

# A crucial step forward

Small things can make a big difference for a young child with a disability. For Liam Ramos, a two-year-old with a developmental disability, modifying a little carousel toy to help him grasp things made the difference. Soon after, Liam gripped and used his walker. “He has a long way to go,” says Jacqueline Schweda, Liam’s mother. “But this was a crucial step.”

There’s no limit to the ways assistive technology can help children learn and develop. But [Suzanne Milbourne](#), project director of the Delaware Early Childhood Assistive Technology Demonstration, says too few teachers, clinicians and families know about AT’s benefits. Only three percent of Individualized Family Service Plans for children with disabilities include assistive technology. Three percent.

To get more people to appreciate and acquire AT, CDS applied for and was awarded a [federal Department of Education grant](#) – one of just three nationwide. The \$1.2 million, five-year grant will help providers and families learn how and when to use AT so children from birth to age five can participate in daily routines and activities.

Mary Agnes Rutkowski of [Bayada Delaware Pediatric Visits](#), one of three organizations serving children with disabilities to partner with the Demonstration, says the Demonstration’s team approach helps Bayada’s clients reach their goals faster.

CDS is devoting a large portion of the grant to expand the CDS-run Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative’s three resource centers. The centers loan AT free to families and providers. “We’ll be seeing far more children and their families make gains from the kind of assistive technology that Bayada used to help Liam,” says Milbourne.

[See a slideshow of assistive technology used by the Demonstration.](#)



Liam Ramos, right, tries out a specially shaped crayon with the help of Bayada therapist Annette Mestern.