manual and power wheelchairs, AAC devices, hearing aids, Braille writers, CCTVs and home d vehicle modifications. In some cases, an Access for Individuals loan can be used to purchase adaptive vans or homes. Additional criteria and qualifications must be met for larger loans.

For additional information on the project, contact:

Assistive Technology of Ohio
445 East Dublin-Granville Road, Building L
Worthington, OH 43085
Phone: (800) 784-3425 (toll free); (614) 293-9133
Fax: (614) 293-9127
Contact: William T. Darling, PhD., Director
darling.12@osu.edu
<http://www.atohio.org/>

Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS)

VATS has aggressively advocated the implementation of a statewide loan financing program for AT, resulting in legislation that has established and capitalized The AT Loan Fund. Now in its sixth printing, a VATS-produced funding resource directory has been compiled and distributed statewide.

VATs has also developed a resource guide to assist families of school-age children with IEPs. The organization provides training, technical assistance and policy development on accessible AT.

VATS operates three AT regional sites with local contact points statewide for information and resources. The sites provide training, public awareness and general technical assistance for consumers utilizing or in need of AT. The organization also collaborates with the Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy on initiatives that include training, legal representation and systems change.

For more information on VATS, contact:

Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS)
8004 Franklin Farms Drive
P.O. Box K-300
Richmond, VA 23288
Phone: (804) 662-9990; (800) 552-5019
(toll free)
Fax: (804) 662-9478
Contact: Kenneth Knorr, Project Director
knorrkh@drs.state.va.us
<http://www.vats.org/>

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