

Assistive technology (AT) devices are defined as “Any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially, off-the-shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” (Assistive Technology Act of 1998, “The Tech Act”).

AT can be used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are now available including wheelchairs, Velcro adapted clothing, computers and mobile devices, seating systems, powered mobility, augmentative communication devices, special switches, assisted listening devices, visual aids, memory prosthetics, and thousands of other commercially available or adapted items.

AT services are those that “directly assist in the selection, acquisition, or use of an AT device” and can include functional evaluations; training on or demonstration of devices; purchasing or leasing devices; designing, customizing and repairing equipment; and individualized training.

A number of resources exist to help VR agencies identify, assess, select, and purchase appropriate AT for clients and to support the professional development of staff.

1. Every State has an AT Act Program funded by the Administration on Community Living (ACL). AT Act Programs provide demonstrations and loans of AT so that consumers can try devices out before they buy them. Many also have reuse and exchange programs that provide gently used refurbished equipment at low cost, and financing programs including low-interest loans, matched savings, telecommunication distribution, and cooperative buying. Additionally, AT Act Programs are the go-to resource for AT resources within each state and provide information and assistance, training, and technical assistance. The RESNA Catalyst Project (<http://www.resnaprojects.org/index.html>) provides technical assistance to the AT Act Programs and a directory for all 56 AT Act programs (<http://www.resnaprojects.org/allcontacts/statewidecontacts.html>) and for most Alternative Financing Programs, Access to Telework Loans, and other Assistive Technology Cash Loan Programs (<http://www.resnaprojects.org/allcontacts/afpid.html>). Further financing resources may also be available; contact the State AT Program for information.
2. The Pass It On Center (<http://www.passitoncenter.org/>) supports state and national efforts that foster reuse of AT.
3. AbleData (<http://www.abledata.com/>) is a database of AT products, solutions, and resources funded by NIDILRR (<http://www.acl.gov/programs/NIDILRR/>). AbleData does not produce, distribute, or sell the products listed in the database.
4. Assistivetech.net (<http://assistivetech.net/>) is another website developed by Georgia Tech's Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA) that provides information about AT devices and services.
5. There are several conferences where staff can go to learn more about AT, including:
  - a. The International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference (<http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/>)

- b. Closing the Gap (<http://www.closingthegap.com/>)
  - c. The Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) Conference (<http://atia.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4549>)
  - d. RESNA Annual Conference (<http://www.resna.org/news-events/annual-meeting/promoting-access-assistive-technology>)
6. Staff who are interested in more in-depth training might consider the CSUN Assistive Technology Certificate Program (<http://www.csun.edu/cod/assistive-technology-certificate-program>).
7. Staff with training and experience working with AT might consider the Assistive Technology Professional (ATP) certification (<http://www.resna.org/get-certified/atp/atp-0>) offered by RESNA.