



**DEPARTMENT  
of HEALTH  
and HUMAN  
SERVICES**

**Annual Report to Congress on  
*the Assistive Technology Act of  
1998, as Amended, for FY 2015***

**Prepared by**

**ADMINISTRATION FOR  
COMMUNITY LIVING**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 (AT) devices and services for individuals with disabilities and older Americans. These programs include 56 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 ACL. This report is a compilation of data from these programs for FY 2015 and contains information about the activities of the Statewide AT Programs. 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.

The report describes state-level and state leadership activities for FY 2015:

How individuals were served by the following activities:

- » Device Demonstration Programs - Over 66,000 individuals participated in device demonstrations;
  - Device Loan Programs - Over 48,000 AT devices loaned on a short-term basis;
  - Device Reutilization Programs - Consumers saved \$28 million on close to 65,000 gently used devices; and
  - State Financing - 91 percent of recipients indicated an AT device could not be obtained without the assistance of the state financing activity.
- » Performance goals for Statewide AT Programs
  - Consumer Satisfaction Ratings of State-Level Activities; and
  - State Activities Performance Measures.
- » How individuals and organizations benefited from:
  - Training - Over 120,000 participants in AT training;
  - Public Awareness - An estimated 22 million people were reached through awareness activities, including the internet, media, print and public forums;
  - Information and Assistance - Individuals with disabilities represented the largest group of over 340,000 recipients of information and referral; and
  - Technical Assistance - Education and community living agencies received a majority of Technical Assistance provided by State Grant for AT programs.

# ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

## Annual Report to Congress on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as Amended, for Fiscal Year 2015

### 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 the state Section 4 grantees in annual progress reports to the Department of Health and Human Services; and 2) a summary of the 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 FY 2015.

*This report summarizes data from the fifty-six Section 4 formula funded State AT Programs 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.*

#### 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)**

### 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 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 Report to Congress provides a national summary of AT program activities outcomes for FY 2015.

## THE 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. The [Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance \(CATADA\)](#) provides a table with FY15 funding levels for all fifty-six grantees along with other activity data.

### 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. Device reutilization programs that support the exchange, repair, recycling or other reutilization of AT devices<sup>1</sup>.
- » 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; and
- » Device demonstration programs in which personnel familiar with AT demonstrate a variety of AT devices and services and provide information about AT vendors, providers and repair services.

### STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

State leadership activities include:

- » Training and technical assistance, which includes developing and disseminating training materials, conducting training, and providing technical assistance to enhance the AT knowledge, skills and competencies of individuals<sup>2</sup>.
- » 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; and
- » Coordination and collaboration of activities among public and private entities responsible for policies, procedures or funding for the provision of AT devices and services.

All state level and major state leadership activities are described in greater detail later 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 ("comparability" provision). Sec. 4(e)(6) of the Act provides states with the

<sup>1</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.

<sup>2</sup> States are required to spend five percent of their state leadership funds specifically to provide AT-related training and technical assistance to assist 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.

“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 of the 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 Sec. 4(f) required data elements was approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) through 10/31/2017 and was used by all grantees to report FY 2015 annual progress report data summarized in this Report to Congress.

### AT PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS RESULTING IN POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES



## 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 2015 reporting period, 55 AT Programs conducted device demonstrations as part of their state-level activities. Daily living was the largest demonstration category, comprising 19 percent of all demonstrations. Most AT areas are well covered by device demonstrations, with six additional areas comprising between 10 percent and 15 percent of all demonstrations (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DEVICE DEMONSTRATIONS BY DEVICE TYPE**

Type of AT Device	Number of Demos	Percent
Daily living	8,233	19%
Mobility, seating	6,688	15%
Speech communication	6,325	14%
Vision	5,683	13%
Computers and related	5,126	12%
Learning, cognition	4,584	10%
Hearing	4,483	10%
Environmental adaptations	1,167	3%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	1,093	3%
Vehicle modification and transportation	389	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43,771</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.

As illustrated in Table 2, individuals with disabilities (47 percent) comprised almost half of those participating in device demonstrations in FY 2015, 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	30,997	47%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	15,724	24%
Representatives of education	8,143	12%
Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	6,313	9%
Representatives of community living	2,769	4%
Representatives of employment	1,623	2%
Representatives of technology	1,002	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66,571</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.

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 2015, community living was listed as the most common purpose (69 percent), followed by education (22 percent) and employment (10 percent).

For AT Program purposes, education is defined as participating in any type of educational program. Community living includes carrying out daily activities, participating in community activities, 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.

### Return on Investment



**66,571 individuals participated in 43,771 device demonstrations conducted by state AT Programs and were assisted in making informed decisions.**



## Device Demonstration Anecdotes

### NORTH CAROLINA

In North Carolina, AT Program staff worked with an individual who had only one hand and needed to put on a glove at his work station to return to work. AT Program staff came up with various solutions including creating an adaptive glove holder from PVC pipe, a wood block and Velcro tape or using a sock aid to put on the glove. Based on these ideas from the State AT Program, the woodworking team at the community rehabilitation provider created a solution. The individual successfully used the device at the AT Center and on the work floor enabling him to return to his job. A second device was made so the demonstration center of the State AT Program had a device to demonstrate and loan out to others.



### MISSOURI

Virginia, who lives in southwest Missouri, had developed both vision and hearing loss over the years that made it increasingly difficult for her to effectively communicate with her husband of many years. In search of a solution to address this barrier, Virginia and her husband visited the Missouri AT Program's demonstration center located in the Southwest Center for Independent Living. The trained staff at SWCIL introduced Virginia and her husband to assistive listening devices and allowed them to compare and contrast several different ones. Assistive listening devices provide amplification and block out background noise and improve the ability of people with mild to moderate hearing loss to hear. Virginia felt that an assistive listening device would be effective for her and purchased one. As a result of learning and obtaining her device, Virginia said: "I gained some of my independence back by being able to hear."



## 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.

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 support/facilitate self-education by a consumer or professional or to provide other training (ED, 2011).

During FY 2015, 55 AT Programs reported providing 36,432 short-term loans of AT devices to individuals or entities. Individuals with disabilities were the largest group to whom devices were loaned (40 percent), followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (20 percent). Please refer to Table 3 for a more detailed breakdown.

Devices for speech communication (17 percent) were the most common types of AT devices loaned in FY 2015, followed by learning and cognition (16 percent), and computers and related devices (16 percent). Seven additional device categories accounted for the remaining 51 percent of the device loans made (Table 4).

**TABLE 3: NUMBER OF DEVICES BORROWED BY TYPE OF BORROWER**

Type of Borrower	Number of Device Borrowers	Percent
Individuals with disabilities	14,487	40%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	7,142	20%
Representatives of education	6,281	17%
Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	4,766	13%
Representatives of community living	2,152	6%
Representatives of technology	1,070	3%
Representatives of employment	534	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,432</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.

Seventy-three percent or 26,567 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 for accommodation (13 percent), for training/personnel development (9 percent), and as a loaner during repair/waiting for funding (5 percent). Over half of the borrowers (57 percent) who received a device loan identified community living as the primary purpose for which they needed an AT device. Education was the second most common purpose (38 percent), followed by employment (5 percent).

**TABLE 4: DEVICES LOANED BY TYPE**

Type of AT Device	Number Loaned	Percent
Speech communication	8,133	17%
Learning, cognition	8,068	16%
Computers and related	7,776	16%
Daily living	6,875	14%
Mobility, seating	6,509	13%
Vision	3,647	8%
Environmental adaptations	3,256	7%
Hearing	2,396	5%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	1,868	4%
Vehicle modification and transportation	98	<1%
<b>Total # of Devices Loaned</b>	<b>48,626</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.

## Return on Investment



36,432 device loans were made to individuals or agencies with 48,626 devices borrowed from short-term device loan programs.

## Device Loan Anecdotes

**OKLAHOMA**  
Patton, an 8-month old boy from Cotton County has bilateral hearing loss and wears hearing aids. This young boy is active and wanted to play with a toy that would make puppies move and stop through an on/off switch. However, the switch was inaccessible to this boy due to his lack of hearing and understanding. His mom was aware of switch adapters and requested one through Oklahoma AT Program's Device Short-Term Loan program. An AirLink Cordless Switch allowed the boy to control a toy easily. As he plays now, he is very proud of himself. His mother has seen how the switch allows him independence and reinforces his confidence.



## GUAM

Lee, a resident of Hagatna, came to the Guam AT Program to explore options to help his mother, who is a wheelchair user, safely navigate over stairs. After receiving a device demonstration, a device called the Garaventa Stair Trac seemed like a good match to what he was looking for. Lee requested to borrow the device on a short-term loan. The short-term loan allowed Lee and his family an opportunity to try a solution for their mother in their family home before making the financial commitment.



## DEVICE REUTILIZATION PROGRAMS

Assistive technology reutilization involves transferring a previously owned device from someone who no longer needs it to someone who does. Device reuse falls into three activity categories. The first one, device exchange, usually occurs through an online forum where sellers and buyers can connect. Recycling, refurbishment, and repair (RRR) 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. Lastly, open-ended loan programs take previously used devices and loan them to individuals who can use them as long as they are needed, with the expectation the devices would be returned to the program at some point.

In FY 2015, 50,706 consumers received a total of 64,617 reutilized devices from all 56 AT Programs, resulting in an overall savings to the consumers of \$28 million. As Table 5 shows, mobility, seating, and daily living AT were the vast majority of AT devices provided through reuse programs (85 percent of all devices).

**TABLE 5: DEVICE REUTILIZATION SUMMARY BY DEVICE TYPE**

Type of AT Device	# of Devices	Percent of Devices	Total Savings	Percent of Savings
Mobility, seating	31,927	49%	\$19,468,642	69%
Daily living	23,434	36%	\$4,185,896	15%
Computers and related	2,494	4%	\$623,918	2%
Vision	1,483	2%	\$722,925	3%
Hearing	1,347	2%	\$352,749	1%
Environmental adaptations	1,288	2%	\$384,769	1%
Learning/cognition	1,011	2%	167,105	<1%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	850	1%	\$183,519	<1%
Speech communication	663	1%	\$1,149,590	4%
Vehicle modification and transportation	120	<1%	\$782,124	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,617</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$28,021,237</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016

The most common device reutilization activity was recycling/refurbishment/repair (RRR). Seventy-one percent of recipients received devices through an RRR program, saving over \$19 million. Overall, of the services provided through reutilization programs RRR activities provided the greatest savings to recipients.

Recipients of AT through the device reutilization program were surveyed about the primary purpose for which AT was needed. Out of the 48,217 respondents, 92 percent gave community living as the primary purpose, followed by education (6 percent) and employment (2 percent).

**TABLE 6: NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS, DEVICES, AND SAVINGS BY TYPE OF REUTILIZATION ACTIVITY**

Activity	Number (Percent) of Device Recipients	Number (Percent) of Devices	Total Savings To Recipients	Percent of Savings to Recipients
Recycle/refurbish/repair (RRR)	36,205 (71%)	46,817 (72%)	\$19,347,290	69%
Open-ended loans	10,215 (20%)	12,885 (20%)	\$4,802,031	17%
Device exchange	4,286 (8%)	4,915 (8%)	\$3,871,916	14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50,706 (100%)</b>	<b>64,617 (100%)</b>	<b>\$28,021,237</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.

## Return on Investment



50,706 recipients acquired 64,617 reutilized devices. Recipients saved an estimated \$28 million by obtaining reutilized AT instead of new. The reuse of gently used devices provided through the State AT Programs enables recipients to afford and acquire the AT needed for community living, education and employment goals. The societal return on investment of those individuals being able to work, learn, or live in the community by obtaining the AT they need is immeasurable.

## Device Reutilization Anecdotes

### WASHINGTON

Tim is a veteran who requires a wheelchair for any activity outside of his home. He had a major operation, causing him to stay in an East Coast hospital for one month before he moved across country to the state of Washington. Due to on-going recovery as well as breathing difficulties, Tim's mobility was severely limited. He needed access to a wheelchair immediately and did not have time to receive one from the Department of Veterans Affairs before his discharge. Tim's daughter went to Washington's AT program reuse contractor, Bridge Viability Ministries, and was successful at obtaining a temporary wheelchair for Tim to borrow once he arrived in Washington and before the VA provided him a more permanent solution. Access to the wheelchair within days of his arrival meant that he could get out with his daughter to explore a new city and enjoy his lifelong passion for photography, thus restoring a sense of normalcy to his life.



### KANSAS

A preschooler and his educational team requested a prone stander from Assistive Technology for Kansans (ATK). ATK staff worked with the physical therapist to select the correct model and determine the needed supports to fit him so he could safely use the stander. Team members report that obtaining the prone stander provided him with an additional position so he could participate in activities. The standing position improved his circulation and allowed him to bear weight on his legs, which helps hip development. The removable tray with bowl provided him with the opportunity to play and learn from different media. Perhaps the best part from his perspective was that he was at eye level with his peers.



## 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 at 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

Twenty-eight State AT programs reported data on financial loans made. These programs issued 731 loans for AT device(s) totaling \$4,821,688. The average annual income of loan recipients was \$37,759 and the national average

TABLE 7: TYPES AND DOLLAR AMOUNTS OF AT FINANCED

Type of AT	# of Devices Financed	Device Percent	Dollar Value of Loans	Dollar Percent	Average Loan Amount
Hearing	332	44%	\$1,221,197	25%	\$3,678
Vehicle modification and transportation	172	23%	\$2,895,905	60%	\$16,837
Computers and related	86	11%	\$81,801	2%	\$951
Mobility, seating, and positioning	67	9%	\$181,489	4%	\$2,709
Daily living	30	4%	\$124,413	3%	\$4,147
Vision	29	4%	\$51,166	1%	\$1,764
Environmental adaptations	28	4%	\$260,347	5%	\$9,298
Recreation, sports, and leisure	3	<1%	\$4,729	<1%	\$1,576
Speech communication	1	<1%	\$641	<1%	\$641
Learning, cognition	0	0%	\$0	0%	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$4,821,688</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$6,446</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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.



interest rate was 3.53 percent. Out of 731 loans issued, 26 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes of less than \$15,000 and another 28 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes between \$15,001 and \$20,000. The overwhelming majority of total loan dollars issued (60 percent) was for vehicle modification and transportation technologies, averaging \$16,837 per loan. Hearing AT ranked first in number of devices financed averaging \$3,678 per loan. For a more detailed breakdown of loans by device type, refer to Table 7.

### **Other State Financing Programs that Provide AT**

Sixteen states reported data on other state financing activities that resulted in the acquisition of AT. 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 typically limited in focus, only providing a particular type of AT (such as telecommunications), restricted to individuals with a specific kind of disability (such as autism), or require individuals be eligible for a specific funding source (such as IDEA) to obtain the AT.

In FY 2015, these programs served 2,135 individuals and provided 2,899 AT devices. Over one third (36 percent) of the total technologies funded were hearing devices. Environmental adaptations constituted 38 percent (\$1,292,599) of the total value of AT provided (\$3,375,743), but made up only 11 percent of total devices funded.

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

Eight states reported data on other state financing activities that allowed recipients to obtain AT at a reduced cost. These programs included cooperative buying programs, a vision-equipment lease program, and device design and development.

In FY 2015, these other state financing activities served 2,184 individuals, and 4,089 devices were acquired at a total savings to consumers of \$1,596,491. Out of all the AT categories, hearing AT resulted in the highest savings to consumers (\$3,435 per device). Devices for speech communication (1,171 devices), learning and cognition (792 devices), and

## **State Financing Anecdotes**

### **LOUISIANA**

Alex and his mom applied through the Louisiana State AT Act program's financial loan program for a loan for a modified vehicle



so Alex could seek work. The store manager of a local supermarket tells LATAN, "Once I met Alex, I knew right away he would fit in very nicely with our organizational philosophy and that is simply, 'treat the customers like family.' Alex has a great attitude and is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done, both qualities any employer would like to have with any employee. Alex is really no different than any other employee and I am sure I will learn more from him than he will learn from me."

### **DELAWARE**

MJ is a high school student and is blind. She was born in Pakistan and did not receive any formal schooling until she arrived in the U.S. as a teenager. When she started high school, she could not even speak English. She received support in school from the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired and made remarkable progress in a few short years. As she progressed in her education, MJ used various technologies to help her with schoolwork, but was not able to participate in the social side of life without access to social networks. After meeting with MJ, it was clear that a device like an iPhone or iPad would help her interact with her peers using VoiceOver. Delaware AT Program staff spent several hours going through how to use VoiceOver, and MJ borrowed an iPod touch for a trial outside of school. Her family could not afford a monthly phone bill, so the iPod touch provided her with access to many social networks and the Internet. With help from the Delaware AT Program's Borrow to Own Low vision Devices (BOLD) program, MJ was able to get an iPod touch to help in a number of different areas of her young life. MJ also learned how to start advocating for herself and expressed a need for a talking watch with braille option and alarm features which she acquired through the BOLD program.

## **Return on Investment**



731 borrowers obtained financial loans totaling almost \$5 million to buy 748 devices. These loans were made at an average interest rate of 5.53 percent. Assuming most standard

loans would be at a 7 percent or higher interest rate, consumers have saved considerable expense through access to this lower rate.

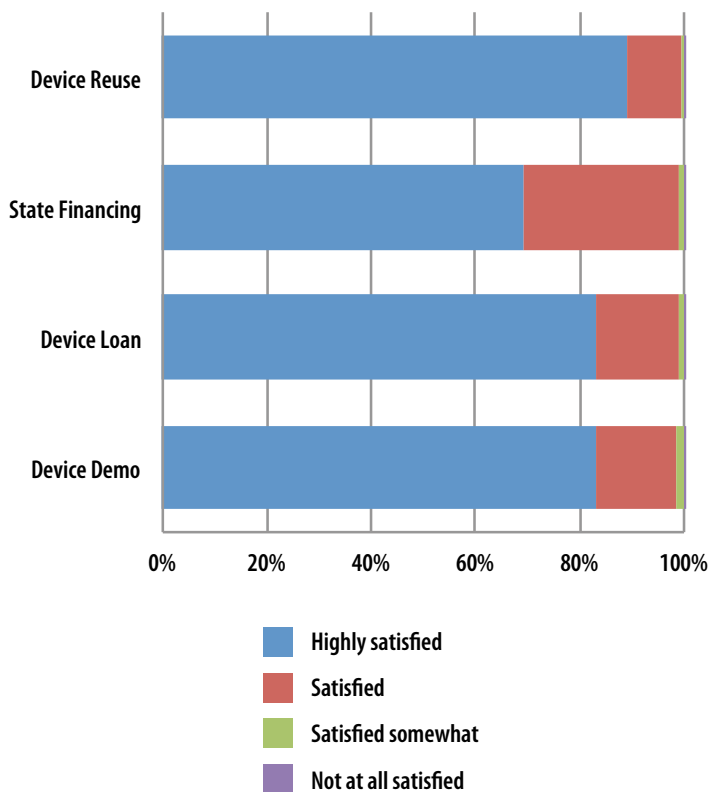
computer or computer access (590 devices) combined made up 62 percent of acquired devices. This resulted in moderate savings per device (\$18 for each device for speech communication, \$54 for each item for learning and cognition, and \$158 for each computer/computer access).

Individuals with disabilities who received services from state financing activities were contacted about the primary purpose for which AT was needed. Seventy-five percent of respondents cited community living as the primary purpose, followed closely by education (17 percent) and employment (8 percent).

### CONSUMER SATISFACTION RATINGS OF STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES

Consumers of AT Program services were asked to report their satisfaction with the services they received. Figure 1 shows the responses to consumer satisfaction questions for each of the state activities. As we can see, the vast majority (>98 percent) of respondents were highly satisfied or satisfied with the services they received in each state activity. Device reuse programs had the highest consumer satisfaction out of all state activities, with 99.4 percent of consumers highly satisfied or satisfied, followed by state financing (99 percent). Device demonstration and device loan programs both have customer satisfaction ratings of 98 percent.

FIGURE 1: CONSUMER RATING OF SERVICES

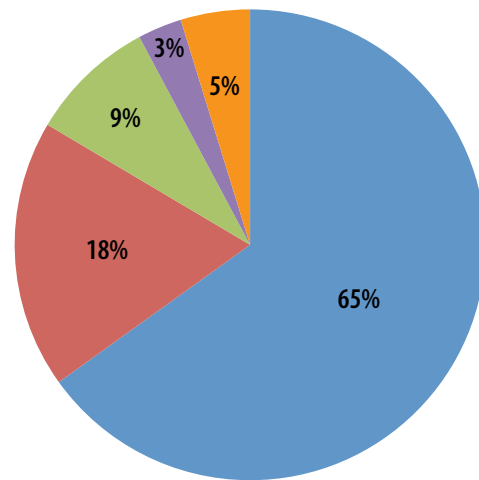


## STATE ACTIVITIES PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### ACQUISITION PERFORMANCE

Consumers were surveyed about the primary purpose of device acquisition and why they chose to participate in any of the following four programs: state financing services, device exchange, device reuse, and open-ended loans. Sixty-five percent of consumers stated that they could only afford AT through these programs. Eighteen percent said that the AT needed was only available to them through these programs, and 9 percent responded that the AT was available to them through other programs, but the system was too complex or the wait time too long. Community living was by far the most common purpose for AT (83 percent). See Figure 2 for more details.

FIGURE 2: WHY CONSUMERS OBTAINED A DEVICE FROM THE STATE AT PROGRAM



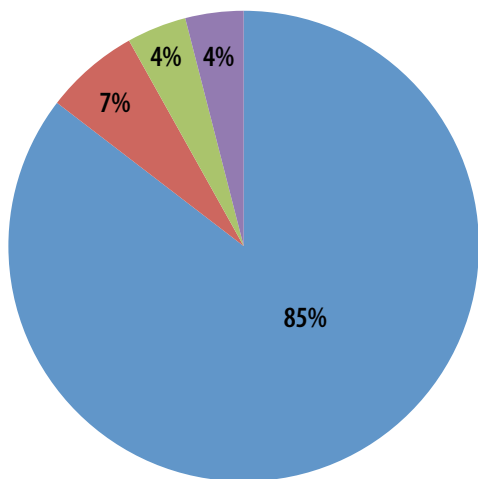
Overall Acquisition Performance Measure	Education	Employment	Community Living
Could only afford the AT through the AT program	3,551	1,207	35,893
AT was only available through the AT program	1,912	447	9,149
AT available through other programs, but system complex/wait time too long	1,079	411	3,941
None of these	307	91	1,495
Nonrespondent	1,383	128	1,462
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,232</b>	<b>2,284</b>	<b>51,940</b>

## ACCESS PERFORMANCE

Consumers were surveyed about the kind of decisions they were able to make as the result of a device demonstration or device loan, as well as the primary purpose for which these devices will be needed. As the chart below illustrates, these services have overwhelmingly contributed to individuals with disabilities or their representatives making an informed decision about AT.

Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that an AT device would meet their needs, or those of someone they represent. Another 7 percent of consumers stated that an AT device would not meet their needs (which is still an important decision outcome), and 4 percent did not make a decision. Community living (64 percent) and education (28 percent) were the most commonly reported purposes for AT, as shown in Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3: KINDS OF CONSUMER DECISIONS THE STATE AT PROGRAM ENABLED**



Overall Access Performance Measure	Education	Employment	Community Living
Decided AT will meet needs	15,852	5,167	39,115
Decided AT will not meet needs	1,711	390	2,461
Have not made a decision	986	213	1,692
Nonrespondent	1,056	210	1,485
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,605</b>	<b>5,980</b>	<b>44,753</b>

## 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 competency, as opposed to training intended only to increase general awareness of AT (ED, 2011).

In FY 2015, AT Programs trained a total of 120,483 participants. Education representatives (31 percent) were closely followed by individuals with disabilities (28 percent) as the types of individuals who were most likely to receive training.

Forty-six 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. Thirty-four 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 were attended by 9 percent of participants. AT funding/policy/practice and information technology/telecommunication access trainings were attended by 11 percent of training participants combined.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS

Public awareness activities include public service announcements, Internet outreach and social networking, 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 determine, and estimates must be reported (ED, 2011).

In FY 2015, AT Programs reached an estimated 22,865,878 people through their awareness activities. Out of the estimated total reached, 43 percent of individuals were contacted through public service announcements on radio or television, 31 percent through the Internet, and the remaining outreach activities were distributed among listservs (7 percent), other print materials (6 percent), newsletters (5 percent), other electronic media (5 percent), and public forums (3 percent).

## INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Information and assistance (I&A) activities are those in which 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 2015, 340,745 individuals were recipients of I&A. Out of the two I&A content areas, information about specific AT products/devices/services was the most common, with 73 percent of recipients requesting this type of information. Twenty-seven percent received information on obtaining funding for AT. The largest recipient group of I&A was individuals with disabilities (26 percent), followed by family members/guardians/authorized representatives (25 percent), representatives of community living (17 percent), and representatives of education (12 percent). The remaining recipient types were representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation (10 percent), representatives of employment (5 percent), representatives of technology (4 percent), and others (<1 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 2015, the 56 grantees reported providing a majority of technical assistance to educational agencies (31 percent) and community living agencies (26 percent).

**TABLE 8: PERCENTAGE OF AGENCIES THAT RECEIVED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Program/Agency Type Receiving TA	Percent
Education	31%
Community living	26%
Employment	18%
Health, allied health, and rehabilitation	13%
Technology (IT, Telecom, AT)	12%
<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 2015. Last accessed April 2016.

## CONCLUSION

State and Territory AT Programs have improved the ability of individuals with disabilities of all ages to fully engage in education, community living, and employment, propelling their chances to advance socioeconomically and achieve optimal self-sufficiency. 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 allows consumers to receive information about a device and become familiar with it through loan and demonstration 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.

Leveraged funding is frequently secured by State AT Programs and is used to expand and maximize services. In FY15, State AT Programs leveraged \$16.1 million from federal, state, local and private sources. These leveraged dollars were used to supplement \$25.7 million in Section 4 AT Act formula grant funding for FY15 and expand program reach in all AT Act authorized activities. This report highlights more than \$55 million in savings and benefits delivered by State AT Programs in FY 2015 to almost 700,000 service recipients.

## REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Rehabilitation Services Administration. Annual report to Congress on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended, for fiscal years 2007 and 2008. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (2011, May). History of the Assistive Technology Act. Springfield, IL.

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## Initiatives from the Field

### COMMUNITY LIVING

The Colorado AT Program worked with the Colorado Department of Health and Environment Emergency Preparedness Community Inclusion program to develop a “live” map platform. This online product enhances emergency preparedness, response planning, and resources by making location-based information easily accessible.

Maps include community demographic data, functional characteristics, and resources for emergency managers at the census tract level. The map website is used by emergency managers across the state as they develop local emergency preparedness plans. The disability community has also begun to use the maps for planning processes and grant development. The website is updated quarterly, and plans are in the works to map Medicare and Medicaid power-dependent equipment use.

### HEALTH, ALLIED HEALTH, REHABILITATION

The Puerto Rico AT Program was involved in successful efforts to amend the Work Accidents Compensation System Law. The amendment provides workers who are disabled on the job with access to AT devices through the State Insurance Fund Corporation, along with AT device repair and replacement. The updated law also increases the funds a worker with disabilities is entitled to receive for home modifications for accessibility.

### EMPLOYMENT

Kansas was one of six states awarded with a nationally recognized Farmer Veteran Chapter from the National Farmer Veteran Organization and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Kansas AT Program, Kansas Farmers Union, and Kansas AgrAbility collaborated to recruit potential board members, and to draft the

mission and operating principles, which were submitted for review.

As a member of the Kansas Farmer Veteran chapter, the Kansas AT Program has increased visibility and recognition among veterans with disabilities, an underserved population. The award also gives the AT Program access to additional funds for technology, as well as increased contacts among veteran and agricultural organizations across the state.

### EDUCATION

The New York AT Program is negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state’s vocational rehabilitation program, ACCES-VR. The MOU will provide AT devices and services to individuals transitioning from school to post-secondary education, training, apprenticeship, and certificate programs. AT devices will also be available for work tryouts and on-the-job training opportunities.

Once the MOU is finalized, the AT Program regional centers will report outcomes on a quarterly and annual basis. After the first year, AT Program staff will work with ACCES-VR staff to develop written procedures for consumers accessing services.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY

Until recently, Pennsylvania’s telecommunication device distribution program was restricted to wired (landline) devices. Staff at the state’s AT Program wanted to expand distribution to include wireless devices. The AT Program submitted a proposal and budget for a wireless pilot program to the PA Public Utility Commission (PUC). In July 2015, the PUC approved the pilot project, which will determine the feasibility and costs of permanently offering both wired and wireless telecommunication devices.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION

Contact and other information on each State AT Program can be found on the Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA) website.

The CATADA website also provides an overall summary data report for Fiscal Year 2015 that provides data on the major AT Act activities by state.

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