



a publication of the  
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center

# assistive technology *facts*

## About Assistive Technology

*J*ordan, a sixth grader with learning disabilities, uses a calculator in his math classes. This piece of “assistive technology” (AT) has changed math from a nightmare to a fun and productive time.

### **What is assistive technology?**

Assistive technology—called AT—is any device or service that helps a person be more independent at home, at work, at school or at play.

Children and adults with any type of disability can use AT to make the most of their abilities and to do things more quickly and easily.

### **Who can use AT?**

AT can benefit our daily lives. Many of us use calculators to balance our checkbooks or wear hearing aids to improve our hearing. Maybe we use a wheelchair or a communication device or we might take a computer course.

For children with disabilities, using assistive technology can bridge the gap between frustration and success.

### **What are AT devices?**

Assistive technology includes everything from a pencil grip to sophisticated wheelchairs, computers and communication devices.

AT devices can be purchased or rented. They can also be modified or created.

### **Examples of AT devices**

- a tape recorder or a computer for a child who has difficulty writing notes in class because of a physical or learning disability
- a voice output device for a child who has difficulty speaking
- a hearing aid for a child who has a hearing impairment
- word prediction software for a student with learning disabilities
- a battery-operated toy modified to include a large, easy-to-use switch
- adapted skis that enable a child to participate in a school recreation program

### **What are AT services?**

An AT service can help children select and make the most of their assistive technology device.

With AT services many children are able to take full advantage of their preschool or classroom experiences.

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To order copies of this fact sheet, or to learn more about VPIC's materials and services, contact the Vermont Parent Information Center (VPIC), 600 Blair Park, Suite 301, Williston, VT 05495, (802) 876-5315 (v/tty) or toll free 1 (800) 639-7170. You can also contact us via e-mail at [vpic@vtpic.com](mailto:vpic@vtpic.com). And don't forget to visit our website at [www.vtpic.com](http://www.vtpic.com).

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### **Examples of AT services**

- evaluation by a speech and language pathologist to see how a student would benefit from an augmentative communication device
- modification of a restroom to make it accessible
- help getting the most out of an electronic communication device to talk with friends
- instruction for a student and his family and teachers in the use of a large-type viewer for doing school work
- arranging for the repair of an electric wheelchair

### **Can a child take AT devices home?**

Generally, yes. If the school paid for the AT device, use at home or in the community must be tied to the education needs of the student, such as completing homework or reinforcing skills. If the AT was paid for by Medicaid or private insurance, then it is the property of the student and its use cannot be restricted.

### **What happens when a child finishes school?**

A child's need for AT should be discussed as part of his or her transition from school to college, technical school, employment or independent or supported living situations. This discussion should include identification of other possible funding sources for AT.

If the AT device is needed for employment, it is possible that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services will purchase the equipment from the school.

### **Resources**

Vermont Parent Information Center  
*help for families advocating for AT*  
(802) 876-5315 (v/tty) • (800) 639-7170  
[vpic@vtpic.com](mailto:vpic@vtpic.com) • [www.vtpic.com](http://www.vtpic.com)

Disability Law Project  
*legal support for getting AT*  
(800) 747-5022 *Burlington/Champlain Valley*

(800) 789-4195 *Central Vermont*  
(800) 769-7459 *Rutland Area*  
(800) 769-6728 *Northeast Kingdom*  
(800) 769-9164 *Southern Vermont*  
All phones (v/tty).

Association for Cerebral Palsy  
*help with AT issues for families and students with physical disabilities*  
(800) 639-1930 *Main office*  
(802) 257-2237 *Southern Vermont*  
(802) 723-6303 *Northern Vermont*

Austine Evaluation Center  
*assistive learning devices for the deaf and hard of hearing*  
130 Austine Dr., Ste. 210 • Brattleboro, VT 05301 • (802) 254-3922  
[www.state.vt.us/schools/aus](http://www.state.vt.us/schools/aus)

Children with Special Health Needs  
*information on AT devices and funding*  
(800) 660-4427  
[www.state.vt.us/health/hi/cshn/cshn.htm](http://www.state.vt.us/health/hi/cshn/cshn.htm)

Vermont Assistive Technology Project  
*"How Do I Pay For It? A Guide to Funding Assistive Technology Equipment" gives a complete overview of AT funding sources.*  
(802) 241-2620 (v/tty)  
[www.dad.state.vt.us/atpl](http://www.dad.state.vt.us/atpl)

Vermont Adaptive Equipment Loan Fund  
*Vermont Development Credit Union AT funding*  
(802) 865-3404  
[www.vdcu.org](http://www.vdcu.org)

Vermont Center for Independent Living  
*information on AT devices and funding*  
(800) 639-1522  
[www.vcil.org](http://www.vcil.org)

### **Titles in VPIC's Assistive Technology (AT) Series**

Facts About AT • AT Evaluations • AT & the IEP • AT & the IFSP • AT & Section 504 • Funding AT • Funding AT Through Medicaid • Funding AT Through Private Insurance