



**DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH
and HUMAN
SERVICES**

**FY 2019 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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION.....	6
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT HISTORY.....	6
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998, AS AMENDED.....	7
<i>STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>DEVICE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>DEVICE LOAN</i>	
<i>PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>DEVICE REUTILIZATION PROGRAMS.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>STATE FINANCING.....</i>	<i>14</i>
State Financing – Cash Loan Programs	14
Other State Financing Programs that Provide AT	15
Other State Financing Programs that Reduce the Cost of AT	15
<i>CONSUMER SATISFACTION RATINGS OF STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Training.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Public Awareness.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Information and Assistance</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Technical Assistance.....</i>	<i>18</i>
INITIATIVES FROM THE FIELD.....	19
CONCLUSION	19
Resource Information.....	20

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.....	11
Table 4: Number of Devices Loaned by AT Type	12
Table 5: Number of Recipients, Devices, and Savings by Type of Reutilization Activity	13
Table 6: Device Refurbishment Summary by AT Type	13
Table 7: Types and Dollar Amounts of AT Acquired with Financial Loans.....	14
Table 8: Consumer Satisfaction with State-level Activities	16
Table 9: Percentage of Technical Assistance provided by Agency Type.....	18

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 2019, State and Territory AT programs served close to 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*), 29 U.S.C. § 3003, 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 assistive technologies. AT programs provide valuable training that helps individuals learn how to access and use accessibility features built into technology, including telehealth technologies. The training enables people to fully use the technologies they access or acquire and reduces technology abandonment. 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.

This report is a compilation of data from these programs for FY 2019, 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 2019 AT Program Achievements from State-Level Activities Resulting in Positive Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities

Device Demonstration Programs
<i>Device demonstrations compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices for an individual or small group of individuals.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 64,668 individuals participated in 33,799 device demonstrations. ▪ Projected a national savings of \$1.7 million for individuals and third-party payers because consumer-equipment matched individual needs. ▪ 95% of device demonstrations resulted in positive decision-making to ensure consumer-equipment matched individuals needs and avoided inappropriate device acquisition.
Device Loan Programs
<i>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.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over 54,000 AT devices loaned on a short-term basis to individuals with disabilities, service providers, and partner agencies. ▪ Using an average savings of \$1,000 per loan with more than one device associated results in national savings of \$17.8 million. ▪ Projecting a minimum \$10 per day rental fee for the average loan period of 35 days, results in national savings of \$4.3 million for devices borrowed.
Device Reutilization Programs
<i>Assistive technology reutilization involves transferring a previously owned device from someone who no longer needs it to someone who does.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 57,588 consumers received a total of 78,412 reutilized (exchanged and refurbished) devices from fifty-two AT Programs, resulting in an overall savings of \$30.4 million. ▪ 87% 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
<i>State financing activities assist individuals with disabilities to acquire needed AT.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 945 borrowers obtained financial loans totaling \$8,532,521 to buy 975 devices. ▪ 2,724 recipients acquired 6,224 devices valued at \$3,860,279 from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources administered by State AT Programs. ▪ 6,638 recipients acquired 8,009 AT devices with a savings of \$880,567 from other state financing activities that are designed to reduce the cost of AT such as device fabrication activities and cooperative buying programs. ▪ 97% of recipients indicated an AT device could not be obtained without the assistance of the state financing activity.

ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

FY 2019 Annual Report to Congress on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as Amended

INTRODUCTION

The *Assistive Technology Act of 1998*, as amended (will be referenced in this report as the AT Act or Act), 29 U.S.C. § 3001 *et seq.*, 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) 2019.

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 prior 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 protection and advocacy AT programs. As mandated by the 2004 amendments, the U.S. Department of Education's

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)

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 report provides a national summary of Section 4 grantee statewide AT program activities and outcomes for FY 2019.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998, AS AMENDED

Section 4 of the AT Act, 29 U.S.C. § 3003, 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 (1) a portion of the funds equally to all states, and (2) a portion of funds to states based on the population of the states. [Funding levels for FY 2019 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).¹

STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

State-level activities include the following:

- **State financing activities**, which can be:
 - o 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
 - o 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.²
- **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

¹ <http://www.catada.info/>.

² 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.

training and technical assistance for students with disabilities who are getting ready to move from 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.

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)(5) 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, 2020, and was used by all grantees to report FY 2019 annual progress report data summarized in this Report to Congress.

**A NATIONAL DATA SUMMARY OF STATE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS:
FISCAL YEAR 2019**

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 2019 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. ‘Speech and communication’ was the largest category, comprising 18 percent of all demonstrations. Nine additional device categories comprised between 1 percent and 16 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
Speech communication	6,019	18%
Mobility, seating	5,412	16%
Vision	4,770	14%
Daily living	4,713	14%
Learning, cognition	3,773	11%
Computers and related equipment	3,307	10%
Hearing	3,301	10%
Environmental adaptations	1,320	4%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	615	2%
Vehicle modification and transportation	569	1%
TOTAL	33,799	100%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

As illustrated in Table 2, individuals with disabilities (46 percent) comprised almost half of those participating in device demonstrations in FY 2019, followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (25 percent).

Table 2: Number of Individuals who Participated in Device Demonstrations

Type of Individual	Number of Participants	Percent
Individuals with disabilities	29,783	46%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	16,159	25%
Representatives of education	6,823	11%

Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	5,480	8%
Representatives of community living	3,434	5%
Representatives of employment	2,035	3%
Representatives of technology	954	2%
TOTAL	64,668	100%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

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 2019, community living was listed as the most common purpose (67 percent), followed by education (23 percent) and employment (10 percent).

For AT Program purposes, community living is defined as participating in and carrying out daily activities in the community, using community services, or living independently. Similarly, education is defined as participating in any type of educational program. 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.

Below is an example of how a device demonstration helped an Assistive Technology Act program recipient learn about and select an assistive technology device to help him continue to farm. The example also features the partnership with the Kansas State Assistive Technology program and the Kansas Vocational Rehabilitation program. Partnership across state and community agencies can expand knowledge and access to assistive technology enabling people more access to devices that enable them to engage in work, community living, and/or education.

Choosing the Right UTV

A farmer who is a double lower leg amputee, needed to figure out what utility vehicle (UTV) would work for him so he could continue to spray weeds on his farm, check fence line, and monitor his livestock. His local assistive technology staff demonstrated multiple UTVs without requiring him to make trips to different vendors.

Staff organized an event with commercial dealers of four different types of UTVs. At the event, the farmer compared features of the different vehicles, their load beds, and spraying options. This information was part of the recommendations to the farmer’s vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor.

Six other customers, four VR counselors, a VR regional manager, and 50 community members attended this event, along with 11 vendors from four states. Several vendors noted that this opened a new market for them as they learned to discuss features of their products that are relevant to people with disabilities. One presenter told ATK staff that having the support of the sign language interpreters helped him interact with all members of his audience.

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 2019, fifty-six AT Programs reported providing 36,198 short-term loans of AT devices to individuals or entities. Individuals with disabilities were the largest group to whom devices were loaned (44 percent), followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (20 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	15,962	44%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	7,161	20%
Representatives of education	5,703	16%
Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	4,951	13%
Representatives of community living	1,160	3%
Representatives of employment	663	2%
Representatives of technology	634	2%
TOTAL	36,198	100%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

Both devices for computers and related devices (18 percent) and speech and communication devices (18 percent) were the most common types of AT devices loaned in FY 2019, followed by mobility and seating devices (13 percent), and devices for learning and cognition (13 percent). Six additional device categories accounted for the remaining 38 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	9,529	18%
Speech communication	9,529	18%
Mobility, seating	7,222	13%
Learning, cognition	7,205	13%
Daily living	6,577	12%
Vision	5,746	11%
Environmental adaptations	3,524	6%
Hearing	2,540	5%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	2,021	4%
Vehicle modification and transportation	125	<1%
TOTAL	54,018	100%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

Sixty-six percent or 23,860 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 (20 percent), and for training/personnel development (8 percent), and as a loaner during repair/waiting for funding (6 percent). AT acquired through device loan programs was primarily used for community living (64 percent), education (30 percent), and employment (6 percent).

Below is an example of how a device loan helped an Assistive Technology Act program recipient access to her classroom and interact with her peers. The device loan expanded a local school’s knowledge of the type of AT technology that is out there enabling a youth to participate in school.

Emma and the Double Robot

Emma is a 13-year-old who is not able to attend her local public school and interact with her peers because of her disability. Her public school system borrowed the Double Robot from Oklahoma ABLE Tech. The robot was a telepresence tool that allowed Emma to have access to the classroom and her peers while at home.

The Double Robot enabled Emma to attend and participate fully in her core classes and receive live instruction. It has been so well received that the school system submitted a grant proposal to pilot a Double Robot for the next school year.

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 lending 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 2019, 57,588 consumers received a total of 78,412 reutilized devices from fifty-two AT Programs, resulting in an overall savings of \$30.4 million. As shown in Table 5, the most common device reutilization activity was device refurbishment. Ninety-seven percent of recipients received devices through a device refurbishment program, saving \$29 million and providing the greatest savings to recipients. As Table 6 shows, most AT devices provided through refurbishment programs were for ‘mobility, seating’ (53 percent) and ‘daily living’ (35 percent). AT acquired through device reutilization programs was primarily used for community living (95 percent) and was also used to support education (3 percent), and employment (2 percent).

Table 5: 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
Device refurbishment	55,826 (97%)	74,727 (95%)	\$29,062,626	95%
Device exchange	1,762 (3%)	3,685 (5%)	\$1,385,916	5%
TOTAL	57,588 (100%)	78,412 (100%)	\$30,448,542	100%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

Table 6: Device Refurbishment Summary by AT Type

Type of AT Device	Number of Devices	Percent of Devices	Total Savings
Mobility, seating	39,344	53%	\$20,646,285
Daily living	25,913	35%	\$4,602,606
Environmental adaptations	4,209	6%	\$1,303,353
Computers and related	2,111	3%	\$616,558
Vision	806	1%	\$405,563
Speech communication	660	1%	\$833,629
Learning, cognition	613	<1%	\$102,384
Recreation, sports, and leisure	543	<1%	\$367,437
Hearing	481	<1%	\$127,716
Vehicle modification and transportation	47	<1%	\$57,049
TOTAL	74,727	100%	\$29,062,626

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

Below is an example of how a device refurbishment program helped an Assistive Technology Act program recipient acquire a walker that would otherwise have been unaffordable to his family. Mobility/seating devices are the most common AT of refurbishment programs saving nearly \$30 million nationwide. This program was able to take a walker from someone who no longer needed it,

refurbished it, and then provided to a new owner. As a result, a child is now able to move around and be part of his community.

Luis Finds the Right Walker

Luis is a 7-year-old boy who underwent surgery due to his motor disabilities. He was discharged from the hospital in a wheelchair. After several weeks, his doctor authorized him to walk again using a mobility device to help maintain stability.

Luis’ parents contacted the Puerto Rico AT Program (PRATP) about a walker that would fit his needs. They could not afford to buy the options offered by suppliers. Through PRATP’s AT reuse program, Luis was fitted with a walker appropriate for his size and needs.

As soon as the fitting was finished, Luis started walking with the device and he did not let it go for the duration of the service. When he left, he was happy getting around with his walker and PRATP staffers were overjoyed to see him moving again.

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). Ninety-seven percent of recipients indicated an AT device could not be obtained without the assistance of the state financing activity.

State Financing – Cash Loan Programs

Thirty-five state AT Programs reported data on financial loans made. These programs issued loans to 945 borrowers for 975 AT devices, totaling \$8,532,521. The average annual income of loan recipients was \$49,606, and the national average interest rate was 4.3 percent.

Out of the 975 devices financed, 15 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes of less than \$15,000, and another 23 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes between \$15,001 and \$20,000. The overwhelming majority of total loan dollars issued (65 percent) was for ‘vehicle modification and transportation technologies,’ averaging \$20,580 per loan. ‘Hearing AT’ ranked first in number of devices financed, averaging \$4,064 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	Number of Devices Financed	Device Percent	Dollar Value of Loans	Dollar Percent	Avg. Loan Amount
Hearing	475	49%	\$1,930,580	23%	\$4,064
Vehicle modification and transportation	271	28%	\$5,577,157	65%	\$20,580
Mobility, seating, and positioning	59	6%	\$245,794	3%	\$4,166

Daily living	56	6%	\$173,687	2%	\$3,102
Environmental adaptations	38	4%	\$326,778	4%	\$8,599
Vision	28	3%	\$65,441	1%	\$2,337
Computers and related	23	2%	\$20,006	<1%	\$870
Recreation, sports, and leisure	16	1%	\$163,673	2%	\$10,230
Learning, cognition	9	1%	\$29,405	<1%	\$3,267
Speech communication	0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0
TOTAL	975	100%	\$8,532,521	100%	\$8,751

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

Other State Financing Programs that Provide AT

Twenty 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 provided the AT to eligible recipients. These programs are frequently limited in focus, only providing a particular type of AT (such as telecommunications), are 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 2019, these programs served 2,724 individuals and provided 6,224 AT devices at a total value of \$3,860,279. Environmental adaptations and controls, such as switches to operate electronic devices in the home, resulted in approximately 27 percent (\$1,024,325) of the total value of AT provided and 40 percent of total devices funded. Vision, hearing and computers and related devices combined made up 41 percent of devices funded with a combined value of \$1,583,437 or 41 percent of the total value of AT provided.

Other State Financing Programs that Reduce the Cost of AT

Ten 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 2019, these other financing activities served 6,638 individuals, and 8,009 devices were acquired at a total savings of \$880,567. Out of all the AT categories, vision AT resulted in the highest savings to consumers (\$446 per device). Devices for learning and cognition (2,988 devices) and daily living (1,748 devices) combined made up 59 percent of acquired devices through other financing activities. This resulted in moderate savings per device (\$55 for each item for learning and cognition, and \$47 for each daily living device).

Recipients of state financing activity services reported the primary purpose for which AT was needed. Sixty-six percent of respondents cited community living as the primary purpose, followed by education (30 percent) and employment (4 percent).

Assistive technology often unlocks unknown potential. Below is an example of how a state financing activity helped an Assistive Technology Act program recipient obtain a much-needed device for education purposes.

Cutler Shares His Words

Cutler received his device through the AT reimbursement program that provides supplemental funding for schools to purchase AT needed by students. Cutler quickly learned how to independently navigate his device installed with the Prologue2Go app. He wasted no time adding phrases to help him express his thoughts.

His device helped Cutler shine as a writer. He completed worksheets he previously didn't do and proudly displayed his work along with his classmates in the hallway. Cutler's parents and educators report that he made gains throughout the year that would not have been possible without this assistive technology.

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 above 98 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	8,540 (88%)	1,134 (12%)	36 (0%)	5 (0%)	597	10,312	94%
Reutilization	48,065 (90%)	5,101 (10%)	185 (0%)	16 (0%)	4,221	57,588	93%
Device Demonstration	53,289 (84%)	9,682 (15%)	402 (1%)	200 (0%)	1,095	64,668	98%
Device Loan	28,772 (87%)	3,714 (11%)	337 (1%)	69 (0%)	3,306	36,198	91%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

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 2019, AT Programs trained a total of 103,182 participants. Representatives of education (25 percent) were closely followed by individuals with disabilities (24 percent) as the types of individuals who were most likely to receive training. Fifty-five 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-five percent of participants attended trainings on a combination of any or all 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 six percent of the participants. AT funding/policy/practice and information technology/telecommunication access trainings represented a combined fourteen percent of the participants.

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). The following are a handful of many exciting and innovative outreach and awareness efforts conducted by AT programs in FY 2019:

- The Kansas AT Program and Kansas AgrAbility collaborated on an interactive display of technology solutions to help farmers, ranchers, and their families be involved in agriculture at the Four State Farm Show. The farm show annually attracts over 1,200 from Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas. The display focused on technology for hearing, vision, and fine motor needs, but accessible recreation was the primary draw. Adapted fishing poles, western saddles, and automatic water guns on a switch-operated mount drew attention from children and adults.
- Specialists from the Delaware AT Program hosted an awareness session for seniors and individuals with disabilities enabling them to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies at home and disasters in their communities. The 75 attendees learned about a wide variety of equipment supporting hearing, vision, communication, and self-care. Their homework was to assemble a “go bag” appropriate to their own needs in preparation for an emergency. These events were popular, prompting invitations for three similar sessions in the coming year.
- The Hawaii AT Program had a segment on statewide KITV news in January 2019. The focus was on AT for seniors and people with disabilities including a home-automation program. The executive director also discussed the value of personal independence and advocacy efforts related to AT availability. This segment aired on three separate broadcasts, was shared on the news program’s website, and YouTube. Across these platforms, it has been viewed by an estimated 10,000 individuals and lead to new service inquiries.
- The Idaho AT Program uses its Facebook and Pinterest pages, as well as the Tater Tech Notes newsletter, to share information with consumers. Facebook followers learn about a weekly featured device available in the program’s lending libraries, project events, and new and innovative devices. Pinterest is used to share device information and ideas on mobility, environmental adaptations, and recreation. The program has over 10,000 followers on Pinterest, and its Facebook posts have reached over 17,400 people.
- A national AT Maker’s Fair Conference and Expo was organized by one of Pennsylvania’s AT Program’s regional centers housed in a Center for Independent Living in southwestern Pennsylvania. This two-day event brought together participants from 20 states as well as two Canadian provinces. Attendees took part in 24 different workshops focused on fabrication of AT.

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 2019, 220,912 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 individuals with disabilities (28 percent), followed by representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation (21 percent), family members/guardians/authorized representatives (18 percent), representatives of education (12 percent), and representatives of community living (9 percent). The remaining recipient types were representatives of employers and employment services (6 percent), representatives of technology (4 percent), and others (2 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 2019, the fifty-six grantees reported providing a majority of technical assistance to educational agencies (28 percent) and community living agencies (28 percent). Please see Table 9 for more information.

Table 9: Percentage of Technical Assistance provided by Agency Type

Program/Agency Type Receiving TA	Percent
Education	28%
Community living	28%
Health, allied health, and rehabilitation	16%
Employment	15%
Technology (IT, Telecom, AT)	13%
TOTAL	100%

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 2019. Last accessed January 2021.

Leveraged funding is frequently secured by state AT Programs and is used to expand and maximize services. In FY 2019, state AT Programs leveraged \$23.9 million from federal, state, local, and private sources. These leverage dollars were used to supplement \$28 million in Section 4 AT Act formula grant funding for FY 2019 and expand program reach in all AT Act authorized activities. This report highlights close to \$67.5 million in savings and benefits delivered by state AT Programs in FY 2019 to nearly 500,000 service recipients.

INITIATIVES FROM THE FIELD

Community Living

During California's Public Safety Power Shutoff events in October 2019, 10 Independent Living Centers received over 800 calls urgently requesting power for oxygen equipment, CPAP/BiPAP machines, and power wheelchairs. Ability Tools, an AT Act program housed with the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC), collaborated with Pacific Gas and Electric to assist people with disabilities and older adults before, during, and after the emergency. Through many of the Independent Living Centers and several community partners, Ability Tools launched a pilot disaster readiness program, Disability Disaster Access & Resources. This program assists those who use electrical medical devices to access backup portable batteries and charging stations in their region.

Employment

Hawaii's Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) staff worked with the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and the Disability and Communications Access Board to promote partnerships with employers to empower individuals with disabilities to live independent and self-sufficient lives. In addition, Hawaii's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) partnered with the ATRC to provide four individuals with disabilities a workplace experience.

Ohio's AT Program helped Governor Mike DeWine craft a set of executive orders, signed minutes after being sworn in, that foster independence and employment for people with disabilities. These initiatives called for the Department of Administrative Services to appoint an ADA coordinator. They also mandate that state employees undergo regular training, including training on AT related to employment, to increase hiring opportunities within state government.

Education & Transition

The Idaho AT Program developed five modules of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) training for speech/language pathologists and education professionals. This training was conducted face to face in 3 locations across the state, made available online, and offered for professional development credit. The AAC in the classroom practices and procedures were developed and distributed through the trainings and made available online.

Information and Communication Technology Accessibility

The Colorado AT Act Program, in collaboration with the University of Colorado Denver's Department of Bioengineering and the College of Engineering, developed six courses for undergraduate and graduate bioengineering students. The courses train these students to become designers of AT and/or rehabilitation/bioengineers and prepare them to enter the AT workforce. Course descriptions can be found here: [Assistive Technology and Inclusive Engineering Graduate Certificate](#)

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 purchasing an AT device or app. 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 Program⁵ can be found on the [Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance \(CATADA\) website](#) or the [AT3 Center website](#). The CATADA website also provides an overall [summary data report⁶ for Fiscal Year 2019](#) 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 website⁷ and on the CATADA website.⁸

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⁵ <https://catada.info/state.html>

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

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

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