

Questions and Answers

Technology for Communication and Independence



What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology, or “AT”, is any device that helps a person with a disability achieve a more independent and productive life. AT devices may include such items as:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication - other ways to communicate besides speech
- Adapted Vehicles
- Flashing doorbells
- Computers with special software or hardware
- Hearing aids
- Home modifications (ramps, showers, counter tops)
- Scooters and wheelchairs
- Seat lift chairs
- Closed circuit televisions

How can I find more information about the different types of technology that is available to meet my needs? Check out the following websites:

- **[AbleData](http://www.abledata.com/)** - is a collection of useful information about assistive technology. The database contains more than 20,000 assistive technology products that are currently available. ABLEDATA is sponsored by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Education.
<http://www.abledata.com/>
- **[AgrAbility](http://agexted.cas.psu.edu/agrab/)** - provides direct services and information to farmers and farm family members with a disability or long-term health condition who want to remain in production agriculture.
<http://agexted.cas.psu.edu/agrab/>
- **[Assistive Technology Information](http://assistivetech.net/)** - is an on-line resource that provides up-to-date information on assistive technology and disability-related information. The database of AT is designed to help consumers target solutions, determine costs and link to vendors that sell products.
<http://assistivetech.net/>
- **[Disabled Dealer Magazine](http://disableddealer.com/)** - is a national, on-line resource that provides items (accessible homes, adapted vehicles, wheelchairs, and other devices) and contact information so people can make their own arrangements for reuse of equipment and accessible homes. The magazine is structured similarly to “Craigslist.” <http://disableddealer.com/>

- **[Make-A-Wish Foundation](http://wish.org/)** - grants wishes of children who are 2 1/2 to 18 years of age who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition. Assistive technology requests are eligible for consideration. Vehicles are not eligible, but a lift or other vehicle modification may be eligible if it is a child's wish. <http://wish.org/>
- **[New Mobility](http://newmobility.com/)** - is a full-color monthly magazine that encourages the integration of active-lifestyle wheelchair users into mainstream society, while simultaneously reflecting the vibrant world of disability-related arts, media, advocacy and philosophy. Stories foster a sense of community and empower readers to: participate in all areas of life, including education, work, love, sex, home ownership, parenting, sports, recreation, travel and entertainment; be informed of and take charge of health concerns; obtain appropriate technology; and assert legal rights. <http://newmobility.com/>
- **[PA Power Port](http://www.pa.gov/pages/default.aspx)** - is the official website for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This site has links to state agencies, the General Assembly, and legislative research. <http://www.pa.gov/pages/default.aspx>
- **[Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network \(PATTAN\)](http://www.pattan.net/)** - supports the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education, PA Department of Education, to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services. PaTTAN staff develops programs based on successful evidence-based practices, provide trainings, and administers a short-term equipment loan program for educational personnel. <http://www.pattan.net/>
- **[Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library](http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/atlend/)** - is a statewide resource for free equipment trials (similar to a book library) of assistive technology devices. <http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/atlend/>
- **[Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology \(PIAT\)](http://disabilities.temple.edu/tech/)** - is a project of the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University. PIAT provides information and assistance, demonstrations and training opportunities on assistive technology devices and services to Pennsylvanians of all ages and disabilities. PIAT also administers the equipment Lending Library, the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program, the Reused and Exchanged Equipment Partnership and other assistive technology programs. PIAT and the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) often work together to help people with disabilities obtain the assistive technology devices and services they want to live as independently as possible, go to work, attend school and participate in the community. <http://disabilities.temple.edu/tech/>
- **[Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North American \(RESNA\)](http://www.resna.org/)** - provides technical assistance to the alternate financing programs (Title III of the Assistive Technology Act). This website includes links to state projects, loan program data, and a library of resources. <http://www.resna.org/>
- **[Reused and Exchanged Equipment Partnership \(REEP\)](http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/reep/)** - is a free listing service for people with disabilities to donate, sell or buy a wide variety of assistive devices. <http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/reep/>
- **[Telecommunication Device Distribution Program \(TDDP\)](#)** - is a program that provides specialized telecommunications equipment to qualified Pennsylvanians whose disability makes it

necessary to use assistive technology to independently access telephone services.

<http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/tddp/>

How can I get funding to pay for Assistive Technology?

1. **The Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation** - PATF's Mission: To provide financing opportunities to people with disabilities and older Pennsylvanians helping them to acquire the assistive technology devices and services that improve the quality of their lives.

PATF offers two loan programs:

- For assistive devices costing more than \$1,500, PATF offers a 3.75% low-interest loan. If a borrower has good credit, then their loan may be approved as a traditional loan for up to \$60,000. If an applicant is not approved for a traditional loan, PATF's board of directors will vote whether or not to guarantee or "back" an applicant's loan. If a guarantee is required the maximum amount that can be borrowed is \$25,000.
- For assistive devices costing between \$100 and \$1,500, PATF offers a 0% interest Mini-Loan, with a minimum monthly payment of \$20. The maximum repayment period is three years.

Who is eligible to apply?

- PATF is a program for Pennsylvania residents who need assistive technology devices and/or services.
- PATF can help people of all ages, disabilities and health conditions.
- People of all income levels may apply for a loan. An applicant must have an ability and willingness to repay a loan.

2. Some organizations are known for supporting/funding assistive technology including:

- ✓ Disability-focused organizations operate nationwide to share information and resources on specific disabilities. Quite often these national organizations have local chapters.
 - National Multiple Sclerosis Society
 - Muscular Dystrophy Association.
 - United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) - educates advocates and provides support services to ensure a life without limits for people with a spectrum of disabilities.
 - UCP Bellows Fund - a national program operated by UCP that provides funds to individuals with disabilities for assistive technology equipment. Individuals are recommended by UCP affiliates. UCP affiliates submit an application on behalf of an individual to the UCP national office. Applications are reviewed for funding by the Bellows Committee.
 - National Dissemination Center of Children with Disabilities - NICHCY's website offers information to help identify and connect with the disability group(s) in your area addressing the disability or disabilities with which you are concerned.
 - NICHCY's Services for Adults with Disabilities
 - American Council of the Blind
 - American Foundation for the Blind

- ✓ RESNA - Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
 - The RESNA Catalyst Project provides aid and resources for statewide AT programs, alternative finance programs, and is a resource for individuals with disabilities and their family members.
 - Connect to the program in your state to find information about what devices and services are available and where to obtain them.

- ✓ US Department of Veterans Affairs

- ✓ National and local organizations and service clubs.
 - International and national organizations such as Easter Seals, United Way, Lions Club International, March of Dimes, Kiwanis and may have assistance programs for funding AT. Some local and state organizations may also take on a “fundraising project” in specific cases.
 - Local organizations such as Knights of Columbus , local Lions Clubs and faith-based organizations will often contribute funds and/or organize fundraisers to assist in the provision of AT devices for individuals who live in their areas. A listing of these clubs can be found in your telephone directory and by searching for “local service organizations” for your locale on the internet.

3. Insurance Options:

Medicare, Medicaid, private health or disability insurance and Worker’s Compensation may pay for some assistive technology. In most cases, a demonstration of medical necessity for the product or equipment and a prescription from a doctor or other professional will be required.

- Medicare – is a national social insurance program administered by the U.S. federal government for adults over 65 years of age and younger people with disabilities. While Medicare may provide coverage for some assistive technology devices, the scope of coverage is limited. <http://www.medicare.gov/default.aspx>
 - Medicaid – is the U.S. cooperative Federal-State health program for certain people and families with low incomes and resources. People served by Medicaid are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents including low-income adults, their children and people with certain disabilities.
 - Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) – is the child health component of Medicaid. It is required in every state and is designed to improve the health of low-income children by financing appropriate and necessary pediatric services.
 - Medicaid Waivers - allows Medicaid to be used for additional services and may cover specialized medical equipment and supplies. Each state writes a plan that defines what types of services will be provided under their Medicaid Waiver Program.
 - Private Insurance – many private insurance policies will pay for AT services and devices that are deemed to be medically necessary and prescribed by a physician. Coverage varies by There are funding options available through federal and state government programs.
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- Special Education at your Local School District: For children up to age 21, the public school’s special education system can be a primary funding source for AT. The Individual’s with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees eligible children a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Since all special education services, including AT, must be free, a family’s income is not a factor. The child's needs, the services to be provided and identified assistive technology must appear in a

written individualized education program (IEP). Check with your child's teacher and work through the IEP process.

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) – The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) administers vocational rehabilitation (VR), supported employment and independent living services. OVR may pay for assistive technology if the technology will enhance the worker's ability to prepare for, get or keep a job.
4. Your Employer: Check with your employer. Your employer may purchase the equipment in order to support your job productivity. There may be tax incentives for your employer as well.
 5. Scholarships are available to fund AT for students with disabilities pursuing post-secondary education. Check the following sites:
 - College Funding For Students with Disabilities: <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/financial-aid.html>
 - List of Disability Scholarships: <http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/education/scholarships/>
 - Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Grants & Funding Opportunities at - <http://ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/rsa/index.html>
RSA awards grants to colleges and universities for providing [scholarship](#) assistance to students.
 6. **Fundraiser Activity Ideas** – What are the most effective ways to raise money to fund AT?
 - Set up a fundraising campaign on Razoo.com: <http://www.razoo.com/story/new>
 - Free e-book: Lisa Simpson for Nonprofits: *7 Free Fundraising, Marketing & Change Making Tips for 2011*: http://web.networkforgood.org/2011-03-Ebook-Lisa-Simpson-Google-Grants/?utm_source=Google%2B&utm_medium=Grants&utm_campaign=Lisa&_k=fundraising%20ideas&_kt=a2232d03-cfe1-482c-9eb0-a4e5db6aec74&gclid=CJSfwLfkp6sCFSEEAodhHbL0g
 - Katya Andresen, Alia McKee Scott & Mark Rovner build on the behavioral economics framework of: [*Homer Simpson for Non Profits: The Truth About How People Really Think & What It Means for Promoting Your Cause.*](#) For 2011, they take applicable scientific frames of thought including cultural cognition and psychology for the nonprofit space and show you how it works!
 7. Other Ideas:
 - Organizations, private corporations and manufacturers of assistive technology are also valuable sources of funding. They may be able to put you in contact with families who have been successful at locating funding and purchasing equipment. Some nonprofit groups and manufacturers sponsor guaranteed loan programs for the purchase of AT devices while others actually loan equipment or computer software.
 - PASS (Plan to Achieve Self-Support) is a program offered by the Social Security Administration for people who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Through PASS it is possible to set aside funds for equipment without causing recipients to lose eligibility for benefits. The cost of AT devices may be deductible from earnings if the unreimbursed cost of these items are related to Impairment Related Work

Expenses. NOTE: SSDI is designed to give workers added protection against loss of income due to disability. However, SSDI does not provide direct funding of assistive technology.

- Loans from private banks: Although banks would hesitate to loan money with AT devices as collateral, there are some aspects of the Federal Reserve Regulations, Regulation Z: the Truth in Lending Law and Regulation B: the Anti-Discrimination Law that might assist a user in acquiring a loan for the purchase of AT.
- Access on Main Street at www.accessonmainstreet.net/, a searchable website that provides information about helpful features built into mainstream personal and public devices, from cell phones with large buttons to touch-screen voting machines. You are also welcome to contact Jane Vincent, one of the contributors, at 510-841-3224 x115.
- Assistive Technology Funding Search
Tips: http://affnet.ucp.org/ucp_channel.doc.cfm/1/14/86/86-86/2938
- Good info on foundation funding from the University of Delaware
[Internet Resources for Foundations and Grants](http://www.uofdelaware.edu/InternetResourcesforFoundationsandGrants/)
- FUNDING OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES;
<http://www.nls.org/atart.htm> - first published in 1997. Includes sections with info on “How to obtain AT from the Special Education System,” Medicaid and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency.
- Using Mini-Grants to Fund Assistive Technology for Students with Severe Disabilities
<http://www.ttac.odu.edu/articles/minigrant.html>

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