



The Law

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team shall consider assistive technology (AT) as part of the IEP process.

Assistive technology is defined in the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) to include:

- Devices—**any item, piece of equipment, or product system** that is used to **increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities** of a child with a disability (excludes a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device).
- Services—directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.



Consideration in the IEP

The IDEA requires that AT be considered for all students within the development of the IEP. There are many processes to follow, keeping in mind the following:

Questions to consider for each area of concern include—

- What specific tasks in this area are difficult or impossible to achieve at this time at the expected level of independence?
- What accommodations and tools are currently being used to lower barriers?
- Are there continuing barriers when the student attempts the task?

AT may be necessary for students to complete expected tasks successfully.

There are no state or national standards for an AT specialist or assessment.

District policies and procedures regarding AT vary across the state but they must be in compliance with the law and ensure students with disabilities are provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE).



Who Provides Assistive Technology?

If AT is necessary, the district must provide the devices and/or services.

The IEP team determines whether AT is necessary for a student's FAPE through the consideration process. The district is responsible for ensuring the necessary AT is made available to the student, regardless of cost. There is a wide variety of AT ranging from no/low-tech to high-tech. AT can be a simple, easily affordable device or service.

Michigan's public local and intermediate school districts considering AT for students have access to the Michigan's Integrated Technology Supports (MITS) Lending Library. Devices can be borrowed for trial periods of up to eight weeks in length. This trial period allows the IEP team to evaluate the effectiveness of AT before investing in a purchase.



Documentation in the IEP

Any AT determined necessary through the consideration process must be documented in the IEP. This can be documented in Special Education Program Goals and Objectives, Supplemental Aids and Services, and Related Services. Documentation must also be made if AT is unnecessary.

Additionally, documentation of progress on goals and access to/progress in general education settings as a result of the implementation of the AT must be reported in progress reporting throughout the school year, as mandated in the IEP process.

If indicated by the IEP team, the AT device must be allowed to go home with the student to address educational goals and objectives. The IEP team may agree to appropriate alternatives that allow the student to perform the activities at home (e.g., a student requiring a computer at school for writing may have the option of dictating assignments at home). Decisions regarding appropriate devices must be made on an individual basis.



AT is an Ongoing Process

For IEP teams to continue making informed decisions, the effectiveness of AT must be continuously assessed. Ongoing data collection is critical. Data should be gathered around the impact of AT. Did it help the student to achieve goals/objectives and did it improve access to and progress in the general education curriculum?

IEP teams must consider the use of AT at least yearly during the IEP team meeting. However, schools and parents should not necessarily wait for the IEP team meeting to reassess the use and effectiveness of the AT. If the student is unable to access or make progress in the general education curriculum, the IEP team should reconvene to amend the current IEP and determine appropriate solutions. Changes to skills, environments, and technology should prompt IEP teams to review the effectiveness of the AT in use by the student.



Who Is Responsible?

AT is everyone's responsibility.

It is important to have at least one member of the IEP team with considerable knowledge about AT. The *Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education* (MARSE) also indicate that all professionals holding a degree in special education have the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes for effective practice related to using assistive technology to improve student outcomes.

The content for this document was provided by **Michigan's Integrated Technology Supports (MITS)**. Contact MITS for questions or more information on assistive technology.

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