ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY!

January 2019

Young Children & Assistive Technology

Too young to use assistive technology?   NOT TRUE!

Myths, such as "children under age five are too young to benefit from the use of assistive technology" often limits its use with young children. Here are a few common myths to be aware of:

- A child requires certain skills before using assistive technology.
- Assistive technology can only be used in a setting where a specialist is available.
- Assistive technology is too expensive to use with young children.
- When a child uses assistive technology, it will interfere with his/her development.
- Assistive technology comes only from specialized sources.
- When a child no longer needs his/her assistive technology it cannot be re-used by another child.

Visit the Take Action "Myth Buster for Beginners" — Resource within Reason p.4

What is assistive technology?

ASSISTIVE = Providing aid or assistance *to* a person with a disability

TECHNOLOGY= Tools made by humans to make our live easier or to solve a problem

BEST PRACTICE TIP: Provide a child with a disability the appropriate assistive devices *at the time they are needed* so that he or she is able to participate in their everyday routines and activities with minimal or no hands-on assistance from an adult.

Visit the Take Action "Try before you buy" DATI — Resource within Reason p.4

Hover the QR code below to access the federal definition of assistive technology devices and services.

Is this considered assistive technology?   IT DEPENDS!

When a child with a disability uses an everyday item that enables him or her to participate in a daily routine or activity in a manner that satisfies parent or primary caregiver expectations, the item becomes assistive technology for that child.

Parents and professionals are already using assistive technology with young children!

Some examples:
- Non-slip stabilizing material
- Pool noodles as seat support
- Photos of choice items
- Hand bell to gain attention
- Kitchen timer to set limits

Ask: If a particular item was taken away from a child with a disability, would he/she still be able to participate as expected? Or, if the item was taken away, would hand-over-hand or adult physical support be needed?

BEST PRACTICE TIP: Label items as "assitive technology devices" in the child service document whenever an item makes it possible for a child to access and participate in everyday routines activities and/or educational learning opportunities.

Who is responsible for assistive technology?

EVERYONE in a child's life can contribute to selection and use of assistive technology. Since the use of assistive technology is an ongoing process and can be applied in various settings, it takes a team of individuals to be successful! The decisions made and actions taken by a team of adults may be defined as assistive technology services. Services relate to the selection, obtaining and use of an assistive technology device.

NOTE: Children receiving early intervention services may not be excluded from consideration for assistive technology services and devices for any reason. Every child with a disability should be **considered** for assistive technology services and devices. This consideration does not mean that a child will need or receive assistive technology services/devices, nor that any particular organization or agency is required to pay for assistive technology devices.

BEST PRACTICE TIP:

♦ Identify a person to serve as the "lead" for all things assistive technology related. This person does not have to be an assistive technology expert, rather a person who will coordinate the service process.

"I was thrilled when we found a way to prop Stanly in the bathtub using a laundry basket and some pool noodles. Now it is easy to bath him plus he smiles instead of screams during bath time."

What does good assistive technology consideration look like?

In the development of a child's service plan, anyone - including a child's family member - can set the stage for considering assitive technology by discussing family priorities and needs.

A good place to start is a conversation about the child's participation in everyday family routines and activities. This conversation will inform the team about the child's level of participation as well as the family's level of satisfaction with the level of participation. Assistive technology services can build a bridge between what is not working well in a particular routine or activity and making the routine or activity work well for everyone involved.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS:

♦ Use a family routines and activities decision-making approach.

♦ Document and share information.

♦ Try before you buy a device

♦ Use a child-specific assistive technology planner to guide the process of considering and using assistive technology with young children. *Visit the Take Action "PEAT's Suite" — Resources within Reason p.4*

How do adults participate in providing assistive technology services?

There are several opportunities to discuss and plan for a child's access to assistive technology services and devices:

♦   Eligibility assessment

♦   Service plan development

♦   Service plan review

♦   Each service visit

Sometimes the type and extent of assistive technology services that a child needs may be evident. When this is not the case, on-going assessments (formal and informal) using a routines- and activities-based approach reveal what items may be necessary to enhance the child's participation and speed the process by which the child gains access to the necessary devices o promote his or her participation across the day and in a variety of settings.

BEST PRACTICE TIP:

♦ Invite a variety of individuals to participate and contribute ideas about how or what assistive technology devices may benefit a child. Think outside the box. Invite the child's family to involve siblings, family friends, and community members who are familiar with the child.

What is important when selecting assistive technology devices?

Caregivers: How practical is the device or item to use? Is it compatible with their lifestyle and their preferences? What is their comfort level using the device with the child? Are they able to transport the device across routines/activities and settings?

It is important to note that once a device or item is selected for use, the needs of the child's primary caregivers will determine the extent to which a child actually uses a particular device within his or her daily routines and activities.

Child: Is the device appropriate for the child's developmental age? Does it address the child's immediate participation needs? Does its use remove identified barriers to participation? Does it support progress toward the child's functional outcomes? Is it comfortable and easy to use?

The device: Is it simple? Does it meet the child's needs? Does it require more than one person to use? Is it dependable? Transportable? Adaptable? Durable? Versatile? Is it compatible with existing or needed devices? Does the device support the

child's functional performance?

Service system: Are there devices available for trial? Are there used devices for purchase? Are there devices available for short - or long-term loan? What are the funding sources and procurement processes? Does the service system have the ability to train professionals and/or caregivers to use the device with the child? Are there transition considerations from one service system to another? Is insurance coverage available (if needed) for malfunction, theft, replacement, and damage?

More on selecting and using devices…

DEVICES SHOULD:

♦ Increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child

♦ Enhance a child's participation in a routine or activity

♦ Provide opportunities for learning

♦ Complement existing services

♦ Be developmentally and age-appropriate

♦ Be appropriate for the environment where the child spends his or her day

♦ Be described in documentation shared with the team

BEST PRACTICE TIP:

♦ At no time should assistive technology devices be used as a "last resort" (its never too early!).

♦ By no means should assistive technology services be used in place of other needed professional services.

"It was so refreshing to have a service team all focus on floor play time with Cali. As a result we now use a variety of devices that allow her to sit, play with toys AND communicate with us all at the same time."

How is a child's assistive technology journey told?

Monitoring and documenting the effectiveness of assistive technology is a dynamic, responsive, and on-going process. Check in regularly with the team to ask: Is the device enabling the child's participation in daily routines/activities? Are the caregivers expressing challenges with using the device? Is there sufficient space to accommodate and/or store a device for a routine/activity (think about the

bath time laundry basket example)? How many devices are needed/used for a routine/activity and are they all being used regularly? Has the child gained functional skills and no longer need the device or need a different device?

Consider documenting quantitative changes as the child uses the device such as length of time participating in a routine/activity; number of hand-over-

hand assists provided; and measures of achievement (e.g., scoops of food, number of blocks).

Document qualitative notes for example the accuracy of movement, the efficiency of movement, the child's affect during participation, the parent's report on adult assistance provided, generalization of device use to other routines/activities.

Assistive technology on the go...Generalize and transition

As children use assistive technology devices it is critical that planning happens to support the generalization of device use to a variety of routines and activities and the transfer device use to another settings. One aspect of providing assistive technology services is assisting to generalize the device use and support the adults in the receiving settings to prepare for and provide access to new routines and activities. One resource listed below to help adults plan for generalization and transition of assitive technology is **PEAT's Suite.** The PEAT's Suite includes a real-life example of Natalie and her Portfolio that uses photos and text to show her assistive technology journey. When Natalie moved from day care to preschool her mother said "It's hard to transition! [Having a plan] gave me and my husband a sense of calm, knowing her upcoming teachers would have a better understanding of and know about Natalie before she arrived in their classroom. We were able to showcase all her abilities and what she is capable of [when she has her assistive technology devices]."

Also included in the PEAT's Suite is a real-life example of Walter which tells the story of how his team generalized the use of a timer to support his participation. For Walter, his preschool teacher was successful using a timer during preschool story time. The service team and family created a web diagram of when else to use the timer to help Water stay engaged. At the center of the diagram was a description of how adults and Walter use the timer for story time. Lines extending from the center ended in descriptions of ways that adults and Walter could use the timer for other routines and activities. As a result, all of the adults interacting with Walter during a variety of routines and activities provided consistent use of the timer device. Walter's parents expressed an increased satisfaction with how Walter was able to participate across the select routines and activities.

TAKE ACTION...RESOURCES WITHIN REASON

Try before you buy—www.cds.udel.edu/at/dati

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) helps Delawarians find and try assistive devices. c*heck "Show Early Childhood Items Only" box* when using the searchable device data base.

Re-use assistive technology devices— www.dati.org/v3/home.php

AT Exchange is an easily-accessed system that connects people wanting to acquire assistive technology devices at wholesale prices to people wishing to give up devices they no longer need.

Do-it-yourself inspired devices—www.fabricate4all.org

fabricATe 4 all features it's inspirATion stATion and search for simple assistive tool solutions that you can make or adapt.

Child-specific assistive technology planning—www.facebook.com/PEATsSuiteJourney/

PEAT's Suite is a comprehensive child-specific assistive technology planning tool which can be used anywhere, anytime, by anyone.

Adaptations to address challenging situations—https://brookespublishing.com/

CARA's Kit for Toddlers, a reader friendly guide with tips and suggestions, a clear six-step process for using adaptations, and dozens of solutions for increasing the participation of children 18-36 months of age.

Assistive technology with young children myth busters—www.cds.udel.edu/at/decatd/

Myth Buster for Beginners covers 12 myths and complimentary myth busting resources including web links to stories and videos of young children using a variety of assistive technology devices.

Hover over this bar code to access an electronic copy of this document and you will also find additional useful information.