Assistive Technology

IM4Q Retreat 2015

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What We Hope You Will Learn Today

- AT means devices AND services
- It's not all "high tech"
- People with intellectual disabilities can benefit from AT – not just people with physical disabilities
- AT includes devices for communication (AAC)
- AAC includes AT, but also includes ways of communicating without devices
- Where to go for more information and assistance

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

Devices

- Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capacities of an individual with a disability.
- You may also hear the terms adaptive appliance; durable medical equipment; accessibility modifications; etc.
The Scope of Assistive Technology Devices

- Communication
- Seating and Positioning
- Power Mobility
- Manual Mobility
- Mobility Aids
- Assistive Listening
- Vehicle Modification
- Leisure/Recreation
- Worksite Modification
- Home Modification
- Learning Aids
- Environmental Controls
- Vision Aids
- Self Care/activities of daily living (ADL)

AT Devices May Be...

- Low tech; “do it yourself”
- Mid tech
- High tech
- Specialized
- Generic
- Adapted
What is Assistive Technology?

Services

- Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device
AT Services

- Evaluation
- Helping with the acquisition of devices (funding assistance, rentals, etc.)
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing of AT devices
- Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with AT devices
- Training or technical assistance for the user and his/her family or others who support the user
- Training or technical assistance for professionals in the use of AT devices

AT helps you do the things you want to do!

- What does the individual need to be able to do that is difficult or impossible to do independently at this time? (functional area)
- Current abilities related to this functional area
- Any special considerations about the task or the environment in which the task is done?

Is there AT that can help?

- I get upset when I don't know what I'm supposed to do next.
- I want to call my sister at her office, but I can't remember the number.
- I want to use the vending machine but I don't know how to count out money.
- I'm color blind but I want to dress "smartly".
Is there AT that can help?

- The bus driver never understands what I'm trying to say when I say the stop I need.
- When I'm in my wheelchair, I can't reach the light switch.
- It's hard for me to use both hands when I cut my meat.
- I can't read, but I like to cook!
Is there AT that can help?

What services are needed with these devices?

Is there AT that can help?

- The remote control has too many buttons and I get confused.
- I want to use the computer but the size of the letters is too small.
- I have a hard time hearing the TV.
- I can be pretty messy when I'm eating.
Is there AT that can help?

Office

What services are needed with these devices?

Office

Everyday, children and adults with developmental disabilities who cannot communicate face social and educational isolation as well as significant frustration because they are unable to communicate their necessities, desires, knowledge and emotions to their parents, siblings, extended family, caregivers, peers, colleagues, and teachers.

--Mary Ann Romski, 2004
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Refers to all communication that supplements or "augments" speech (including writing, signs and gestures)
- May be employed to a greater or lesser extent, with different partners, and/or in different contexts
- May consist of "specialized" as well as "typical" strategies and modalities

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) includes:

- "low tech" devices like communication boards or books
- "high tech" electronic devices that produce speech (SGDs) or written output; may be dedicated, generic, or adapted (e.g. iPad+app)
- "no tech" strategies like eye gaze
- Formal approaches like American Sign Language
- Nonstandard approaches like individualized gestures

But...

- It's not all about the "stuff"
- Devices – and services!
- AAC answers the question, "HOW" can I communicate – but does not address WHY, to WHO, about WHAT, etc.
- AAC devices adds a level of additional work for users and partners – an important but not necessarily EASY solution! Not a magic bullet!
Your Turn!

- Doohickeys, Thing-a-ma-bobs, and Whatchamacallits
- What is it?
- How much does it cost?
- How does it help?
- What would you call it?
- Where do you get it?
- Where in the ISP might it be listed/described?

To learn more...

- Explore the website of Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library, disabilities.temple.edu/attend
- Ask for a demonstration, ATdemo@temple.edu
- Borrow one or more devices
- Get an assessment from a qualified SLP, ATP, or other experienced AT professional
- Visit manufacturers' websites for online training

The End