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# ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY INTERVENTION: A Family Guide

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## **What is Assistive Technology, or AT, in Early Intervention?**

AT refers to tools and/or adapting a child's environment in order to support his/her ability to participate actively in the home, childcare program, or other community settings. This may include the ability to play successfully with toys and other children, communicate needs and ideas, make choices, and move independently. AT includes both services and devices. Devices generally fall in to two categories; 1) low-tech, which includes simple, no-cost or low-cost devices and, 2) high-tech, which includes more complex, higher cost devices. Low-tech items might include knobs on a puzzle or foam on a spoon handle to build it up. High-tech items might include a Go Talk communicator or a Rifton corner chair.

## **Who Qualifies for AT in Colorado?**

A child must live in Colorado, be within the age range of birth through two (under three years of age), and be eligible for the system of early intervention supports and services through Early Intervention Colorado. They must have an IFSP developed which documents AT as a service needed to meet the individualized outcomes of the child. For more information, visit <http://www.eicolorado.org/> or call 1-888-777-4041.

## **How will I know what kind of AT my child needs?**

Once eligibility for early intervention services is determined, the team, consisting of the parents, the professionals working with the child, and any others the family would like to include, develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Part of this planning process is to make decisions



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about whether the child needs assistive technology to access developmental learning opportunities throughout their day. This determination is based upon assessment information, the child's individual abilities and needs, the desired outcomes of the family and the strategies necessary to make progress toward those outcomes.

If the initial IFSP team does not feel they have the expertise needed to make this determination, a professional with additional training in AT may need to provide further evaluation (see "Where can I find more info" below). If an evaluation for assistive technology is determined to be needed, the child should be evaluated in his or her natural environment, if possible, in order to observe how they interact with people and places throughout the day. Based on this evaluation, the IFSP team will decide if assistive technology is needed.

### **Does AT have to be included on the IFSP?**

If AT is a needed service to implement the strategies on the child's IFSP, then **AT must be documented** as a service on the supports & services page of the IFSP. The name and discipline of the provider of assistive technology should be listed on the IDSP any time their services are being used, whether it is the primary provider or someone with advance training in AT. For more detailed information about documentation of AT on the IFSP see: [http://techfortykes.org/files/TA\\_Brief.pdf](http://techfortykes.org/files/TA_Brief.pdf)

### **Who will pay for an AT device?**

Funding of AT services and devices follows the same funding guidelines as all other available early intervention services in Colorado. For more information on this topic, please read "A Family Guide: Funding Early Intervention Services" on the EI Colorado web site at [http://www.eicolorado.org/Files/Coordinated%20System%20of%20Payment\\_Family%20Guide\\_May09Revisions.pdf](http://www.eicolorado.org/Files/Coordinated%20System%20of%20Payment_Family%20Guide_May09Revisions.pdf)

### **If my child gets an AT device, who will teach us how to use it?**



Your child's service provider can provide help and support to you and other caregivers by teaching you how to help your child learn to use his/her AT device effectively. Service providers with advanced training in AT can be brought in to provide consultation and referrals if needed.

## **What should I do if I feel the device is not a good fit for my child?**

Evaluation by a qualified professional with experience in AT is the first step to assuring a proper match between an AT device and the child and family using it. Trialing equipment from the Loan Bank prior to purchasing a device is also a good way to assure a proper fit with the child. Then, if necessary, evaluation should be followed by training on training and troubleshooting for the child, the family, and the primary provider.

If, after all this, the device still does not feel like a good fit, you should not hesitate to let your service provider know how you feel about the chosen device. Family involvement is an essential component of the decision-making for AT. Service providers will work with your family to find the best method for choosing appropriate assistive technology for your child and your family.

## **What do I do if the AT breaks?**

Your service coordinator and early intervention provider will work with you to help repair or replace the device. As with any other service on an IFSP, multiple funding sources will be considered for repair or replacement of the device. Under IDEA Part C, appropriate funding to repair or replace the AT devices must be accessed.

## **What do I need to know when transitioning my child's AT device to preschool?**

The use, maintenance and training required to support the child's use of the AT device in the new setting should be discussed as part of the transition planning process and documented on the IFSP.



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## \*Where can I find more info about AT devices and services?

*Assistive Technology Partners*  
303-315-1287

<http://www.assistivetechologypartners.org>

*Early Intervention Colorado*  
1-888-777-4041

<http://www.eicolorado.org>



### For more information contact:

Assistive Technology Partners  
601 East 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 130  
Denver, CO 80203

303.315.1280 office  
303.837.1208 fax  
800.255.3477 toll free

[generalinfo@at-partners.org](mailto:generalinfo@at-partners.org)

[www.assistivetechologypartners.org](http://www.assistivetechologypartners.org)

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Fast Facts made possible by NIDRR Grant #H224A40014