Low-Tech Assistive Technology

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Federal Definition of AT?

- Definition:
  - Assistive technology means 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 the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. These may include commercially available or “home made” devices that are specially designed to meet the idiosyncratic needs to a particular individual.
Other definitions...

- AT is defined as technological tools used to access education, employment, recreation or communication, to live as independently as possible.
- AT is devices and aids which can help a person with a disability perform activities that might otherwise be difficult or not possible.
Commonly known AT items

- Eye glasses
- Tumble form chairs
- Standers
- Rifton chairs
- Switches
- Splints
- Hearing aids
- Communication systems
- Positioners
- Seating Equipment
- Bolsters
- Sensory Equipment
- Feeding Equipment
- Therapy Balls
- Wheelchairs
Tots n Tech National Research Institute

- Best Practices Grant for 0-3 population
  - Increase participation in functional skills at home and in the community
  - Increase proper documentation of AT use on IFSP
- Decrease barriers for the development and funding of AT items.
- Increase consistent well-established guidelines for assessment, use, and billing.
Tots n Tech National Research Institute

- State and community levels
  - What are the decision making processes and typical practices?
  - What resources are available to providers and families?
  - What training and supports are provided?
  - What is the prevalence and use of AT in the 0-3 population?
**TNT Outcomes**

- TNT Newsletter and website was developed to share ideas throughout the country.
- Improved definitions of AT.
- Ongoing communication regarding the use of AT in the 0-3 population.
The AT Continuum

- High Tech - incorporate sophisticated electronics or computers.
  - Some items can grow with the child from simple to more advanced.
  - Typically more expensive.
  - Involves more paperwork which can delay obtaining the item for long periods of time.
  - Sometimes can be too complicated for families to use and therefore don’t use as often as anticipated.
The AT Continuum

- **Medium Tech** – relatively complicated mechanical devices such as wheelchairs.

- **Low Tech** – less sophisticated and can include devices such as an adapted spoon handle, Velcro fasteners, and non-tipping cups. These items can usually be found in local stores or catalogs.
AT dollars and the budget

- Assistive technology is reimbursed at 100% and is not subject to risk share.
- When added to an IFSP, Early Steps must cover requested equipment.
- AT dollars are significantly impacting the limited budget.
Budget Solutions

- Using creative low tech AT solutions can:
  - Usually meet the same individual needs of a child on their IFSP as high tech solutions in many cases.
  - Decrease the significant impact on the monthly budget.
  - Improve families access to AT solutions quicker and with less paperwork or “red tape”.

Budget Solutions

- Low tech items can be less expensive and easier to find.
- Many times, low tech items can even be found at garage sales or second hand stores.
- Using lending libraries to test equipment before ordering.
Budget Solutions

- Try low tech options for a period of time before requesting costly equipment on IFSP.
- If many costly items are necessary, a referral to Shriners may be more appropriate than requesting multiple items from Early Steps.
- Reminder: Any AT item must be requested by the time the child is 30 months of age.
Seating

High Tech:
Rifton Chair      $529.00
Low Tech:

Booster Chair
$39.99

High Chair
$30.00 +
How do I Adapt a highchair/chair?

- Use the items below to position the child easily in a highchair or other type of chair.
  - Blankets
  - Pillows
  - Towels
  - Phone book/ books
  - What items have you used successfully?
Tray for Seating

Low Tech
$17-$20

High Tech
$599.00
Ideas to assist in seating...

High Tech:

- Wedges (Move N’ Sit)
  $32.95
- “Sit Upons”
  $42.95
- Bolsters
  $104 +
- Neck Collars
  $84.95
Ideas to assist in seating…

Low Tech:

- Pillows (Free)
- Cushions
- Beach Balls (one puff of air)
- Blankets Rolled Up
- Bean Bags
- Boppys
Inflatable pool float
**Boppie – Pillows - Cushions**

- These items can provide supports in many ways.
  - Sitting, upper extremity support, head support, etc.
  - Can be used on floor, in chair, in swing, in shopping cart, etc.
Feeder Seat

High Tech: $299.99 +

Low Tech: $69.99 +
Tummy Time Positioning
High Tech: $849.00
Tummy Time Positioning

Low Tech:

$24.00  $40.00
Other low tech ideas…

- Crawling device - Skateboard with padding
- Seat support - Shopping cart insert with foam noodle and pillow
- Seat support - Laundry basket with pillow
Bath Chairs

High Tech: $379 +

Low Tech: $19.00 or less
Splinting and AFO’s

● High Tech:
  ● Benick hand splints (neoprene hand splints) $300-$500
  ● Westcoast Brace and Limb for AFO’s $500-$1000 depending on the need. (Shriners provides these free of charge)
  ● Theratogs- blue neoprene suits that are $500. Be careful with this, for orthopedic condition versus a neurological condition.
Splinting and AFO’s

- Low Tech:
  - Futuro Wrist splints (CVS) $20-$30.00
  - Taping can provide either the same stimulating or inhibiting effects to muscle groups as bracing. Can be done by family members if taught by therapist. Can be found at CVS.
  - Techniques such as icing and vibration can also provide the same results as bracing in some cases.
Feeding Utensils
Low Tech:
$5.49-$9.99 versus
$9.99-$14.99 more from a catalog
Cause and Effect Toys
High Tech: $299.00
Low Tech: $19-$30
Alternative Eating Utensils
Push Light
Velcro Strips
Adapted Utensil - Velcro strips
Adapted Utensil-toy ring
Adapted Utensil-shower
Curtain ring
Adapted Utensil-foam noodle
Adapted Utensil-tennis ball
Adapted Utensil - bowling pin
Adapted Utensil-film container
Adapted Utensil – stress ball
Hand Support Device - panty hose
Hand Support Device - panty hose
Water bottle with slits
Hand Support Device - foam toy
Adapted Puzzle- foam pieces
Adapted Toy- small block
Adapted Book – foam pieces
Adapted Book- pom-pom balls
Adapted Book – popsicle sticks
Communication Book- folder
Communication Ring- key chain
Communication Box- pencil box
**Resources**

- Community Lending Libraries:
  - Shriners/IYC
  - Independent Living, Inc.
  - Advance Abilities Solutions
  - FAAST
- Tech N Tots website for a long list of resources and websites
  
  www.asu.edu/clas/tnt/home_files/ideas.htm
Resources

● Make and Take Workshops – Janet Atkinson IYC 356-1632
● Family Guide to AT – www.pluk.org
● Assistive Technology Centre- www.nsnet.org
● Assistive Tech Net – www.assistivetech.net
● Assistive Technology Industry Assoc.- www.atia.org