

Assistive Technology Evaluations

People with disabilities are individuals with different needs and abilities, and their assistive technology (AT) should respond to these differences and be specific to meet these needs. The primary way to ensure that a person obtains the proper AT is through an evaluation by an individual qualified in the field.

One approach to evaluating an individual is to gather information about him or her in the specific setting or settings in which he or she will be using AT. The SETT approach uses the Student (in a school setting), the Environment, the Tasks, and the Tools or Technology, including tools used in the past, in order to obtain information and determine the most appropriate AT needed at a particular point in a person's life.

An open relationship between the evaluator and the individual being evaluated is optimal in determining the most appropriate AT match. The individual knows and shares his or her goals, interests, and priorities and the evaluator knows and understands the uses of technology. The evaluator can also determine the individual's comfort level with the AT, which is important for the future use of the device.

An evaluation should include a list of specified problem areas and possible solutions. AT devices may be prioritized based on importance, or may begin with the simplest AT solution and gradually work up to the most complex solution.

School Evaluations

Assistive technology evaluations can take place either in the school setting or at an outside agency. Having the evaluation conducted in school, which is the student's natural environment, is ideal. Individuals who work closely with the student, including parents, child study team members, teachers, related services staff, and others should provide input regarding the student's strengths, weaknesses and educational goals.

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Worksite Evaluations

The ideal way to evaluate an employee with a disability is to have a professional evaluator go to the worksite and work with the employer to identify the individual's essential job functions. The employer, employee and evaluator then identify potential AT accommodations.

Home Evaluations

Home evaluations may assess a variety of activities related to daily living, including dressing, bathing and toileting, cooking or managing the home, mobility into, out of, and within the home, and recreation or leisure. If a caregiver is involved, his or her abilities should be taken into consideration as well.

The Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC) of NJP&A provides information about qualified assistive technology evaluators. ATAC (formerly TARP) is a program of New Jersey Protection & Advocacy Inc., providing information and referral, outreach and education, technical assistance and legal and non-legal advocacy in the area of assistive technology.

The Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC) of NJP&A

210 South Broad Street, Third Floor, Trenton, NJ 08608

For voice assistance and information, please call toll free, 1-800-922-7233, or 609-292-9742

TTY USERS MAY DIAL (609) 633-7106, or use the NJ Relay, 1-800-852-7899, to reach the 800# above.

Visit us on the web at www.njpanda.org

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