

Assistive Technology and Transition from School to Adult Life



During high school, students with disabilities, their families and teams need to think about what life will be like after graduation. What kind of work will they do? Will they go to college first? Where will they live, and how can they be independent? Assistive technology (AT) can be an important tool in a smooth transition to adult life!

By Pennsylvania law, the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team should begin transition planning when the student turns 14. After considering AT devices and services needed for reaching educational goals, the IEP team and the student should also try to identify "post-school outcomes" and start thinking more broadly about how AT can help the student to participate successfully in higher education, at work, and in the community.

Listing any AT devices the student currently uses at home and in the community—low tech to high tech, specialized or "off the shelf"—is the first step. For each device on the list, the family and the team should think about the following: Who owns the device? Will the device be needed after graduation (for post-secondary education, employment, or independent living)? What services are currently provided by the school (if any) to support the use of the device? If these services are needed after graduation, who will provide them?

Next, the team should consider any AT devices and services that are currently needed at home, in school, or in the community; plans should

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	
Page 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT and Transition • Financing AT
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mouse Adapter • WordLogic Predictive Keyboard • UbiDuo Face to Face Communicator
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teleemergency Help System • LampLighter Wireless Alerting Device • Caller IDs • Related Websites

Financing Assistive Technology: Transition from School to Post-Secondary Education

When Lauren graduated high school, her goal was to attend college and focus on becoming a writer. Diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Lauren had limited use of her hand; using the computer keyboard was a challenge. Lauren contacted the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for help and was told it would take five months before an appointment for an evaluation could be arranged. Subsequently, Lauren approached the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF) to see if she could take out a loan to purchase a computer and specialized word prediction

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from front page)

be made to address these needs as soon as possible. The team should also consider whether the device will be needed after graduation. The student’s remaining years in school are the perfect time to learn how to use devices needed for the future.

Students with disabilities will also need to know how to obtain assistive technology after graduation. Because funding sources change as the student gets older, it is important to know who will pay for replacement devices, or other devices/services to meet changing needs in new environments and activities. For post-secondary education, students should know how to communicate their needs to their college’s office that serves students with disabilities. As an employee, the student should let the employer know about his/her needs for AT in the workplace, and understand the role of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in planning to meet those needs. Transition is the time for the individual to think about using AT devices and services (instead of depending on other people) to become more independent. See the following table for examples of tasks that may be currently performed by a family member, friend, teacher, or aide, but COULD be done more independently with AT.

TASK	Barrier	Current approach	AT device	Continuing need?
Waking up	Cannot hear alarm clock	Family member wakes him/her	Sonic Boom Alarm Clock	yes—daily living
Medication	Cannot accurately self-administer multiple medications	Parent sets out each dosage	Medication reminder system, e.g. MedReady	yes—daily living
Taking notes in class	Cannot write quickly or legibly	Photocopies classmate’s notes	AlphaSmart NEO or Dana	yes—college
Written assignments	Cannot use his/her hands	Dictates to someone	Dragon Naturally Speaking	yes—college
Reading	Cannot read print (vision disability)	Aide or family member reads	ZoomText	yes—employment
Reading	Cannot read print (intellectual disability)	Aide reads	Reading machine, e.g. Sara Scan and Read	yes—employment
Telecommunication	Cannot hold telephone handset	Family member holds handset	Cordless headset	yes—employment
Communication	Is understood by familiar listeners only	Family member interprets	AAC device	yes—all areas

Financing Assistive Technology: Transition from School to Post-Secondary Education

software to ease the typing process. Lauren had never taken out a loan before but the PATF felt that her need was great and that taking out a loan would help Lauren build good credit. Lauren is currently a successful student who uses assistive technology every day. Although Lauren decided that access to assistive technology was necessary only after her graduation, the scope of opportunities for achieving life goals does broaden

greatly when AT is combined with school-aged transition planning. Careful planning that includes appropriate AT recommendations improves a student’s functional achievement and helps assure a smooth transition from school to post-school activities. PA waiver funding, the Variety Club, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation are some of the resources available to fund AT.

Assistive technology includes any device that

Assistive Mouse Adapter

This adapter is designed for use by individuals with hand tremors and helps eliminate excess movement of the mouse cursor and extra clicks. It filters out unintentional movements so the cursor moves more smoothly and has improved accuracy. The device is plugged in between the computer and the mouse; no additional software is required.



Inventory code: HW-SECAM; Cost: \$184;
Montrose Secam Limited,
www.montrosesecam.com

WordLogic Predictive Keyboard



This software, conveniently loaded on a USB flash drive, is a portable word prediction on-screen keyboard that can be plugged into almost any computer that uses Windows 2000 or XP and works with any software application where text entry is needed. The keyboard can be customized, and as the software is used, it learns frequently used words and phrases. Custom words, phrases, names and other vocabulary can be added into a personal dictionary. Some other features include smart web searching and spell checking alert.

Inventory code: CA-SW-LOGIC; Cost: \$100; WordLogic Corporation, 866-967-3564, www.wordlogic.com



UbiDuo Face-to-Face Communicator

Designed to enable people who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate with anyone without the services of an additional interpreter, this device consists of two portable, wireless, battery-powered keyboards with displays that can interface with each other at a distance of up to 500 feet. As one person types on the keyboard, the text simultaneously appears on the screen and on the other person's screen. The screen angle can be adjusted to up to a 45-degree angle for easy viewing, and the font size can be adjusted to a larger size. Some additional features include the ability to chat with up to four people, a USB port for saving

conversations to a computer, Emoticons to convey emotions as you type, a pre-recorded greeting option, and adjustable brightness and contrast. Both terminals of the UbiDuo hook together on a hinge and fold easily for storage in a carrying case.

Inventory code: HW-UBIDUO; Cost: approximately \$2,000; sComm, 866-505-7008, www.scommonline.com

(Continued from front page)

helps a person with a disability achieve a more independent and productive life. AT can include a wide array of items but is not limited to, screen readers, lowered floors for cars and vans, ramps, grab bars and wider doorways for homes, hearing and vision aids, scooters, and computers with special software and/or hardware. The PATF is a non-profit organization that provides low-interest loans to people with disabilities and older

Pennsylvanians so that they can buy the assistive technology devices and services they need.

This article was contributed by the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation. Contact the PATF toll free at 888-744-1938 (voice/TTY) or by calling 484-674-0506 for information about PATF or other possible funding sources. For more information, email patf@patf.us or visit www.patf.us.

Telemergency Help System

This is an emergency alert system that connects to an existing residential phone line. It includes a base unit, a wireless pendant, and a phone cord. To activate, the user presses a button on either the pendant or the base unit marked "paramedic," "police" or "fire department." The automatic dialer then calls up to five stored emergency contact numbers and plays a custom recorded message to alert the person who answers the call. The auto-dialer cycles through the programmed numbers for up to 15 minutes or until a contact responds by pressing the appropriate button. The called party can also activate the unit's speakerphone to verbally communicate with the caller and monitor the situation. The range for the wireless transmitter pendant is approximately 140 feet. This device does not require subscription service.



Inventory code: TL-HELP; Cost: \$90; Telemergency, Ltd., 631-467-6700, www.telemergency300.com



LampLighter Wireless Alerting Device

A signaler device created for individuals who are hard of hearing, this palm-sized wireless system flashes the light of the lamp in a

distinctive pattern for each alert received. The device features on/off buttons, and indicates if the lamp is disconnected, turned off, or has a burned out bulb. A telephone can be plugged directly into the LampLighter for instant visual notification of an incoming call. It is compatible with all Silent Call transmitters and has a wireless range of up to 100 feet. When borrowing this device from the Lending Library, one transmitter is included.

Inventory code: TL-ALERT; Cost: \$206; Silent Call Communications, 800-572-5227, www.silentcall.com

Caller IDs

This kit contains four different caller IDs. The Jumbo Caller ID and Call Waiting ID have large backlit screens to display caller's telephone number or name, date and time. The Basic Talking Caller ID has no visual display but announces the incoming telephone number when the phone rings or indicates if the caller's number is blocked or unknown. The Name Announcement Talking Caller ID with Call Waiting announces the caller's name and number and displays the name, number, date and time of the call. The Large Display Caller ID shows (1/2-inch tall type) the caller's name and number, time and date, and the total number of calls.



Inventory Code: TL-CALLID; Cost: \$178. Devices may also be borrowed individually. Kit is listed online in Lending Library Equipment catalog with links to more information about individual devices. *Please note: Caller ID and Call Waiting options are only available if the borrower subscribes to those services through his/her local telephone company.*

RELATED WEBSITES

www.nichcy.org/pubs/transum/ts10txt.htm –

"Transition Planning: A Team Effort" is a publication of the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities.

www.ncset.org – The website for the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition contains a variety of relevant publications and links to other resources on transition.

www.health.state.pa.us/transitionchecklist –The

Transition Health Care Checklist details many of the activities that a young adult should be able to do or know about. For a copy of the "Assistive Technology Companion Guide" to the Transition Health Care Checklist, please email piat@temple.edu.

PENNSYLVANIA'S ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LENDING LIBRARY

Call toll-free: 877-PA AT LEND (VOICE/TTY)

EMAIL: atlend@temple.edu

WEB: www.disabilities.temple.edu/atlend

AT FOCUS—EDITOR: Sandra McNally

EMAIL: smcnally@temple.edu

TEL. 215-204-3370

PA's Assistive Technology Lending Library is funded by the Commonwealth of PA, with partial support from the U.S. Dept. of Education (through PA's Initiative on Assistive Technology) and through the contributions of AT vendors, manufacturers, and users of the Lending Library.

available in alternate formats by request

