



# **DEPARTMENT of HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES**

## **FY 2020 Annual Report to Congress on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as Amended**

**Prepared by**

**ADMINISTRATION FOR  
COMMUNITY LIVING**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People with disabilities and older adults use assistive technology (AT) to engage in employment, education, and all aspects of community living. AT can help individuals eat, bathe, read, walk, hear, communicate, and generally live more independent lives. In FY 2020, State and Territory AT programs served close to 770,000 individuals by providing AT demonstrations, training, and information and referral, improving such individuals' chances to advance socioeconomically and achieve optimal self-sufficiency and independence.

Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended (AT Act), 29 U.S.C. § 3003, authorizes grants to support programs that increase knowledge about, access to, and acquisition of, assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities and older Americans. These programs include fifty-six statewide AT programs that provide device demonstrations, device loans, device reutilization, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and assistance with obtaining funding for AT. Statewide AT programs are required by law to collect data on their activities and provide annual progress reports to the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

State-level and state leadership activities provide a continuum of services that reach a wide variety of individuals and provide access to a broad range of technologies. AT Programs enable individuals with disabilities, their representatives, and others working with them, to make informed decisions about accessing and acquiring assistive technologies. AT programs provide valuable training that helps individuals learn how to access and use accessibility features built into technology, including telehealth technologies. The training enables people to fully use the technologies they access or acquire and reduces technology abandonment. The streamlined process for awareness of and access to AT allows consumers to receive information about a device and become familiar with it through demonstration and short-term device loan programs prior to making a costly purchase. When consumers are ready to acquire a device, the reuse and state financing programs provide an affordable purchasing avenue.

Leveraged funding is frequently secured by state AT Programs and is used to expand and maximize services. In FY 2020, state AT Programs leveraged \$20.9 million from federal, state, local, and private sources. These leverage dollars were used to supplement \$29 million in Section 4 AT Act formula grant funding for FY 2020 and expand program reach in all AT Act authorized activities. This report highlights close to \$54.3 million in savings and benefits delivered by state AT Programs in FY 2020 to nearly 770,000 service recipients.

In March 2020, the United States experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, a public health emergency (PHE). During the PHE, the Assistive Technology programs were more important than ever. The AT programs helped people learn about, use, and find assistive technology enabling people to obtain groceries, engage with family, friends, and neighbors, telework, participate in education, access and use health care via telehealth, and engage in social activities. The PHE required AT programs to rethink how they engaged in device demonstrations, device loans and device reuse. These activities required the AT programs to adjust their approaches by using zoom to conduct device demonstrations, shipping devices to people's homes for device loans, allowing longer loan periods, and instituting extensive sanitation processes for device reuse. When comparing the FY 2019 data to the FY 2020 data, there are reductions in some activities and increases in other activities as a result of adjustments AT programs made to best support people with disabilities of any age during the PHE.

This report is a compilation of data from these programs for FY 2020, contains information about the state-level and state leadership activities of the statewide AT programs, and highlights anecdotes of consumers maintaining their independence by utilizing various assistive technology through state-level AT activities. It is preceded by an introduction to the purpose of the document and a history of the AT Act and is followed by resource information containing contacts and data on each state AT program.

## FY 2020 AT Program Achievements from State-Level Activities Resulting in Positive Outcomes for Individuals with Disabilities

<b>Device Demonstration Programs</b>
<i>Device demonstrations compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices for an individual or small group of individuals.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 39,396 individuals participated in 21,533 device demonstrations.</li> <li>▪ Projecting national savings of \$1 million for individuals and third-party payers because consumer-equipment matched individual needs.</li> <li>▪ 92% of device demonstrations resulted in positive decision-making to ensure consumer-equipment matched individual needs and avoided inappropriate device acquisition.</li> </ul>
<b>Device Loan Programs</b>
<i>The purpose of a device loan may be to assist in decision-making, to fill a gap while the consumer is waiting for device repair or funding, to provide a short-term accommodation, to facilitate or support self-education by a consumer or professional, or to provide other training.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Over 37,000 AT devices loaned on a short-term basis to individuals with disabilities, service providers, and partner agencies.</li> <li>▪ Using an average savings of \$1,000 per loan with more than one device associated results in national savings of \$12.7 million.</li> <li>▪ Projecting a minimum \$10 per day rental fee for the average loan period of 35 days results in national savings of \$2.5 million for devices borrowed.</li> </ul>
<b>Device Reutilization Programs</b>
<i>Assistive technology reutilization involves transferring a previously owned device from someone who no longer needs it to someone who does.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 38,692 consumers saved almost \$23 million on over 65,000 lightly used devices.</li> <li>▪ 90% of recipients indicated that they would not have been able to afford the AT or obtain it from other sources if it were not for the reuse services.</li> </ul>
<b>State Financing</b>
<i>State financing activities assist individuals with disabilities to acquire needed AT.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 795 borrowers obtained financial loans totaling \$6,373,091 to buy 987 devices.</li> <li>▪ 5,194 recipients acquired 8,240 devices valued at \$4,758,816 from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources administered by state AT programs.</li> <li>▪ 392,231 recipients acquired 394,721 AT devices with a savings of \$3,968,859 from other state financing activities that are designed to reduce the cost of AT such as device fabrication activities and cooperative buying programs.</li> <li>▪ 97% of recipients indicated an AT device could not be obtained without the assistance of the state financing activity.</li> </ul>

# ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

## FY 2020 Annual Report to Congress on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as Amended

### INTRODUCTION

The Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended will be referenced in this report as the AT Act or Act), 29 U.S.C. § 3001 *et seq.*, requires that the Secretary of Health and Human Services submit to Congress a report on the activities funded under the AT Act. Specifically, the Secretary of Health and Human Services is required to provide annually to Congress: (1) a compilation and summary of the information provided by state Section 4 grantees in annual progress reports to the Department of Health and Human Services; and (2) a summary of state Section 4 State Plan applications and an analysis of the progress of the states in meeting the measurable goals established in state applications under Sec. 4(d)(3) of the AT Act. This document serves as the Report to Congress for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020.

This report summarizes data from the fifty-six Section 4 formula funded state AT program grantees, including all 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The term, AT Program, is used to describe all fifty-six Section 4 grantees.

### ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT HISTORY

In 1988, Congress passed the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (P.L. 100-407) (Tech Act) to assist states with identifying and responding to the assistive technology (AT) needs of individuals with disabilities. Competitive grants awarded under the Tech Act were used by states to create systemic changes that improved the availability of assistive technology devices and services. States were provided with flexibility in the design of their programs, and this flexibility continued when the Tech Act was reauthorized in 1994 (P.L. 103-218).

The Tech Act was reauthorized again in 1998 as the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-394; AT Act of 1998). The AT Act of 1998 required states to conduct capacity-building activities that increased the availability of funding for, access to, and provision of, AT devices and services and allowed states to conduct other discretionary activities as well. Title III of the AT Act of 1998 authorized the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) to help individuals with disabilities and their families fund the purchase of AT devices or services.

The AT Act of 1998 was amended in 2004 by P. L. 108-364 (AT Act). The amendments significantly changed the prior legislation. Rather than focusing the efforts of states on systems-change activities, the AT Act requires states to conduct activities that directly provide individuals with disabilities and others with support to access and acquire AT. The program was changed from a competitive discretionary grant program to a formula state grant program with Section 4 providing formula grants to state AT programs and Section 5 providing formula grants to protection and advocacy AT programs. As mandated by the 2004 amendments, the U.S. Department of

#### **What is Assistive Technology (AT)?**

AT is any item, piece of equipment, or system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

(Source: AT Act of 1998, as amended, 29 USC §3002)

Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), assumed responsibility for administering programs under the Act as of December 2004. Previously, the Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) administered the Act.

In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) transferred administration of the AT Act to the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living (ACL). This report provides a national summary of Section 4 grantee statewide AT program activities and outcomes for FY 2020.

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998, AS AMENDED**

Section 4 of the AT Act, 29 U.S.C. § 3003, authorizes the formula-based State Grant for AT Program and requires a common set of activities to be provided by all AT programs (with some limited exceptions explained below) to create consistency among grantees. With these grant funds, states develop and maintain statewide AT programs that conduct "state-level" activities and "state leadership" activities. Any funds appropriated above the FY 2004 level (which constitutes the base year amount) are allocated according to a formula that provides (1) a portion of the funds equally to all states, and (2) a portion of funds to states based on the population of the states. [Funding levels for FY 2020 for all fifty-six grantees](#) along with other activity data are available from ACL's data analysis and reporting assistance grantee, the Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA).<sup>1</sup>

## **STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES**

State-level activities include the following:

- **State financing activities**, which can be:
  - o Systems for the purchase, lease or other acquisition of, or payment for, AT devices and services (though states may not directly pay for AT devices and services for individuals with disabilities); or
  - o Alternative financing systems, such as low-interest loan funds, interest buy-down programs, revolving loan funds, loan guarantees or insurance programs or other mechanisms for the provision of AT devices.<sup>2</sup>
- **Device reutilization programs** that support the exchange, repair, recycle or other reutilization of AT devices.
- **Device loan programs** that provide short-term loans of AT so that individuals can try out devices or fill a temporary need for a device.
- **Device demonstration programs** in which personnel familiar with AT demonstrate a variety of devices and services and provide information about AT vendors, providers, and repair services.

## **STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES**

State leadership activities include:

- **Training and technical assistance** comprises the development and dissemination of training materials, conducting training, and providing technical assistance to enhance the AT knowledge, skills, and competencies of individuals. Five percent of state leadership funds must be used for

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.catada.info/>

<sup>2</sup> While they possess some similarities, "alternative financing systems," as included under Section 4 state financing activities, need not be the same as those formerly funded under Title III of the AT Act of 1998, which contains many specific statutory requirements.



training and technical assistance for students with disabilities who are getting ready to move from school to adult life, including employment, post-secondary education, or independent living, and adults who need AT assistance to maintain or transition to community living.

- **Public awareness activities** designed to provide information on the availability, benefits, appropriateness and costs of AT devices and services, including a statewide information and referral system.
- **Coordination and collaboration of activities** among public funders under Title III of the AT Act and private entities responsible for policies, procedures or funding of AT devices and services specifically to provide AT.

State level and major state leadership activities are described in greater detail in this report.

Section 4(e)(1)(B) of the AT Act allows states to opt out of funding a state-level activity if that activity is supported comparably with non-federal funds. Section 4(e)(5) of the Act provides states with the flexibility to carry out only two or three of the state-level activities. States that carry out all four state-level activities may use a maximum of 40 percent of their federal funds for state leadership activities. States that carry out two or three state-level activities may use a maximum of 30 percent of their funds for state leadership activities.

The AT Act includes specific data collection requirements for state-level and state leadership activities, state improvement outcomes, leveraged funding, performance measure outcomes, and consumer satisfaction. A data collection instrument developed to collect the Section 4(f) required data elements was approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) through October 31, 2020, and was used by all grantees to report FY 2020 annual progress report data summarized in this Report to Congress.

## A NATIONAL DATA SUMMARY OF STATE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS: FISCAL YEAR 2020

### STATE-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

#### DEVICE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS

Device demonstrations compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices for an individual or small group of individuals (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2011). Device demonstrations allow individuals and groups to make informed choices about an AT device prior to acquiring it. Along with providing demonstrations, AT Programs are required to provide comprehensive information about state and local assistive technology vendors, providers, and repair services.

During the FY 2020 reporting period, all fifty-six AT Programs conducted device demonstrations as part of their state-level activities. State AT Programs classify device demonstrations into 10 categories. ‘Speech and communication’ was the largest category, comprising 18 percent of all demonstrations. Nine additional device categories comprised between 1 percent and 17 percent of all demonstrations (see Table 1). For more information on how AT devices are defined and classified, please visit <https://catada.info/federal-reporting-forms/> and select “Classification of AT devices.”

**Table 1: Number of Device Demonstrations by AT Type**

Type of AT Device	Number of Demos	Percent
Speech communication	3,821	18%
Mobility, seating	3,668	17%
Daily living	3,192	15%
Vision	3,175	15%
Learning, cognition	2,119	10%
Computers and related equipment	1,919	9%
Hearing	1,790	8%
Vehicle modification and transportation	802	4%
Environmental adaptations	731	3%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	316	1%
TOTAL	21,533	100%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

As illustrated in Table 2, individuals with disabilities (47 percent) comprised almost half of those participating in device demonstrations in FY 2020, followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (27 percent).

**Table 2: Number of Individuals who Participated in Device Demonstrations**

Type of Individual	Number of Participants	Percent
Individuals with disabilities	18,374	47%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	10,849	27%
Representatives of education	4,157	11%

Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	3,209	8%
Representatives of community living	1,441	4%
Representatives of technology	735	2%
Representatives of employment	631	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39,396</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

Individuals who participated in device demonstrations were surveyed by AT Programs about the main purpose of the AT device for which they attended the demonstration. In FY 2020, community living was listed as the most common purpose (68 percent), followed by education (24 percent) and employment (8 percent).

For AT Program purposes, community living is defined as participating in and carrying out daily activities in the community, using community services, or living independently. Similarly, education is defined as participating in any type of educational program. Employment means finding or keeping a job, getting a better job, or participating in an employment training program, vocational rehabilitation program, or other program related to employment. Lastly, information technology/telecommunications is defined as using computers, software, websites, telephones, office equipment, and media.

Below is an example of how a device demonstration helped an Assistive Technology Act program recipient learn about and select an assistive technology device to help him live independently in his home. The example also features the partnership with the Disability Advocates of Kent County, Michigan. Partnerships across state and community agencies can expand knowledge and access to assistive technology enabling people more access to devices that enable them to engage in work, community living, and/or education.

### **Opening New Doors**

Bernard's family was concerned that he could not hear the doorbell ring when he was home alone. His caseworker at the local Area Agency on Aging referred him to an occupational therapist (OT) from a Michigan AT program subcontractor. In addition to assessing the doorbell, the OT correctly anticipated that Bernard might want to test a Pocket Talker, a hearing device that amplifies sound and reduces background noise. When testing the Pocket Talker, Bernard reported, "I can hear so much better now!"

The OT recommended a strobe light for Bernard that would flash when someone rang the doorbell. The OT also noticed that Bernard was watching TV with the volume turned up very high, and recommended the TV Ears headset, which makes TV audio clearer and reduces background noise. During the follow up visit, Bernard tried the TV Ears and was able to hear his television, even at a low volume. "I love it," Bernard shared.

## DEVICE LOAN PROGRAMS

Device loan programs allow AT consumers and professionals who provide services to individuals with disabilities to borrow AT devices for use at home, at school, at work, and in the community on a short-term basis. The purpose of a device loan may be to assist in decision-making, to fill a gap while the consumer is waiting for device repair or funding, to provide a short-term accommodation, to facilitate or support self-education by a consumer or professional, or to provide other training (ED, 2011).

During FY 2020, fifty-six AT Programs reported providing 24,454 short-term loans of AT devices to individuals or entities. Individuals with disabilities were the largest group to whom devices were loaned (45 percent), followed by family members, guardians, and authorized representatives (19 percent). Please refer to Table 3 for a more detailed breakdown.

**Table 3: Number of Short-term Device Loans by Type of Borrower**

Type of Borrower	Number of Device Borrowers	Percent
Individuals with disabilities	11,094	45%
Family members, guardians, and authorized representatives	4,726	19%
Representatives of education	4,248	17%
Representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation	3,097	13%
Representatives of community living	604	3%
Representatives of technology	468	2%
Representatives of employment	217	1%
TOTAL	24,454	100%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

Both devices for speech and communication, and mobility and seating (18 percent) were the most common types of AT devices loaned in FY 2020, followed by computers and related devices (17 percent), and devices for daily living (13 percent). Six additional device categories accounted for the remaining 34 percent of the device loans made (Table 4).

**Table 4: Number of Devices Loaned by AT Type**

Type of AT Device	Number Loaned	Percent
Speech communication	6,581	18%
Mobility, seating	6,527	18%
Computers and related devices	6,361	17%
Daily living	4,816	13%
Learning, cognition	4,302	12%
Vision	3,152	8%
Environmental adaptations	2,338	6%
Hearing	1,950	5%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	1,112	3%
Vehicle modification and transportation	71	<1%
TOTAL	37,210	100%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

Seventy percent of device loans were made to individuals for the primary purpose of decision-making. Other reasons borrowers cited for wanting a short-term device loan included accommodation (19 percent), as a loaner during repair/waiting for funding (6 percent), and for training/personal development (5 percent). AT acquired through device loan programs was primarily used for community living (54 percent), education (40 percent), and employment (6 percent).

The example below shows how a person participated in a Missouri AT program device loan program and learned about an assistive technology device to help her eat her lunch independently without the assistance of an aid. In addition, the AT solution enables the student to return to class in a similar timeframe as her peers.

### **Eating Lunch with Obi**

Natalie values her independence at her school in Missouri. At school, it can take longer for Natalie to eat lunch than her peers. As a result, Natalie stays in the cafeteria for too long, and falls behind in class. Natalie's educational support team had been looking for creative ways to help Natalie keep up with her school tasks.

Natalie and her support team consulted with the Missouri AT program about assistive technologies that could potentially help Natalie. The Missouri AT program recommended Obi, a robotic dining device that helps people feed themselves independently by activating one switch. Now, with Obi, Natalie can eat lunch independently, socialize with her peers without an aid present, and return to class on time to complete her classwork.

## **DEVICE REUTILIZATION PROGRAMS**

Assistive technology reutilization involves transferring a previously owned device from someone who no longer needs it to someone who does. Device reutilization falls into two activity categories. The first one, device exchange, usually occurs through an online forum where sellers and buyers can connect. Recycling, refurbishment, and repair (RRR) and/or open-ended loan is the second category. In this type of program, devices are typically obtained from individuals who no longer need them, are refurbished, and then provided to new owners. Open-ended loan programs use the same process, collecting previously used devices and refurbishing them as needed, and then lending them to individuals who can use them as long as they are needed. The expectation is that the devices would be returned to the program at some point. For the purposes of this report, the second category—RRR and/or open-ended loan—will be referred to as device refurbishment.

In FY 2020, 38,692 consumers received a total of 65,638 reutilized devices from fifty-six AT Programs, resulting in an overall savings of \$22.8 million. As shown in Table 5, the most common device reutilization activity was device refurbishment. Ninety-six percent of recipients received devices through a device refurbishment program, saving almost \$22 million and providing the greatest savings to recipients. As Table 6 shows, the vast majority of AT devices provided through refurbishment programs were for 'daily living (45 percent) and 'mobility, seating' (43 percent). AT acquired through device reutilization programs was primarily used for community living (96 percent), and was also used to support education (3 percent), and employment (1 percent).

**Table 5: Number of Recipients, Devices, and Savings by Type of Reutilization Activity**

Activity	Number (%) of Device Recipients	Number (%) of Devices	Total Savings to Recipients	Percent of Savings to Recipients
Device refurbishment	37,512 (97%)	53,259 (81%)	\$21,991,563	96%
Device exchange	1,180 (3%)	12,380 (19%)	\$907,865	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38,692 (100%)</b>	<b>65,638 (100%)</b>	<b>\$22,899,428</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

**Table 6: Device Refurbishment Summary by AT Type**

Type of AT Device	Number of Devices	Percent of Devices	Total Savings
Daily living	29,343	45%	\$4,339,201
Mobility, seating	28,316	43%	\$15,260,612
Environmental adaptations	3,881	6%	\$895,801
Computers and related	1,402	2%	\$504,773
Vision	1,191	2%	\$591,539
Hearing	442	<1%	\$126,040
Speech communication	409	<1%	\$760,827
Learning, cognition	386	<1%	\$82,003
Recreation, sports, and leisure	211	<1%	\$95,377
Vehicle modification and transportation	57	<1%	\$243,255
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65,638</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$22,899,428</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

The story below illustrates how community members help each other through the assistive technology reuse program.

### Sharing Back

Ciara donated her military veteran husband's durable medical equipment to the Goodwill Easter Seals We Share Program, a partnership with the Alabama AT Program. Ciara graciously gave several high-quality medical items, including an electric wheelchair in excellent condition.

The chaplain for a local police department called the We Share Program to get an electric wheelchair for a police officer who was injured in the line of duty. They were able to get the wheelchair and deliver it directly to the officer. Through the Alabama AT program, Ciara learned that the wheelchair was provided to an injured officer, so she sold the accessible van to the police department for the injured officer's use.

## STATE FINANCING

State financing activities assist individuals with disabilities to acquire needed AT through three types of programs: (1) financial loan programs that provide cash loans that borrowers can use to purchase AT, (2) other activities that result in direct AT provision, and (3) additional activities that allow consumers to obtain AT for a reduced cost. Funds authorized under the AT Act of 1998, as amended, cannot be used to purchase AT devices or services directly for consumers (ED, 2011). Ninety-seven percent of recipients indicated an AT device could not be obtained without the assistance of the state financing activity.

### State Financing – Cash Loan Programs

Thirty-five state AT Programs reported data on financial loans made. These programs issued 795 loans for AT devices, totaling \$6,373,091. The average annual income of loan recipients was \$48,343, and the national average interest rate was 4.1 percent.

Out of 795 loans issued, 17 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes of less than \$15,000, and another 23 percent were made to applicants with annual incomes between \$15,001 and \$20,000. The overwhelming majority of total loan dollars issued (58 percent) was for ‘vehicle modification and transportation technologies,’ averaging \$19,950 per loan. ‘Hearing AT’ ranked first in number of devices financed, averaging \$2,808 per loan. For a more detailed breakdown of loans by device type, refer to Table 7.

**Table 5: Types and Dollar Amounts of AT Acquired with Financial Loans**

Type of AT	Number of Devices Financed	Device Percent	Dollar Value of Loans	Dollar Percent	Avg. Loan Amount
Hearing	551	56%	\$1,547,378	24%	\$2,808
Vehicle modification and transportation	186	19%	\$3,710,736	58%	\$19,950
Mobility, seating, and positioning	78	8%	\$310,124	5%	\$3,976
Daily living	51	5%	\$278,173	4%	\$5,454
Environmental adaptations	36	4%	\$281,804	4%	\$7,828
Vision	33	3%	\$71,924	1%	\$2,180
Computers and related	27	3%	\$27,852	1%	\$1,032
Speech communication	12	1%	\$39,227	1%	\$3,269
Recreation, sports, and leisure	10	1%	\$76,593	1%	\$7,659
Learning, cognition	3	<1%	\$29,280	1%	\$9,760
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$6,373,091</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$8,751</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

### Other State Financing Programs that Provide AT

Twenty-one states reported data on other financing activities that resulted in the acquisition of AT devices and services. These programs typically purchased AT, using external funding provided to the AT Program by another agency, and directly provide that AT to eligible recipients. These programs are frequently limited in focus, only providing a particular type of AT (such as telecommunications), are restricted to individuals with a specific kind of disability (autism), or require individuals be eligible for a specific funding source (such as IDEA) to obtain the AT.

In FY 2020, these programs served 5,194 individuals and provided 8,240 AT devices. Hearing, computers and related devices, and vision devices comprised 74 percent of the technologies funded. Hearing devices made up 21 percent (\$1,010,422) of the total value of AT provided (\$4,758,816), and 38 percent of total devices funded.

### **Other State Financing Programs that Reduce the Cost of AT**

Nine states reported data on other state financing activities that allowed consumers to obtain assistive technology at a reduced cost. These programs included cooperative buying programs, a vision equipment lease program, and device design, fabrication and development.

In FY 2020, these other financing activities served 392,231 individuals, and 394,721 devices were acquired at a total savings of \$3,968,859. This is a significant increase from FY 2019 as a result of data reported by a single grantee. With schools transitioning to remote learning precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, this AT program purchased licenses for remote learning software with the State Education Department causing a potentially one-time significant increase in devices acquired under learning and cognition. Out of all the AT categories, vision AT resulted in the highest savings to consumers (\$980 per device). Devices for learning and cognition (390,413 devices) made up 99 percent of acquired devices resulting in a modest savings per device of \$8.

Recipients of state financing activity services reported the primary purpose for which AT was needed. Sixty-seven percent of respondents cited community living as the primary purpose, followed by education (25 percent) and employment (8 percent).

The example below shows how the Puerto Rico AT program fabricated an AT solution for a program recipient who was unable to wear a mask, remain safe, and go out during the pandemic.

#### **Creative Adventures**

Isabel is a young girl with Cerebral Palsy. Some of her favorite activities involve going out with her mother; just about any daily errand is a fun adventure. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, all of that changed. Because of the virus's risks, Isabel spent most of her time at home, indoors. Even once restrictions were partially lifted, Puerto Rico required that masks be worn in public spaces. Isabel tried many different options, but masking was not tolerable for her.

Isabel's mother contacted the Puerto Rico AT Program (PRATP) to help her find a solution. PRATP's AT Fabrication initiative built Isabel a custom transparent enclosure for her wheelchair, which included a removable, lightweight aluminum frame. The frame was designed to allow Isabel's voluntary and involuntary movements without the cover touching her, which gave her space to look out, move, and use her mother's smartphone on her lap. Soon after installation, fitting, and testing, Isabel and her mother were off running errands, going shopping, and even attending a long-postponed visit to the dentist, all while Isabel remained safe.



## CONSUMER SATISFACTION RATINGS OF STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES

AT Program consumers were asked to report their satisfaction with the services they received from four state-level activities. Device reuse, state financing, device loan, and device demonstration programs each received combined highly satisfied and satisfied customer satisfaction ratings of 99% percent or higher. Please refer to Table 8 for more details about the level of consumer satisfaction, response rates, and number of consumers in each of the four activities.

**Table 6: Consumer Satisfaction with State-level Activities**

State-level Activity	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied Somewhat	Not at all satisfied	Non-respondents	Total # of Consumers	Response Rate Percentage
State Financing	387,155 (98%)	8,894 (2%)	18 (0%)	5 (0%)	2,148	398,220	99%
Reutilization	33,699 (92%)	2,925 (8%)	65 (0%)	13 (0%)	1,990	38,692	95%
Device Demonstration	32,008 (84%)	5,834 (15%)	252 (1%)	144 (0%)	1,158	39,396	97%
Device Loan	20,288 (88%)	2,559 (11%)	158 (1%)	57 (0%)	1,392	24,454	94%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

## STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

### TRAINING

Training activities are instructional events, planned in advance for a specific purpose or audience. Examples of training include classes, workshops, and presentations that have a goal of increasing skills, knowledge, and operational competence with the technology, as opposed to training intended only to increase general awareness of AT (ED, 2011).

In FY 2020, AT Programs trained a total of 81,807 participants. Representatives of education (26 percent) were closely followed by representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation (20 percent) as the types of individuals who were most likely to receive training. Forty-six percent of participants attended trainings about AT products and services, which focused on increasing skills and competencies in using AT and integrating AT into different settings. Thirty-one percent of participants attended trainings on a combination of any or all of the following topics: AT products/services, AT funding/policy/practice, and information technology/telecommunication access. Trainings on information technology/telecommunication access were attended by 10 percent of the participants. Trainings on transition for students with disabilities in education and transition for adults to independent living were attended by nine percent of the participants while AT funding/policy/practice trainings were attended by four percent of the participants.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS

Public awareness activities include public service announcements, Internet outreach and social media, radio talk shows and news reports, newspaper stories and columns, newsletters, brochures, and public forums. The exact number of people who receive information through these public awareness activities is large, but is often difficult to quantify precisely, and estimates must be reported (ED, 2011). The following are a handful of many exciting and innovative outreach and awareness efforts conducted by AT programs in FY 2020:

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Georgia AT Program collected and compiled resources for people with disabilities to stay connected, engaged, independent, and safe as our familiar environments rapidly changed. The guide includes over 200 resources with information on virtual platforms, entertainment and recreation, sanitization, speech and communication, and more. It was shared in newsletters, on social media, and through other channels from partners across the country.
- The Indiana AT Program produces three popular, widely distributed podcasts: 1) Assistive Technology (AT) Update, 2) Assistive Technology Frequently Asked Questions, and 3) Accessibility Minute. These podcasts draw highly engaged audiences from over 160 countries. In 2020, Feedspot.com recognized AT Update as the #1 AT Podcast in the world. Additionally, the INDATA YouTube Channel has over 2,800 subscribers and features 600+ "Tech Tip" videos with 1.1 million views.
- On September 9, 2020, Public News Service published an online and radio story about how the Montana AT Program (MonTECH) uses assistive technology (AT) to help Montana students with disabilities attend school either in person, remotely, or using a hybrid learning model. The MonTECH Program Director and AT Specialist provided comments about plans to increase inventory and offer additional services to meet students' needs across the state. Over 100 media outlets published this story to an estimated audience of 1,177,655 people.
- Alabama AT Program staff attended the Successful Aging Initiative (SAI), a free, annual event that addresses the needs and concerns of older adults by providing resources to help them make informed decisions, maintain independence, play active roles in society, and improve quality of life. The Alabama AT Program, vendors, and community partners, shared resources with over 600 older adults, caregivers, practitioners, family members, and volunteers. As a result, Alabama AT anticipates receiving more referrals for the reutilization and alternative finance programs.
- The Colorado AT Program participated in the 2020 Denver Metro Regional Science Fair. They demonstrated a power wheelchair with multiple drive modes (e.g. chin-joystick, head-array) and an adaptive Xbox controller with various switch types to over 100 middle and high school students and their guardians. As a result, multiple interested students contacted us to participate in the Center's bioengineering program, future projects, and other activities.
- After Maryland shifted to remote work and learning, the Maryland AT Program presented a session on AT supports during the Developmental Disability Administrations (DDA) weekly provider resource webinar on June 12, 2020. The executive director hosted a discussion with DDA leadership and providers, families, and individual clients that focused on using AT to support remote services, reduce social isolation, and continue engaging in needed medical and provider appointments. At least 618 people across Maryland participated.
- Over the course of 2020, Nevada AT Program's CARE Chest has professionally produced and released seven short films highlighting our programs and services. The films each featured clients and track their CARE Chest programming use. The films also highlighted the community's impact as they donate funds or gently used equipment and supplies for reuse. To date, more than 64,000 people across CARE Chest's service area have watched our films.

- The New York AT Program began promoting TRAIID Tuesdays in mid-August 2020 on the agency's Facebook page. Each Tuesday, TRAIID staff shared videos, photos, and write-ups about common assistive devices that people borrowed or purchased but may not know how to use. Staff answered common questions about different equipment in videos so viewers can watch over and over until they feel comfortable and knowledgeable. TRAIID Tuesday posts reached more than 15,276 people.

## INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Information and assistance (I&A) activities are those in which state AT Programs respond to requests for information or put individuals in contact with other entities. These other entities can provide individuals with information and intensive assistance on AT devices/services or AT funding.

In FY 2020, 187,251 individuals were recipients of I&A. Of the two I&A content areas, information about specific AT products/devices/services was the most common, with 82 percent of recipients requesting this type of information. Eighteen percent received information on obtaining funding for AT. The largest recipient group of I&A was individuals with disabilities (27 percent), followed by representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation (18 percent), family members/guardians/authorized representatives (18 percent), representatives of education (15 percent), and representatives of community living (9 percent). The remaining recipient types were representatives of employers and employment services (4 percent), representatives of technology (4 percent), and others (4 percent).

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance (TA) is provided by state AT Programs to help programs and agencies improve their services management, policies, and/or outcomes. As a result of technical assistance and other activities, some AT Programs report state improvement outcomes with policy, practice, or procedure that result in increased access to and acquisition of AT in the state. In FY 2020, the fifty- six grantees reported providing a majority of technical assistance to community living agencies (31 percent) and educational agencies (29 percent). Please see Table 9 for more information.

**Table 7: Percentage of Technical Assistance provided by Agency Type**

<b>Program/Agency Type Receiving TA</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Community living	31%
Education	29%
Health, allied health, and rehabilitation	16%
Employment	14%
Technology (IT, Telecom, AT)	10%
TOTAL	100%

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance – National Assistive Technology Act Data System, State Grants for AT Program annual progress report aggregate data for FY 2020. Last accessed April 2022.

Leveraged funding is frequently secured by state AT Programs and is used to expand and maximize services. In FY 2020, state AT Programs leveraged \$20.9 million from federal, state, local, and private sources. These leverage dollars were used to supplement \$29 million in Section 4 AT Act formula grant funding for FY 2020 and expand program reach in all AT Act authorized activities. This report highlights close to \$54.3 million in savings and benefits delivered by state AT Programs in FY 2020 to nearly 770,000 service recipients.

## CONCLUSION

State-level and state leadership activities provide a continuum of services that reach a wide variety of individuals and provide access to a broad range of technologies. AT Programs enable individuals with disabilities and older adults, their representatives, and others working with them to make informed decisions about accessing and acquiring technologies. The streamlined process allows consumers to receive information about a device and become familiar with it through demonstration and short-term device loan programs prior to making a costly purchase. When consumers are ready to acquire a device, the reuse and state financing programs provide an affordable purchasing avenue.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION

Contact and other information on each State AT Program<sup>5</sup> can be found on the Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA) website. The CATADA website also provides an overall summary data report<sup>6</sup> for Fiscal Year 2020 that provides data on the major AT Act activities by state.

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This publication is available in accessible digital format on ACL's website<sup>7</sup> and on the CATADA website.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://catada.info/state.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://catada.info/at/?report=summary>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.acl.gov/about-acl/reports-congress-and-president>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://catada.info/catada-publications/>