Updating Medicaid Benefit Coverage Standards

Becky Breaux, Leslie McLachlan and Kelly Waugh, faculty at Assistive Technology Partners (ATP), were contracted by The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (Colorado Medicaid) to develop Benefit Coverage Standards (BCS) in the area of wheelchairs and related equipment. Colorado Medicaid covers wheelchairs and related seating equipment as a Durable Medical Equipment (DME) benefit under the Colorado Medicaid program.

Colorado Medicaid utilizes a process called the Benefits Collaborative to review and update BCS that define the appropriate amount, duration and scope of Colorado Medicaid's covered services, as required by both state and federal law. ATP developed BCS drafts on coverage criteria and limitations for manual wheelchairs, powered mobility devices, wheelchair operations and accessories, and wheelchair seating equipment. ATP also generated a final report summarizing medical literature, expert and stakeholders input and recommendations.

The development of benefit coverage standards for durable medical equipment requires an extensive review and synthesis of the medical literature, as well as an analysis of current standards of practice and evidence-based guidelines - specifically those with mobility impairment - is a necessity.

Colorado Medicaid will then use these drafts and final report to implement a final BCS through the Benefits Collaborative Process for manual wheelchairs, power wheelchairs, wheelchair options and accessories and wheelchair seating equipment.
CLINIC SPOTLIGHT

Terry Has Something to Say

Terry Brown’s speech is difficult to understand for someone who is unfamiliar with him. He has been coming to Assistive Technology Partners regularly for the past four years to learn how to use an Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) device that was recommended for him by ATP clinician Christina Perkins, MA, CCC-SLP. The AAC device helps Terry convey his thoughts out loud by touching buttons on the machine. He comes every other week, practices regularly, and has learned how to operate this complex device because, like everyone else, Terry has something to say.

Terry will be 50 years old this month. When he was just shy of 2 years old, he was diagnosed with viral encephalitis that was transmitted by an insect bite. At that time, he was a typically developing toddler who developed an illness that was severe enough that the doctors were guarded in their prognosis. In the event that he were to survive, the neurological damage caused by the infection was predicted to be so serious that he would need institutional care. His mother, Elva Lewis, decided to take Terry home and proceeded to educate herself in the area of advocacy for children with disabilities. Elva kept Terry at home and her expectations of him were nothing short of Terry working hard and doing his best. Meeting him, it is clear that his mother saw potential in him and did all she could to give him the tools he needed to succeed.

Special education at that time was not as well established as it is today. Mainstreaming students with disabilities into the general education setting was new and, like most new movements, lacked programming and the internal training needed to provide a cohesive educational experience for students. Terry was fortunate to attend special programs from Kindergarten through elementary school. However, middle school brought years of inequality in education to the forefront of Elva’s awareness. Terry graduated with the first graduating class of Overland Trailblazers in 1982. Also accepting her high school diploma that same day was another Trailblazer, Aleaza Goldberg, who would, one day become his AAC specialist at Assistive Technology Partners.

Throughout the years, Terry has received Speech/Language Pathology services in the school and privately to improve his speech intelligibility. Though he worked hard, his speech remained significantly impaired. Terry has never given up trying to communicate, but interactions when his speech was not understood were embarrassing for both Terry and the person with whom he was trying to communicate. As a result, Terry has experienced social, vocational and emotional barriers that left permanent scars and changed the “carefree bundle of joy” to a guarded and quiet person. Despite these challenges, his goal is to be a contributing and independent citizen and to help others. Through various programs, Terry has always had gainful employment. He was a friendly face at Pizza Hut and Good Times. He was the helpful hand at Bally Total Fitness; and volunteered at animal shelters and shelters for the homeless. Successful communication is, of course critical in these settings, but most recently, Terry lost his job because a new manager was unable to understand his speech.

Terry was referred to Assistive Technology Partners to be assessed for alternative means for communication that might augment his verbal speech. When Terry was initially seen it was unclear which device would work best for him. He was 45 years old, his literacy skills were limited and he had no experience with AAC prior to the evaluation. Given the opportunity to trial several devices, Terry chose the device with “the most words.” A PRC Vantage Lite was recommended for him and the long process of training began with his former high school classmate, Aleaza Goldberg, MA, CCC-SLP.

It has taken four years for Terry to learn the language program on this AAC device, which can be compared to learning a second language. Unity 84 Sequenced is a language program made up of 84 icons.

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“Terry” continued

differently, so can the rest of the world.

Terry is currently looking for a new job. The AAC device that is helping Terry communicate is also the mechanism on which he is writing his cover letter and resume. With assistance, Terry recently composed text, that when printed on a professional card, will be used as a communication strategy when meeting new people.

“My speech is not that easy to understand, I want to help you understand me better. I use my device to talk to you. It takes me a little while to talk with my communication device. Please wait. I understand you. Thank you for helping me talk to you.”

Using the AAC device has improved Terry’s confidence in himself and, with the courage of a Trailblazer, Terry can say what he wants, when he wants to say it and it is worth the wait.

Upcoming Trainings - Join Us

Assistive Technology Partners has a great line up of trainings for you to choose from over the coming months. For more information visit the Upcoming Events page under the Events section of our website - www.assistivetechnologypartners.org. From there you can download informational brochures and register online.

- **Empower Student Success with the iPad: Real World Examples** - Presented by Jim Sandstrum, MA, CCC-SLP and Hosted at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus with distance locations in Colorado Springs, Grand Junction and Lamar on October 7.

- **Wheelchair Seating for Postural Control and Function** - Presented by Kelly Waugh, PT, MAPT, ATP and Hosted at Assistive Technology Partners in Denver on April 24, 25 & 26, 2014.

- **Dragon NaturallySpeaking for Beginners** - Presented by Denice Roberts, MEd and Hosted at STRIVE in Grand Junction. This training is currently being rescheduled. The new date and time will be posted soon.

To keep up to date on the latest ATP trainings join our electronic mailing list. Please contact elizabeth.woodruff@ucdenver.edu to be added to the list.

Have you 'liked' ATP on Facebook yet? ATP’s facebook page is full of up to date information on upcoming trainings, current legislation, new and improved gadgets and links to other assistive technology and disability service providers in Colorado and around the nation. Like us today!
Lindsey Erickson

Lindsey first came to ATP as a Metropolitan State University of Denver, Communication Disorders student intern in January of 2013. During her internship, she was instrumental in selecting and developing electronic forms to increase the efficiency of AAC documentation practices in our clinic. Her initial work was met with terrific enthusiasm from the therapists who were eager to continue revising and improving upon Lindsey’s early work. After her internship ended, Lindsey continued for 2 months in a volunteer capacity giving countless hours to revise, edit and improve upon the e-forms. Thank you Lindsey!

Taking Aim at Literacy Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

This past summer, the SWAAAC program hosted a two day training event to address professional development in the area of Augmentative Alternative Communication. Two of the featured workshops specifically addressed development of literacy skills for students with complex communication needs. In order to build upon the techniques/strategies and new knowledge gained during the symposium, the SWAAAC program is offering a semester long class designed to help educators and therapists systematically implement that knowledge and collect the data necessary to monitor and report outcomes. This fall class, delivered entirely via the web, will meet in a virtual classroom several times a month for lively discussions of intervention plans, review of the evidence base, to share resources, and document outcomes.

Join us for the Application and Independent Study in Literacy Outcomes course. A two hour graduate credit option is also available through Adams State College.

Plan on attending if you have ideas and energy around integrating workshop information into practice and are ready to apply what you learned at the Summer Symposium.

For more information, registration and/or a complete class syllabus, please contact Christina Perkins at christina.perkins@ucdenver.edu or 303.315.1278. Registration ends August 26th!

Assistive Technology Awareness Week - October 6-12, 2013

Governor Hickenlooper has proclaimed October 6-12, 2013 as Assistive Technology Awareness Week in Colorado. Organizations who serve people with disabilities are gearing up to remind people about the tools and resources that are available to improve the quality of an individual’s life. AT comes in many shapes and forms and can be as simple as hearing aids, a talking alarm clock, knee braces or manual and power wheelchairs, or as sophisticated as voice-activated computer system and stair climbing wheelchairs. AT tools can assist in dressing or cooking as well as helping people stay in communication with friends and family through specially adapted electronic devices such as computers or the telephone. Contact one of Colorado’s Assistive Technology Program sites to find opportunities in your area to learn more about AT. Or if you are already an expert in the field, find a way to raise awareness about AT with colleagues, family and friends.

- **AT for Independence and Self-Sufficiency** - October 7, 11am-1pm and 6pm-8pm, Valley View Hospital, Glenwood Springs.
- **Prentke Romich Company Trainings: Introduction to Unity & Overview of Basic Programming for all PRC Devices** - October 9, 2013. 9am-12pm and 1pm-4pm, Assistive Technology Partners, 601 East 18th Avenue, Suite 130, Denver.
- **Assistive Technology Partners Open House and Student Open House** - October 10, 2013. More details coming soon!
- **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Open House** - October 11th, 10am-2pm, 2211 West Evans Building A, Denver.

To keep up to date on all the 2013 AT Events visit the Upcoming Events page on our website. Or visit the Assistive Technology Partners facebook page - www.facebook.com/AssistiveTechnologyPartners.
6th Annual Déjà Vu Rendezvous a Success!

Assistive Technology Partners (ATP) is deeply grateful for the ongoing support from the Colorado construction industry’s annual Déjà vu Rendezvous event. Held May 17, 2013, this sixth event offered fabulous food catered by Gourmet Fine Catering and a chance to unite past and current members of the Colorado construction community while supporting a worthwhile cause. Proceeds help ATP meet our mission for persons with cognitive, sensory, and/or physical disabilities to reach their highest potential at home, school, work and play through the addition of appropriate assistive technologies to their lives. The event was hosted at Denver’s Mile High Station and received support of over $200,000.

The event has grown tremendously since its inception five years ago. Created by retired Trautman & Shreve CEO, Bill Caile, the event is unique in its format. Déjà vu Rendezvous had more than 100 event sponsors. ICON Venue Group, senior vice president, Mike Harms, chaired the planning committee of over fifteen construction industry leaders. Cathy Bodine, executive director of ATP, indicated, “We are so grateful to the local construction companies and our generous sponsors for choosing ATP to benefit from such a wonderful annual event.” Funds will be used to support persons with disabilities, their families and others who are unable to afford services.

“This event was first envisioned as a way to annually celebrate the fantastic industry and relationships we have all established,” said Harms. “It has grown beyond our wildest imaginations and we will continue to set our sights higher. The ultimate reward is that we are raising money for such a great cause.

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Please visit the Deja Vu website for a full list of sponsors and to view pictures from the event - dejavu-rendezvous.org

### AT Expo Connects People with Solutions

On June 2, over 200 attendees joined us at The Conference Center at Adams 12 in Thornton, for ATPs second annual Assistive Technology Expo. The 2013 AT Expo: Technology for Living & Learning, featured over 50 vendors showcasing the latest innovations in hardware, software, educational materials, AT devices and solutions for home, school, work and play. Colorado organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities or to those who are experiencing problems associated with aging were also present.

The AT Expo Planning Committee would love to get your feedback. Please fill out our short AT Expo Evaluation with comments or suggestions.
Future Medical Professionals Enjoyed Internships at ATP

This past summer, ATP worked closely with the University of Colorado Denver, Anschutz Medical Campus, Office of Diversity and Inclusion and their Undergraduate Pre-Health Program (UPP) to provide summer internships for undergraduate students interested in pursuing healthcare careers. Through summer internships, ATP offers a unique opportunity for these students to learn about assistive technology (AT) and its potential for individuals with disabilities. Often, AT is a field that is largely neglected in medical training. Consequently, providing an enriching internship early in a student’s educational career offers long term benefits to both the student and their future medical patients with disabilities.

From May to August, 2013, ATP worked closely with three undergraduate pre-health students, Megan, Zack and Iman. These three students had opportunities to observe in the clinic, help with research and assist in the day-to-day operations of ATP. In addition, the UPP fellows attended 2 weeks of educational training at CU Denver. Each of the students wrote a short paragraph summarizing their experience at ATP this summer.

My time at ATP taught me things I could have learned nowhere else. The work that ATP does is no easy task, but is essential for our community and our world. Yet the truly remarkable part of ATP is the people, clinicians and caretakers alike, who devote not just their careers, but their lives, to helping those with disabilities. Never have I experienced a group more compassionate and determined to help others. And, as I continue on my journey to become a doctor, I hope that I can show even a fraction of the kindness that I have experienced from the incredible people within the offices of ATP. Thank you, all, for letting me be a part of it. ~Zack

I came into this summer internship not knowing exactly what to expect. I was unaware of disabilities like many others, but my time spent at ATP has opened my eyes and mind to people with disabilities, who should receive attention and love from us all. I learned to believe in miracles and would like to be a part of a change for the gray area of mental health and disabilities because it is much needed and it is time we address this gray area. I would like to thank the ATP staff for this enlightening experience, and will remember everything I have learned at ATP and will keep it in a special place in my heart as I continue my journey. ~Iman

Assistive Technology Partners has literally changed my life. I never realized the vast spectrum of disabilities, and more importantly, I never realized how amazing and resilient the people who have them are. Shadowing in this facility has been such a unique experienced in that I have been able to observe people who you do not typically see in an ordinary clinic. Even more phenomenal was to see their lives transformed by the use of assistive technology. Watching the clinicians work so well with the patients was a great learning experience. They connected so well with everyone that came into the clinic, and it gave me some excellent insight on how to work with all types of patients. The compassion all of the employees embodied was inspiring and really convinced me that health care is the field I am going to pursue. I am very grateful for the opportunity I had over the summer, and working there has changed my perspective on not only how precious and fragile life is, but that medicine and technology have the incredible power of truly making a difference in someone’s life. ~Megan

Our team at ATP is so grateful for the opportunity to work with these impressive students this summer and for their positive attitudes and passion for helping people. They reminded us why we do what we do.