ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES & THEIR FAMILIES: RIGHTS AND DEFINITIONS

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AS AN EARLY INTERVENTION/SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE

Assistive Technology should be considered for all young children eligible for services in Part C and Part B (619) programs. Assistive technology, which includes devices and services, is one of the services required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. Children may not be excluded from consideration for assistive technology for any reason (e.g., type of disability, age, cost, lowered expectations, or administrative concerns).

PARENT RIGHTS

Parents are an integral part of the process for determining the needs of their child, including the need for assistive technology. Parental participation is vital for the assessment, selection, implementation, reporting, and maintenance associated with their child's use of assistive technology. Parents must be included as part of the team that develops the Individual Family Service Plan/Individualized Education Program (IFSP/IEP). If the family and the IFSP/IEP team do not agree on the proposed assistive technology, the family may share its concerns with the program through many informal steps. However, if informal steps do not satisfy the concerns, a family can take other, more formal steps, including a written complaint, mediation, and/or a hearing.

DEFINITION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEVICES AND SERVICES

Assistive technology in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act includes both *assistive technology devices* and *assistive technology services*.

Assistive technology devices covered under IDEA, 2004

An *assistive technology device* means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device (IDEA 2004, Sec.602(1)A; 34CFR §.300.5).

Assistive technology devices not covered under IDEA

- Devices provided to meet the medical, daily living, or life-sustaining needs of a child.
- Devices that are not specifically designed to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.
- A device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device.

AT for children birth to 3 in Early Intervention programs must serve a developmental purpose; while AT for preschool children with a disability/delay services supports developmental or learning outcomes. AT is used to support a child's participation in everyday routines and activities- where learning opportunities exist. All children who are eligible to receive special education or early intervention services are also eligible to receive assistive technology, if it is included as part of their IEP/IFSP

Assistive technology services means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Assistive technology services include:

- evaluation of the needs of such child, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by such child;
- selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;
- coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
- training of child and family; and
- training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education and rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of such child (IDEA 2004).

AT services can be provided by any member of the team. Training in the selection and use of AT with young children can be obtained from many sources. For more complex devices, more intensive training may be required for knowledge and skills in selecting, adapting, and customizing a particular device.

Determining whether a piece of equipment meets the definition of assistive technology under IDEA must occur on an individual basis and be based on the child's needs, the family's concerns, and the IFSP/IEP goals/outcomes. Some devices might be therapeutic or make caring for the child easier or safer but do not contribute to enhancing or maintaining the child's functional capabilities. Consequently, these may not be AT but may be appropriate to acquire these devices through other medical channels.

Resources

- Tots n Tech Research Institute http://tnt.asu.edu/
- Connecticut Assisitve Technology Guidelines http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2663&q=334846

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Cooperative Agreement - H327L120003.

www.letsparticipate.org | letsparticipate@fhi360.org