
SECTION I

Introduction to Assistive Technology and Oklahoma ABLE tech

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WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

Assistive technology is devices and services designed to make your life easier, or to help you perform specific tasks. If you are one of the 600,000 Oklahomans with disabilities, assistive technology devices becomes the door to opportunity and can assist you in realizing your potential. Technology can be a great enabler and an equalizer of opportunity.

Assistive technology is any item or piece of equipment used to improve the capabilities of people with disabilities such as a scooter or wheelchair, aids to helps those with low vision or blindness, devices to assist individuals who are hard of hearing, specialized computer hardware and software, electronic tablets and apps, aids for daily living, and communication devices. Assistive technology allows people with disabilities to function independently in recreation, education, employment, and daily living activities.

Assistive technology in the classroom brings children with and without disabilities together to share social and educational experiences. In the office or work setting, assistive technology enables people with disabilities to utilize knowledge and skills to be productive. At home, assistive technology makes life easier and more enjoyable. From simple to complex, assistive devices provide more opportunities and greater personal independence for people with disabilities.

See Appendix A for the legal definition of assistive technology within the Assistive Technology Act.

TYPES OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

For the purposes of this guide, the types of AT devices are divided into the following categories. Picture icons have been developed and included to represent each category of AT devices. These categories and icons have been used in this guide to quickly identify what types of AT devices are provided or covered by each funding source for eligible applicants. You may want to refer to this list when using the information on funding sources included in this guide.



Aids for Daily Living: devices for use in activities of daily living; such as, eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, grooming, cooking, cleaning, and home maintenance. Some medical devices such as glucose monitors, respirators and many other types of machines and related disposable supplies are also daily living aids.



Aids for Hearing Loss: devices for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; such as, hearing aids, TDDs, and visual alerting systems.



Aids for Low Vision: devices for persons who are blind or visually impaired; such as, magnifiers, braille, speech output devices, and large print computer screens.



Speech Communication: devices that provide a means for expressive and receptive communication for persons with limited speech; such as, electronic devices with speech output and/or non-electronic devices. Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices also referred to as Speech Generating Devices (SGD) are considered speech communications devices.

WHAT IS OKLAHOMA ABLE TECH?

 **Mobility, Seating & Positioning:** devices to improve personal mobility for persons with physical disabilities; such as, manual and electric wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, motorized scooters, and other utility vehicles. This includes seating systems to improve body stability and sitting posture, provide trunk and/or head support, and reduce pressure on the skin surface (i.e., cushions, contour seats, lumbar and head supports).

 **Computers & Related:** Hardware and software products to access, interact with, and use computers at home, work or school. Includes modified or alternate keyboards, switches activated by pressure, touch screens, special software, electronic tablet apps, or voice to text software.

 **Learning Cognition & Developmental:** devices to provide access to educational materials and instruction in school or other environments; may include specialized software.

 **Environmental Adaptations:** environmental and structural adaptations that remove or reduce barriers and promote access to and within the home, employment and community facilities. This includes home modifications, environmental controls and switches that enables the person with limited mobility to control various devices such as appliances, electronic aids, and security systems.

 **Vehicle Modifications:** adapted driving aids, such as, hand controls, lifts, and modified vans or other motor vehicles used for personal transportation.

 **Recreation & Leisure Devices:** devices and modifications that enable persons with disabilities to participate in: a) recreational activities; such as, adapted equipment for water skiing, wheelchair basketball, etc., or b) leisure activities using devices such as braille or large print playing cards or board games, adapted tools for gardening, books on tape, etc.

Oklahoma ABLE Tech is a sponsored program of the Department of Wellness, Oklahoma State University, which is the lead agency for the Assistive Technology Act Program as designated by Governor Frank Keating in 1995. The mission is to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) for individuals with disabilities of all ages. ABLE Tech is funded through the Administration for Community Living of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and maintains coordination and collaboration efforts with partners throughout the State of Oklahoma. The funding provided helps enhance the opportunities for Oklahomans with disabilities to access and acquire needed assistive technology. ABLE Tech is a valuable resource for persons with disabilities, their families, advocates, and service providers. Although Oklahoma ABLE Tech does not purchase or sell AT devices they do provide the following services.

- Device demonstration programs have provided an opportunity to compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices for an individual or small group of individuals. The device explorations is designed to support informed decision-making regarding the appropriate purchase of assistive technology.
- Device short-term loan program allows individuals to borrow AT in order to “try before you buy”. Short-term loans are also beneficial for the purposes of assessment, meeting interim needs when devices need to be repaired and for personnel development activities. ABLE Tech partners with various organizations across the state to make assistive technology available.
- An assistive technology “Oklahoma Equipment Exchange” (OEE) Program is a free service to help Oklahomans with disabilities needing assistive technology to find affordable, used adaptive equipment to meet their needs. To buy, donate, or sell used AT call the Oklahoma ABLE Tech INFO-line at 1-888-885-5588 or visit the website at <http://oec.okstate.edu>.



- The Oklahoma Durable Medical Equipment Reuse Program (OKDMERP) in partnership with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) is designed to reuse valuable durable medical equipment (DME) that is no longer needed, and reassign it to an Oklahoma resident in need. Priority will be given to SoonerCare members, but any Oklahoma resident is eligible with a completed application. The program retrieves specific types of donated equipment and reassigns to the best matched eligible individual. Pickup and delivery services are limited, however OKDMERP staff make every effort to ensure Oklahoma residents can access the needed equipment. Any Oklahoma resident can make prearrangements to drop-off or pickup equipment at the OKDMERP office in Oklahoma City.
- Oklahoma ABLE Tech in partnership with the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation (OkAT) and BancFirst of Stillwater offers a Financial Loan Program to Oklahomans with disabilities. The Financial Loan is a low interest and/or guaranty loan that provides individuals with disabilities or those that have a dependent with a disability the opportunity to borrow money for the purchase of needed assistive technology. Additionally, the program can provide financial loans to individuals with disabilities that need equipment to meet an employment telework goal.
- Information and referral services on AT through the Oklahoma ABLE Tech INFO-line at 1-888-885-5588. This service is available to people of all ages with disabilities, their family members, and professionals. INFO-line's resources include a statewide computer database, national resources, a collection of AT catalogs, product literature, vendor and evaluation information.
- ABLE Tech serves as the Assistive Technology & Information Services Program for Oklahoma public schools and assists educators in meeting the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). ABLE Tech conducts regional trainings, webinars, videos, one-on-one consultations, and technical assistance documents. In addition, students, educators, and families have access to ABLE Tech's AT devices and short-term loan program, training, and support recommendations to help students with disabilities achieve educational goals.
- ABLE Tech assists students, educators, and families obtain Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) and determine the appropriate technology often necessary to read the specialized formats. Some students have difficulty reading textbooks and other curricular materials due to blindness, low vision, a specific learning disability such as dyslexia, or a physical disability preventing the student from holding the textbook or turning pages. To succeed in school, these students need specialized formats. The federal special education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), requires schools to provide AEM for elementary and secondary students. AEM includes: large print, braille, audio, and digital text.
- ABLE Tech provides technical assistance, training and consultation about web and digital accessibility and the standards and laws that make accessibility mandatory for agencies and institutions in the State of Oklahoma. In addition, ABLE Tech provides a fee-for-service consultation to assist Oklahoma state agencies and higher education institutions in designing, developing and procuring accessible web sites and software.
- ABLE Tech partners with the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to bring training to Oklahoma's Workforce partner system through regional training and technical assistance. The partnership between DRS and ABLE Tech seeks to close the gaps in workforce utilization, income, and poverty among people with disabilities by providing equal access to workforce services. The program trains staff in best practices to help job seekers with disabilities gain competitive employment. The shared goal of the Workforce System is to provide access to employment for everyone, ultimately increasing household wealth. The program helps Workforce staff to be aware of the benefits and requirements for ensuring accessible Workforce services and environments and to learn more about the responsibilities that are part of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).