



**DEPARTMENT  
of HEALTH  
and HUMAN  
SERVICES**

**FY 2017 Annual Report to  
Congress on the Assistive  
Technology Act of 1998, as  
Amended**

**Prepared by**

**ADMINISTRATION FOR  
COMMUNITY LIVING**



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT HISTORY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998, AS AMENDED.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>DEVICE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>DEVICE LOAN PROGRAMS .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>DEVICE REUTILIZATION PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>STATE FINANCING.....</i>	<i>13</i>
State Financing – Cash Loan Programs .....	13
Other State Financing Programs that Provide AT .....	14
Other State Financing Programs that Reduce the Cost of AT .....	14
<i>CONSUMER SATISFACTION RATINGS OF STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<b>STATE ACTIVITIES PERFORMANCE MEASURES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Acquisition Performance .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Access Performance.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Training.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Public Awareness.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Information and Assistance.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Technical Assistance.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>INITIATIVES FROM THE FIELD .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Resource Information.....</b>	<b>20</b>

### List of Tables

Table 1: Number of Device Demonstrations by AT Type.....	9
Table 2: Number of Individuals by Type who Participated in Device Demonstrations .....	9
Table 3: Number of Short-term Device Loans by Type of Borrower.....	10
Table 4: Number of Devices Loaned by AT Type .....	11
Table 5: Device Reutilization Summary by AT Type .....	12
Table 6: Number of Recipients, Devices, and Savings by Type of Reutilization Activity .....	13
Table 7: Types and Dollar Amounts of AT Acquired with Financial Loans.....	14
Table 8: Consumer Satisfaction with State-level Activities .....	15
Table 9: Percentage of Technical Assistance provided by Agency Type.....	17

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People with disabilities and older adults use assistive technology (AT) to engage in employment, education, and all aspects of community living. AT can help individuals eat, bathe, read, walk, hear, communicate, and generally live more independent lives. In FY 2017, State and Territory AT programs served over 500,000 individuals by providing AT demonstrations, training, and information and referral, improving such individuals' chances to advance socioeconomically and achieve optimal self-sufficiency and independence.

Section 4 of the *Assistive Technology Act of 1998*, as amended (*AT Act*) authorizes grants to support programs that increase knowledge about, access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities and older Americans. These programs include fifty-six statewide AT programs that provide device demonstrations, device loans, device reutilization, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and assistance with obtaining funding for AT. Statewide AT programs are required by law to collect data on their activities and provide annual progress reports to the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

“State-level” and “state leadership” activities provide a continuum of services that reach a wide variety of individuals and provide access to a broad range of technologies. AT Programs enable individuals with disabilities, their representatives, and others working with them, to make informed decisions about accessing and acquiring technologies. The streamlined process for awareness of and access to AT allows consumers to receive information about a device and become familiar with it through demonstration and short-term device loan programs prior to making a costly purchase. When consumers are ready to acquire a device, the reuse and state financing programs provide an affordable purchasing avenue.

### ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES FLOW: How Consumers Access and Acquire AT Devices

The AT Act authorizes state leadership and state level activities designed to provide an integrated continuum of AT services for people with disabilities and older adults. The service flow begins with the individual learning about AT through public awareness, training and information and assistance; then exploring AT through device demonstration and/or borrowing AT to try-out and make informed decisions about what AT will work best. When the individual has made an informed decision, the individual can acquire AT for little or no cost through reuse programs or, if eligible, through financial loan programs or other financing options available. Each activity within the continuum provides critical access or acquisition to AT.



This report is a compilation of data from these programs for FY 2017, contains information about the state-level and state leadership activities of the statewide AT programs, and highlights anecdotes of consumers maintaining their independence by utilizing various assistive technology through state-level AT activities. It is preceded by an introduction to the purpose of the document and a history of the AT Act and is followed by resource information containing contacts and data on each state AT program.

## FY 2017 AT Program Achievements from State-Level Activities Resulting in Positive Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities

### Device Demonstration Programs

- **80,096 individuals** participated in **49,056 device demonstrations**.
- Projecting a modest \$100 savings realized by just half of the total demonstrations conducted results in national **savings of \$2.4 million**.

### Device Loan Programs

- Over **52,000 AT devices loaned** on a short-term basis to individuals with disabilities, service providers and agencies.
- Using an average savings of \$1,000 per loan with more than one device associated results in national **savings of over \$15 million**.
- Projecting a minimum \$10 per day rental fee for the average loan period of 35 days, results in national **savings of almost \$4.2 million** for devices borrowed.

### Device Reutilization Programs

- Consumers **saved over \$29 million** on nearly **75,000** gently used devices.
- **82%** of recipients indicated that they would not have been able to afford the AT or obtain it from other sources if it were not for the reuse services.

### State Financing

- 853 borrowers obtained financial loans totaling **\$7,665,522** to buy **876 devices**.
- **4,357 recipients** acquired **5,768 devices valued at \$3,836,113** from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources.
- **2,093 recipients** acquired **3,735 AT devices with a savings of \$1,573,345** from other state financing activities.
- **93%** of recipients indicated an AT device could not be obtained without the assistance of the state financing activity.

# ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

## FY 2017 Annual Report to Congress on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as Amended

### INTRODUCTION

The *Assistive Technology Act of 1998*, as amended by Public Law 108-364 (*AT Act of 1998*, as amended, will be referenced in this report as the AT Act or Act) requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services submit to Congress a report on the activities funded under the AT Act. Specifically, the Secretary of Health and Human Services is required to provide annually to Congress: (1) a compilation and summary of the information provided by state Section 4 grantees in annual progress reports to the Department of Health and Human Services; and (2) a summary of state Section 4 State Plan applications and an analysis of the progress of the states in meeting the measurable goals established in state applications under Sec. 4(d)(3) of the AT Act. This document serves as the Report to Congress for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.

This report summarizes data from the fifty-six Section 4 formula funded state AT program grantees, including all 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The term, AT Program, is used to describe all fifty-six Section 4 grantees.

### ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT HISTORY

In 1988, Congress passed the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (P.L. 100-407) (Tech Act) to assist states with identifying and responding to the assistive technology (AT) needs of individuals with disabilities. Competitive grants awarded under the Tech Act were used by states to create systemic changes that improved the availability of assistive technology devices and services. States were provided with flexibility in the design of their programs, and this flexibility continued when the Tech Act was reauthorized in 1994 (P.L. 103-218).

The Tech Act was reauthorized again in 1998 as the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-394; AT Act of 1998). The AT Act of 1998 required states to conduct capacity-building activities that increased the availability of funding for, access to, and provision of, AT devices and services and allowed states to conduct other discretionary activities as well. Title III of the AT Act of 1998 authorized the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) to help individuals with disabilities and their families fund the purchase of AT devices or services.

The AT Act of 1998 was amended in 2004 by P. L. 108-364 (AT Act). The amendments significantly changed the preceding legislation. Rather than focusing the efforts of states on systems-change activities, the AT Act requires states to conduct activities that directly provide individuals with disabilities and others with support to access and acquire AT. The program was changed from a competitive discretionary grant program to a formula state grant program with Section 4 providing formula grants to state AT programs and Section 5 providing formula grants to

### What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

AT is any item, piece of equipment, or system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

(Source: AT Act of 1998, as amended, 29 USC §3002)

protection and advocacy AT programs. As mandated by the 2004 amendments, the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), assumed responsibility for administering programs under the Act as of December 2004. Previously, the Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) administered the Act.

In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) transferred administration of the AT Act to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living (ACL). This data report provides a national summary of Section 4 grantee statewide AT program activities and outcomes for FY 2017.

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998, AS AMENDED**

Section 4 of the AT Act authorizes the formula-based State Grant for AT Program and requires a common set of activities to be provided by all AT programs (with some limited exceptions explained below) to create consistency among grantees. With these grant funds, states develop and maintain statewide AT programs that conduct "state-level" activities and "state leadership" activities. Any funds appropriated above the FY 2004 level (which constitutes the base year amount) are allocated according to a formula that provides a portion of the funds equally to all states and a portion of funds based on the population of a state. Funding levels for FY 2017 for all fifty-six grantees along with other activity data are available from ACL's data analysis and reporting assistance grantee, the Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA).<sup>1</sup>

### **STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES**

State-level activities include the following:

- **State financing activities**, which can be:
  - Systems for the purchase, lease or other acquisition of or payment for AT devices and services (though states may not directly pay for AT devices and services for individuals with disabilities); or
  - Alternative financing systems, such as low-interest loan funds, interest buy-down programs, revolving loan funds, loan guarantees or insurance programs or other mechanisms for the provision of AT devices.<sup>2</sup>
- **Device reutilization programs** that support the exchange, repair, recycle or other reutilization of AT devices.
- **Device loan programs** that provide short-term loans of AT so that individuals can try out devices or fill a temporary need for a device.
- **Device demonstration programs** in which personnel familiar with AT demonstrate a variety of devices and services and provide information about AT vendors, providers and repair services.

### **STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

State leadership activities include

- **Training and technical assistance** comprises the development and dissemination of training materials, conducting training, and providing technical assistance to enhance the AT knowledge, skills and competencies of individuals. Five percent of state leadership funds must be used for training and technical assistance for students with disabilities who are getting ready to move from

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.catada.info/>.

<sup>2</sup> While they possess some similarities, "alternative financing systems," as included under Section 4 state financing activities, need not be the same as those formerly funded under Title III of the AT Act of 1998, which contains many specific statutory requirements.

school to adult life, including employment, post-secondary education, or independent living, and adults who need AT assistance to maintain or transition to community living.

- **Public awareness activities** designed to provide information on the availability, benefits, appropriateness and costs of AT devices and services, including a statewide information and referral system.
- **Coordination and collaboration of activities** among public funders under Title III of the AT Act and private entities responsible for policies, procedures or funding of AT devices and services specifically to provide AT.

All state level and major state leadership activities are described in greater detail in this report.

Section 4(e)(1)(B) of the *AT Act* allows states to opt out of funding a state-level activity if that activity is supported comparably with non-federal funds. Section 4(e)(6) of the Act provides states with the flexibility to carry out only two or three of the state-level activities. States that carry out all four state-level activities may use a maximum of 40 percent of their federal funds for state leadership activities. States that carry out two or three state-level activities may use a maximum of 30 percent of their funds for state leadership activities.

The *AT Act* includes specific data collection requirements for state-level and state leadership activities, state improvement outcomes, leveraged funding, performance measure outcomes and consumer satisfaction. A data collection instrument developed to collect the Section 4(f) required data elements was approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) through October 31, 2017, and was used by all grantees to report FY 2017 annual progress report data summarized in this Report to Congress.

## **A NATIONAL DATA SUMMARY OF STATE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS: FISCAL YEAR 2017**

### **STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES**

#### **DEVICE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS**

Device demonstrations compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices for an individual or small group of individuals (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2011). Device demonstrations allow individuals and groups to make informed choices about an AT device prior to acquiring it. Along with providing demonstrations, AT Programs are required to provide comprehensive information about state and local assistive technology vendors, providers, and repair services.

During the FY 2017 reporting period, all fifty-six AT Programs conducted device demonstrations as part of their state-level activities. State AT Programs classify device demonstration into 10 categories. ‘Daily living’ and ‘mobility, seating’ were the two largest demonstration categories, each comprising 18 percent of all demonstrations. Five additional device categories comprised between 7 percent and 15 percent of all demonstrations (see Table 1). For more information on how AT devices are defined and classified, please visit <https://catada.info/federal-reporting-forms/> and select “Classification of AT devices.”



**Table 1: Number of Device Demonstrations by AT Type**

Type of AT Device	Number of Demos	Percent
Daily living	8,606	18%
Mobility, seating	8,498	18%
Speech communication	7,391	15%
Computers and related equipment	6,087	12%
Vision	5,280	11%
Learning, cognition	4,793	10%
Hearing	3,649	7%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	2,030	4%
Environmental adaptations	2,092	4%
Vehicle modification and transportation	630	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,056</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

As illustrated in Table 2, individuals with disabilities (42 percent) comprised almost half of those participating in device demonstrations in FY 2017, followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (24 percent).

**Table 2: Number of Individuals who Participated in Device Demonstrations**

Type of Individual	Number of Participants	Percent
Individuals with disabilities	33,845	42%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	19,220	24%
Representatives of education	10,845	14%
Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	7,647	10%
Representatives of community living	4,854	6%
Representatives of employment	2,410	3%
Representatives of technology	1,275	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80,096</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

Individuals who participated in device demonstrations were surveyed by AT Programs about the main purpose of the AT device for which they attended the demonstration. In FY 2017, community living was listed as the most common purpose (66 percent), followed by education (23 percent) and employment (11 percent).

For AT Program purposes, education is defined as participating in any type of educational program. Similarly, community living is defined as participating in and carrying out daily activities in the community, using community services, or living independently. Employment means finding or keeping a job, getting a better job, or participating in an employment training program, vocational rehabilitation program, or other program related to employment. Lastly, information technology/telecommunications is defined as using computers, software, websites, telephones, office equipment, and media.

## Device Demonstration and Employment

Kirk needed the right technology to work from home. Since he is blind and has arthritis, he worked with the Kansas AT Program and Kansas Rehabilitation Services to determine what technology he needed. After receiving device and software demonstrations as well as short-term loans, Kirk received a laptop with JAWS, Duxbury, and Open Book; a scanner; a smart phone with tactile markers; and a Braille Focus 40 for Braille display. These new devices and technology enabled Kirk to study for, and pass, an exam to work as a vision specialist. Kirk works as a vision specialist, providing technical assistance over the phone to rural Kansans and individuals in other Midwest states.

## DEVICE LOAN PROGRAMS

Device loan programs allow AT consumers and professionals who provide services to individuals with disabilities to borrow AT devices for use at home, at school, at work, and in the community on a short-term basis. The purpose of a device loan may be to assist in decision-making, to fill a gap while the consumer is waiting for device repair or funding, to provide a short-term accommodation, to facilitate or support self-education by a consumer or professional, or to provide other training (ED, 2011).

During FY 2017, fifty-five AT Programs reported providing 37,239 short-term loans of AT devices to individuals or entities. Individuals with disabilities were the largest group to whom devices were loaned (36 percent), followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (22 percent). Please refer to Table 3 for a more detailed breakdown.

**Table 3: Number of Short-term Device Loans by Type of Borrower**

Type of Borrower	Number of Device Borrowers	Percent
Individuals with disabilities	13,299	36%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	8,128	22%
Representatives of education	7,652	21%
Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	5,341	14%
Representatives of community living	1,671	4%
Representatives of technology	575	1.5%
Representatives of employment	573	1.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,239</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

Devices for computers and related devices (17 percent) were the most common types of AT devices loaned in FY 2017, followed by speech communication devices (16 percent), and devices for ‘daily living’ (15 percent). Seven additional device categories accounted for the remaining 52 percent of the device loans made (Table 4).

**Table 4: Number of Devices Loaned by AT Type**

Type of AT Device	Number Loaned	Percent
Computers and related	9,010	17%
Speech communication	8,305	16%
Daily living	7,844	15%
Mobility, seating	7,492	14%
Learning, cognition	7,126	14%
Vision	4,166	8%
Environmental adaptations	3,562	7%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	2,432	5%
Hearing	2,382	4%
Vehicle modification and transportation	53	<1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52,374</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

Sixty-eight percent or 25,320 device loans were made to individuals for the primary purpose of decision-making. Other reasons borrowers cited for wanting a short-term device loan included accommodation (18 percent), a loaner during repair/waiting for funding (6 percent), and for training/personnel development (7 percent). AT acquired through device loan programs was primarily used for community living (54 percent), education (39 percent), and employment (7 percent).

#### **Device Loan and Education**

A 9-year-old student, Brian, needed assistance with reading. His family contacted the Oklahoma AT Program to borrow the C-Reader Pen before purchasing it. With the use of the pen, Brian was able to read without assistance. Having this device was a big boost to his confidence. Brian is now able to read with independence and enjoy it!

#### **DEVICE REUTILIZATION PROGRAMS**

Assistive technology reutilization involves transferring a previously owned device from someone who no longer needs it to someone who does. Device reutilization falls into two activity categories. The first one, device exchange, usually occurs through an online forum where sellers and buyers can connect. Recycling, refurbishment, and repair (RRR) and/or open-ended loan is the second category. In this type of program, devices are typically obtained from individuals who no longer need them, are refurbished, and then provided to new owners. Open-ended loan programs use the same process, collecting previously used devices and refurbishing them as needed, and then loaning them to individuals who can use them as long as they are needed. The expectation is that the devices would be returned to the program at some point. For the purposes of this report, the second category—RRR and/or open-ended loan—will be referred to as device refurbishment.

In FY 2017, 57,782 consumers received a total of 74,205 reutilized devices from fifty-five AT Programs, resulting in an overall savings of \$29.9 million. As Table 5 shows, the vast majority of AT devices provided through reutilization programs were for ‘mobility, seating’ (47 percent) and ‘daily living’ (38 percent).

### ***Highlighting Innovative State Partnerships***

State Medicaid programs in Kansas and Oklahoma have years of experience in collaborating with their state AT Act Programs in the implementation of comprehensive reuse programs, achieving tremendous cost-savings in the healthcare systems through these partnerships.

- Kansas has collected over 11,359 items of equipment, valued at \$16.8 million since 2003. Approximately 90% of this donated equipment was originally purchased through private insurance or private funding sources. In total, the Kansas Reuse program has reassigned over 9,676 pieces of equipment valued at over \$13,426,563. Using return on investment (ROI) analysis, in 2017-2018, the Kansas program reassigned 693 devices valued at \$815,525, with program costs of \$285,000, yielding an ROI of \$2.86 for every dollar invested.
- In Oklahoma, the program has resulted in over \$4,176,496 in healthcare savings to agencies and individuals since 2012. Over the period, 7,043 devices were reassigned, including 3,654 devices to SoonerCare (Oklahoma Medicaid) members, resulting in \$1,364,350 in SoonerCare program cost savings in the first six years.

**Table 5: Device Reutilization Summary by AT Type**

Type of AT Device	# of Devices	Percent of Devices	Total Savings	Percent of Savings
Mobility, seating	34,638	47%	\$19,787,763	66%
Daily living	28,259	38%	\$5,108,330	17%
Environmental adaptations	4,190	6%	\$860,471	3%
Computers and related	2,182	3%	\$573,952	2%
Hearing	1,638	2%	\$233,581	<1%
Speech and communication	901	1%	\$1,409,107	5%
Learning/cognition	835	1%	\$150,545	<1%
Vision	833	1%	\$597,541	2%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	442	1%	\$130,872	<1%
Vehicle modification and transportation	287	<1%	\$1,146,622	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74,205</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$29,988,784</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

As shown in Table 6, the most common device reutilization activity was device refurbishment. Ninety-seven percent of recipients received devices through a device refurbishment program, saving \$27.9 million. Of the services provided through reutilization programs, device refurbishment activities provided the greatest savings to recipients. AT acquired through device reutilization programs was primarily used for community living (92 percent), and was also used to support education (5 percent), and employment (3 percent).

**Table 6: Number of Recipients, Devices, and Savings by Type of Reutilization Activity**

Activity	Number (%) of Device Recipients	Number (%) of Devices	Total Savings to Recipients	Percent of Savings to Recipients
Recycle/refurbish/repair (device refurbishment)	55,773 (97%)	69,995 (94%)	\$27,969,789	93%
Device exchange	2,009 (3%)	4,540 (6%)	\$2,018,995	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57,782 (100%)</b>	<b>74,205 (100%)</b>	<b>\$29,988,784</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

### **Device Reutilization and Employment**

Graziela, a 32-year-old elementary school teacher with spina bifida, was referred to the Puerto Rico AT program by her co-workers. She used a manual wheelchair for mobility. However, one of the casters was badly damaged, resulting in an unsafe ride. Graziela had been waiting for a new wheelchair from a local agency, but it was uncertain how much longer she would have to wait, or even if she would finally get the wheelchair at all. Through Puerto Rico’s reuse program, Graziela received a wheelchair that met her needs at home and at school. Now she is back to teaching classes and performing her regular duties in and out of the classroom.

### **STATE FINANCING**

State financing activities assist individuals with disabilities to acquire needed AT through three types of programs: (1) financial loan programs that provide cash loans that borrowers can use to purchase AT, (2) other activities that result in direct AT provision, and (3) additional activities that allow consumers to obtain AT for a reduced cost. Funds authorized under the AT Act of 1998, as amended, cannot be used to purchase AT devices or services directly for consumers (ED, 2011).

#### **State Financing – Cash Loan Programs**

Thirty-five State AT programs reported data on financial loans made. These programs issued 853 cash loans for AT device(s) totaling \$7,665,522. The average annual income of loan recipients was \$43,231 and the national average interest rate was 3.68 percent. Out of 853 loans issued, 23 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes of less than \$15,000; another 23 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes between \$15,001 and \$20,000. The overwhelming majority of total loan dollars issued (72 percent) was for vehicle modification and transportation technologies, averaging \$21,450 per loan. Hearing AT ranked first in number of devices financed, averaging \$3,746 per loan. For a more detailed breakdown of loans by device type, refer to Table 7.

**Table 7: Types and Dollar Amounts of AT Acquired with Financial Loans**

Type of AT Device	# of Devices Financed	Device Percent	Dollar Value of Loans	Dollar Percent	Average Loan Amount
Hearing	350	40%	\$1,311,221	17%	\$3,746
Vehicle modification and transportation	257	29%	\$5,512,541	72%	\$21,450
Computers and related	66	8%	\$46,043	1%	\$697
Mobility, seating and positioning	65	7%	\$287,048	4%	\$4,416
Daily living	44	5%	\$130,235	2%	\$2,960
Vision	43	5%	\$107,241	1%	\$2,494
Environmental adaptations	34	4%	\$238,897	3%	\$7,026
Learning/cognition	14	2%	\$6,250	<1%	\$446
Recreation, sports, & leisure	3	<1%	\$26,055	<1%	\$8,685
Speech communication	0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$7,665,522</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$8,751</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

### Other State Financing Programs that Provide AT

Seventeen states reported data on other financing activities that resulted in the acquisition of AT devices and services. These programs typically purchased AT, using external funding provided to the AT Program by another agency, and directly provide that AT to eligible recipients. These programs are frequently limited in focus, only providing a particular type of AT (such as telecommunications), or restricted to individuals with a specific kind of disability (autism), or require individuals be eligible for a specific funding source (such as IDEA) to obtain the AT.

In FY 2017, these programs served 4,357 individuals and provided 5,768 AT devices. Almost half (48 percent) of the total technologies funded were hearing devices. Environmental adaptations constituted 23 percent (\$892,391) of the total value of AT provided (\$3,836,113) but made up only 4 percent of total devices funded.

### Other State Financing Programs that Reduce the Cost of AT

Nine states reported data on other state financing activities that allowed consumers to obtain assistive technology at a reduced cost. These programs included cooperative buying programs, a vision equipment lease program, and device design, fabrication and development.

In FY 2017, these other state financing activities served 2,093 individuals, and 3,735 devices were acquired at a total savings of \$1,573,345. Out of all the AT categories, hearing AT resulted in the highest savings to consumers (\$6,184 per device). Devices for learning and cognition (1,083 devices), speech communication (888 devices), and vision (582 devices), combined, made up 68 percent of acquired devices through other financing activities. This resulted in moderate savings per device (\$93 for each item for learning and cognition, \$37 for each device for speech communication, and \$711 for each vision device).

Recipients of state financing activity services reported the primary purpose for which AT was needed. Seventy-seven percent of respondents cited community living as the primary purpose, followed by education (19 percent) and employment (4 percent).

### State Financing and Community Living

In 2013, Peter experienced a stroke. As a result, it was difficult for him to move his upper and lower extremities, requiring him to use a motorized scooter. However, this option did not address all of his mobility needs.

Peter was connected to the Guam AT Program, where he expressed interest in purchasing an accessible vehicle. When he met with AT staff in March 2017, he was given information on various AT options and got help applying for an Akudi Loan to help finance the purchase. When Peter’s loan was approved, he received additional assistance in purchasing an accessible van, which involved working with an off-island vendor and shipping company, with the whole process taking six months.

After just a few weeks of using the vehicle, Peter shared that his quality of life significantly improved, and going around the island was much more enjoyable and stress-free. He is able to participate in day-to-day activities, run errands, and do things with his wife, 26 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. An accessible vehicle has given Peter a renewed feeling of independence.

## CONSUMER SATISFACTION RATINGS OF STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES

AT Program consumers were asked to report their satisfaction with the services they received from four state-level activities. Device reuse, state financing, device loan, and device demonstration programs each received combined highly satisfied and satisfied customer satisfaction ratings of 99% percent. Please refer to Table 8 for more details about the level of consumer satisfaction, response rates, and number of consumers in each of the four activities.

**Table 8: Consumer Satisfaction with State-level Activities**

State-level Activity	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied Somewhat	Not at all satisfied	Non-respondents	Total # of Consumers	Response Rate Percentage
State Financing	4,429 (84%)	782 (15%)	43 (1%)	11 (0%)	2,038	7,303	72%
Reutilization	47,440 (89%)	5,635 (11%)	151 (0%)	61 (0%)	4,495	57,782	92%
Device Demonstration	66,265 (85%)	10,679 (14%)	540 (1%)	124 (0%)	2,488	80,096	97%
Device Loan	31,220 (88%)	3,947 (11%)	352 (1%)	77 (0%)	1,643	37,239	96%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

## STATE ACTIVITIES PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### Acquisition Performance

Consumers were surveyed about why they utilized state financing services, device reutilization programs (i.e., device exchange and device refurbishment), and short-ended loans for the purpose of

acquisition. Sixty-eight percent of consumers stated that they could only afford AT through these programs. Sixteen percent said that the AT needed was only available to them through AT programs, and 11 percent responded that the AT was available to them through other programs, but these systems were too complex or the wait time to acquire a device was too long, and five percent responded none of the above.

### **Access Performance**

Consumers were surveyed about the kind of decisions they were able to make as the result of a device demonstration or short-term device loan. Eighty-seven percent of respondents stated that an AT device would meet their needs, or those of someone they represent. Another seven percent of consumers stated that an AT device would not meet their needs (which is still an important decision outcome), and five percent did not make a decision.

## **STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

### **Training**

Training activities are instructional events, planned in advance for a specific purpose or audience. Examples of training include classes, workshops, and presentations that have a goal of increasing skills, knowledge, and operational competence with the technology, as opposed to training intended only to increase general awareness of AT (ED, 2011).

In FY 2017, AT Programs trained a total of 125,783 participants. Individuals with disabilities (27 percent) were closely followed by representatives of education (24 percent) as the types of individuals who were most likely to receive training. Forty-four percent of participants attended trainings about AT products and services, which focused on increasing skills and competencies in using AT and integrating AT into different settings. Twenty-nine percent of participants attended trainings on a combination of any or all of the following topics: AT products/services, AT funding/policy/practice, and information technology/telecommunication access. Trainings on transition for students with disabilities in education and transition for adults to independent living were attended by nine percent of participants. AT funding/policy/practice and information technology/telecommunication access trainings were attended by six percent of training participants combined.

### **Public Awareness**

Public awareness activities include public service announcements, Internet outreach and social media, radio talk shows and news reports, newspaper stories and columns, newsletters, brochures, and public forums. The exact number of people who receive information through these public awareness activities is large, but is often difficult to quantify precisely, and estimates must be reported (ED, 2011). Due to the difficulty of quantifying, FY 2017 was the first year that data for public awareness activities were submitted as anecdotes. The following are a handful of many exciting and innovative outreach and awareness efforts conducted by AT programs:

- Indiana's three widely distributed and popular podcasts have highly engaged audiences in over 160 countries. AT program staff created over 400 "Tech Tip" videos on YouTube that have been viewed over 500,000 times.
- Louisiana's AT program hosted an exhibit at the Louisiana State Fair's "Senior Day at the Fair" to raise awareness among seniors about the benefits of AT with regard to functional



limitations related to aging. 2,500 people from across the state attended the fair. The exhibit attracted many seniors who picked up literature, with over 250 people signing up to receive targeted information.

- North Dakota’s blog “Assistive” is in its 5th year. With its focus on user anecdotes, general AT information, and funding, it has attracted people from all over the world. In 2017, the blog had 134,870 visitors. Due to the blog’s visibility, the AT program has received many calls and emails from people with disabilities, their family members, and the professionals that work with them.
- In 2017, the Ohio State AT Program reached out to school districts more than they ever had in the past. To familiarize schools with services and promote new programs directed at schools, AT staff mailed annual reports to all 612 school superintendents in the state. The efforts were productive, generating numerous referrals, and expanded the program’s reach.

### Information and Assistance

Information and assistance (I&A) activities are those in which state AT Programs respond to requests for information or put individuals in contact with other entities. These other entities can provide individuals with information and intensive assistance on AT devices/services or AT funding.

In FY 2017, 324,688 individuals were recipients of I&A. Of the two I&A content areas, information about specific AT products/devices/services was the most common, with 81 percent of recipients requesting this type of information. Nineteen percent received information on obtaining funding for AT. The largest recipient group of I&A was family members/guardians/authorized representatives (28 percent), followed by individuals with disabilities (23 percent), representatives of education (14 percent), representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation (14 percent), and representatives of community living (9 percent). The remaining recipient types were representatives of technology (5 percent), representatives of employers and employment services (5 percent), and others (3 percent).

### Technical Assistance

Technical assistance (TA) is provided by state AT Programs to help programs and agencies improve their services management, policies, and/or outcomes. As a result of technical assistance and other activities, some AT Programs report state improvement outcomes with policy, practice, or procedure improvements that result in increased access to and acquisition of AT in the state. In FY 2017, the fifty-six grantees reported providing a majority of technical assistance to educational agencies (33 percent) and community living agencies (26 percent).

**Table 9: Percentage of Technical Assistance provided by Agency Type**

Program/Agency Type Receiving TA	Percent
Education	33%
Community living	26%
Employment	15%
Technology (IT, Telecom, AT)	13%
Health, allied health, and rehabilitation	13%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2017. Last accessed October 2018.

Leveraged funding is frequently secured by State AT Programs and is used to expand and maximize services. In FY 2017, State AT Programs leveraged \$21.8 million from federal, state, local and private sources. These leveraged dollars were used to supplement \$26.4 million in Section 4 AT Act formula grant funding for FY 2017 and expand program reach in all AT Act authorized activities. This report highlights close to \$65 million in savings and benefits delivered by State AT Programs in FY 2017 to over 600,000 service recipients.

## **INITIATIVES FROM THE FIELD**

### *Community Living*

North Dakota (ND) ASSISTIVE Program staff commented on the proposed renewal of the Medicaid 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid waiver. The AT program requested that the waiver be amended to include AT evaluations under the Specialized Equipment (SE) and Environmental Modifications (EM) portions, and requested that the qualifications for professionals providing AT evaluations under EM portion of the ND HCBS waiver be comparable to the Minnesota Elderly Waiver and Alternative Care Program. The comments also contained research with comparison to other states' services and other North Dakota waivers.

### *Health Care*

Michigan AT Program staff worked with people in the mental health recovery community to provide technical assistance on how to include AT in their recovery work. Staff assisted in creating a short video on the importance of AT and other supports for people in recovery.

### *Employment*

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act outlines service delivery with special attention to AT. The act specifically mandates collaboration between State AT Programs and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services. Iowa State AT Program collaborated with Iowa VR, outlining how lives would be impacted by additional referral and engagement with one another's services. This advocacy resulted in the creation of an AT leadership team at Iowa VR, comprised of ten staff members from across Iowa. AT staff provided AT training in the Assistive Technology Demonstration Center to the Iowa VR leadership team.

### *Education & Transition*

Arizona's AT Program's program director met with representatives from the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. The goal was to explore strategies for strengthening collaboration between the organizations, and to ensure that Employment First initiatives address AT issues for high school students with disabilities as part of the transition process into post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. The AT program director now attends monthly Employment First meetings to provide input and recommendations.

### *Information and Communication Technology Accessibility*

As part of the implementation of Local Law 238, an AT specialist on information technology and computer access from Puerto Rico's AT program conducted a series of training sessions on creating accessible documents at the University of Puerto Rico's various campuses around the island. Additionally, AT staff provided individual support to professors, webmasters, and librarians on how to improve the accessibility of web pages and other online documents such as syllabi and presentations.

### *Voting Accessibility*

In collaboration with the Protection & Advocacy for Voter Access Program, the Wyoming AT Program hosted a training on voting and accessibility. The training provided information on voting rights for individuals with disabilities, and hands-on training on two voting machines that are used throughout Wyoming. Also demonstrated were AT devices used in the voting booth.

### *Aging*

Due to demographic shifts, the Florida AT program adjusted its service delivery model to focus more on delivering services to an aging population. The staff developed senior kits for each Regional Demonstration Center to provide device loans, demonstrations, trainings, and public awareness activities. A wide range of devices are included in the kit, such as rescue and locate devices, home automation units, medication reminders, and simple vehicle modifications.

## **CONCLUSION**

State-level and state leadership activities provide a continuum of services that reach a wide variety of individuals and provide access to a broad range of technologies. AT Programs enable individuals with disabilities and older adults, their representatives, and others working with them to make informed decisions about accessing and acquiring technologies. The streamlined process allows consumers to receive information about a device and become familiar with it through demonstration and short-term device loan programs prior to making a costly purchase. When consumers are ready to acquire a device, the reuse and state financing programs provide an affordable purchasing avenue.

## Resource Information

Contact and other information on each State AT Program<sup>5</sup> can be found on the Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA) website. The CATADA website also provides an overall summary data report<sup>6</sup> for Fiscal Year 2017 that provides data on the major AT Act activities by state.

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This publication is available in accessible digital format on ACL's website<sup>7</sup> and on the CATADA website.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://catada.info/state.html>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://catada.info/at/?report=summary>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.acl.gov/about-acl/reports-congress-and-president>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://catada.info/catada-publications/>.