



TECH FOR TYKES

A Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE)
Early Childhood Program

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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

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

Assistive Technology, or AT, refers to devices and/or adapting a child's environment in order to support their 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. For young children, AT often means strategies like helping a child to sit by providing support to the child with rolled up towels in the child's high chair or modifying their spoon making the size of the handle bigger, or helping a child feel an object they cannot see by adding texture to the object (usually called "low tech" adaptations or devices). It can also include more complex technology like a communication device or devices like standers or wheelchairs (usually called "high tech" devices).

Who Qualifies for Early Intervention 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.

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

Once eligibility for Early Intervention Colorado is determined, the team, consisting of you, the parents, the professionals involved with your child, and any others that the family would like to be included, develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Part of this planning process is to make decisions about whether your child needs supports in order to participate in routines throughout their day. If the initial IFSP team does not feel they have the expertise needed to make this determination, a professional with additional training in AT (called an AT Consultant) may need to provide further evaluation. If an evaluation for assistive technology is determined to be needed, your 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. The assessment also considers your child's individual abilities and needs, the desired outcomes of your family and the strategies necessary to make progress toward those outcomes.

Based on this evaluation for AT, the IFSP team will decide if assistive technology should be added to the IFSP. AT may be provided by an early intervention provider that is already working with your child, or by someone with advanced training in AT.

What can I expect from the early intervention AT consultant assessment?

- The Consultant will review your child's current strengths and needs, IFSP outcomes, and strategies listed on the IFSP
- He or she will evaluate your child's needs and discuss ways that AT can be helpful
- Research AT strategies or devices that may be helpful for your child/family
- Borrow AT devices from the statewide loan bank that may be tried with your child
- Discuss a referral to a provider with more advanced skills in AT if needed
- Discuss funding issues related to buying an AT device if needed
- Teach your family how to use the AT

Although an AT Consultant may not have expertise in all areas of AT, they can assist with brainstorming possible solutions with the family and other early intervention team members. They can explore changes to your environment to help your child make progress toward the IFSP outcomes or connect you with other resources for AT.

How do I know the device will be 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. Borrowing equipment from the AT Loan Bank for a “trial run” prior to purchasing a device is also a good way to assure a proper fit with your child. Then, if necessary, evaluation should be followed by training on the use and maintenance of the equipment 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 part of the decision-making for AT to ensure that whatever is chosen is a good fit.

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.

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”](#).

What do I need to know when transitioning my child’s AT device to preschool?

The use, maintenance and training required to support your 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. If your child’s device was paid for by your early intervention program, they own the device. You will need to talk to your provider or service coordinator about options for keeping the device.

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

The Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering

303-315-1287

www1.ucdenver.edu/centers/cide

Early Intervention Colorado

1-888-777-4041

<http://www.eicolorado.org>



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