



Assistive Technology Is a Part of Everyday Life: **Community Living**

#ATAwarenessDay

March 1, 2023, is National Assistive Technology Awareness Day! Congress has designated this day to recognize the role of assistive technology (AT) and AT services in the lives of persons with disabilities. Celebrate AT!

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

AT is any item, device, or software used to maintain or improve the independence and functioning of persons with disabilities and older adults. AT devices can be "low tech," such as a built-up handle on a spoon to improve the ability to grasp, to "high tech," such as computers controlled with eye gaze. AT includes the services necessary to get and use the devices, including assessment, customization, repair, and training.

What Services Do State and Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs Provide?

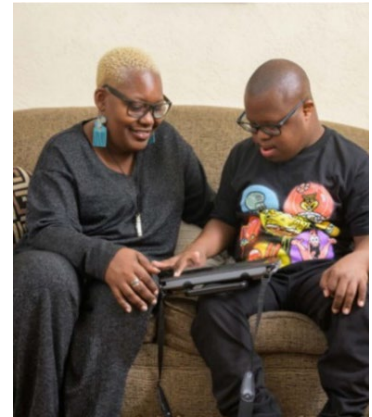
AT Act Programs assist individuals with disabilities of all ages (including veterans and older adults) to identify and acquire AT that supports their independence, safety, and personal goals. Programs serve AT users directly and their family members, caregivers, educators, therapists, and employers. Anyone with a reason to learn about AT is welcome.

AT Act Programs provide opportunities to learn about and try out AT. Visitors can compare the functions and features of a range of devices through hands-on exploration. These equipment demonstrations often lead to device loans that help inform future purchase decisions or fulfill a short-term equipment need.

AT Act Programs do not sell new AT. Instead, they may provide funding counseling and financing to obtain or purchase AT. Visitors are not pressured to choose any particular product or vendor. AT users learn about devices from AT professionals who may use assistive technology themselves. AT Act Programs also support the reutilization of gently-used devices to provide free or affordable equipment. [Learn more at AT3Center.net](https://www.at3center.net).

How Does Assistive Technology Support Community Living?

AT supports community living and inclusion in a myriad of ways. It may be a speech-generating device used to buy coffee, lift-equipped transportation for attending events and appointments, or mobility devices to extend a person's stamina and participation. It may be braille signage, hearing-loop-equipped meeting rooms, elevators, ramps, and audible crosswalks to make public spaces accessible. There are even virtual-presence robots for touring museums remotely,



A young client of the Delaware AT Act Program using an iPad for communication.

adapted recreation equipment for joining in family fun, and scenic-overlook binoculars for colorblind tourists (installed in Tennessee!) AT expands horizons.

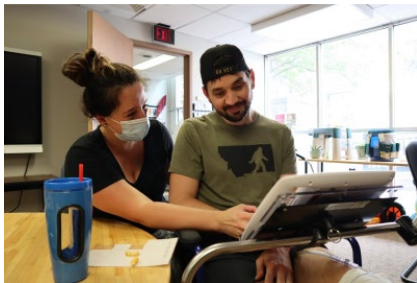
A Story from Nebraska



When "Roger" retired, he acquired a dog for companionship during the pandemic. Before long, he realized the growing puppy needed more walking than his health could manage. Roger knew a scooter could help, but his insurance would not cover this type of device. So, he called Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), Nebraska's AT Program. ATP

coordinates a network of reutilization partners to help collect, refurbish, and redistribute donated devices. Roger was delighted when a local ATP reuse partner came through with a donated scooter. Now Mac and Roger have a well-practiced routine. Despite his diabetes, "the scooter makes it possible for me to walk Mac every day and do errands," he says. Bells are attached to Mac's harness. People tell him he sounds like Santa coming down the street! ([Read Roger's full story.](#))

A Story from Montana



"James," a 32-year-old veteran with frontal temporal dementia, visited the Montana AT Act Program (MonTECH) with his wife and caregiver. MonTECH's team was determined to provide any equipment that might make life sweeter or more comfortable for them. An equipment demonstration in Missoula resulted in loans of simple communication devices, universal cuffs, cup holders, mounts, and a more supportive wheelchair James can use

while he awaits funding for a new chair. With MonTECH device loans, James, his wife, and their young son were also able to join their extended family on a camping trip. They borrowed an all-terrain wheelchair and a wide camp cot. James's participation was important to the whole family, and the MonTECH team was grateful to play a part in their special weekend.

Examples of AT for Community Living:

- communication devices (AAC),
- devices for orientation with a vision impairment,
- mobility equipment,
- tactile 3D-printed images in museums,
- public spaces equipped with hearing loop technology,
- hearing aids,
- braille signage,
- accessible transportation,
- adaptive recreation equipment,
- accessible gaming