



Options to Help Live Independently: Statewide Assistive Technology Programs

“The Virginia Assistive Technology System helped me get devices that have greatly improved my quality of life and ability to interact independently within my community!”

Armenta S., Virginia

Statewide Assistive Technology Programs are designed to help people living with disabilities live more independently through the use of AT. Each year, Statewide Assistive Technology Programs are funded to help people learn about, try out, and get AT that they need. The term “Assistive Technology” means any item, piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals living with disabilities.

AT can be any number of things; even things that are not normally thought of as technology. For example, in addition to computers and “high tech” devices, items such as ramps, doorknobs, and pencil grips are considered to be AT. Learning more about AT is easy and can be an exciting experience! All one has to do is visit their Statewide AT Program to begin unlocking the door to what AT has to offer!

Visiting a Statewide Assistive Technology Program

One of the best ways of knowing if you can benefit from AT is to visit a Statewide AT Program. These programs provide free services that are available to people living with a disability and their families. While each state has its own unique program to suite its population, in general, Statewide AT Programs provide the following:

- ✓ Information about AT devices, services available, and where to obtain them in that state
- ✓ Device Demonstrations and Device Loans
 - Device Demonstration -- An AT Device Demonstration provides the opportunity for a person to interact with an AT device, learn about different features of that device, and compare it with other similar devices. An Assistive Technology Professional may be contacted through the Statewide AT Program to “demo” the device. Additionally, they may guide the person receiving the demo in understanding what possible devices might work best based for their functional needs.
 - Device Loan -- After a person has had the opportunity to demo the different AT at their Statewide Assistive Technology Program, they may choose to borrow a chosen device for a short period of time to help them decide if the device will meet their needs. Loaning the device provides the person with the chance to “try it before you buy it” to see if the device is indeed the right device for them.
- ✓ Funding resources for purchasing or acquiring Assistive Technology
 - Once a person is satisfied with a piece of AT through the device demonstrations and loans they received at their Statewide AT Program, they may want to consider purchase. While Statewide

AT Programs provide device demonstration and loans, they are not able to purchase AT directly for individuals. However, many Statewide AT Programs have a financing component within their program or in their state, and many work with other programs such as AT Programs to offer low-interest loans to individuals wanting to purchase AT. These loans enable individuals with disabilities the option to purchase AT that might otherwise not be possible through conventional financial borrowing.

✓ **Device Exchange and Recycling Programs**

- Most Statewide AT Programs offer a Device Exchange and Recycling Program. Reutilization of AT devices gives new life to used equipment, and provides individuals with AT at little to no cost. Reusing this equipment allows for good, used devices to get into the hands of people who need them. Reutilization can happen in a few different ways through device exchange programs, refurbishment, or recycling. All reused AT goes through a sanitation process to ensure items are clean.

Contact a Statewide Assistive Technology Program Today!

People with disabilities and their families interested in obtaining AT can connect to their Statewide AT Program.

The simplest way to do so is by visiting: <http://www.findatnow.org/>

About the RESNA Catalyst Project:

The RESNA Catalyst Project is a sponsored project of RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. RESNA operates the Catalyst Project under a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education.

The RESNA Catalyst Project is funded to provide technical assistance to the Assistive Technology Act Grantees to assist them in increasing awareness, access, acquisition, and advocacy to AT devices and services for consumers with disabilities of all ages. The Project works with the 56 Statewide Assistive Technology Programs, the 57 Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology Programs, and 36 Alternative Financing Programs. The Project also works with 19 Access to Telework Financial Loan Programs.

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**For more information, please contact the
RESNA Catalyst Project at:**

**(703) 524-6686
Catalyst@resna.org**

or visit: www.resnaprojects.org

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