

# Shasta County Office of Education Local Plan Area Special Education Assistive Technology Guidelines

## Introduction

The Shasta County SELPA Assistive Technology Guidelines are developed as a way to help support districts in following Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) laws and regulations. They are designed to help district Individual Education Program (IEP) team members with consideration, evaluation, planning, and implementation with regards to students assistive technology needs in order to benefit from special education instruction and/or related services.

## Laws and Regulations

The amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team consider whether a special education child requires assistive technology and services (20 U.S.C. Section 1414[d] [3] [B] [v]). Furthermore, California's Education Code (EC) Section 56341.1(a)(5) states: "When developing each pupil's individualized education program, the individualized education program team shall consider... whether the pupil requires assistive technology devices and services as defined in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 1401 of Title 20 of the United States Code."

IDEA (20 U.S.C. Section 1401) includes the following definitions:

1. Assistive Technology Device: The term "assistive technology device" 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 functional capabilities of a child with a disability.
2. Assistive Technology Service: The term "assistive technology service" means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Such term includes:
  - a. The evaluation of the needs of such child, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment.
  - b. Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by such child;
  - c. Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing of assistive technology devices;
  - d. Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
  - e. Training or technical assistance for such child, or, when appropriate, the family of such need; and
  - f. Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education and rehabilitation services) to, employ, or otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of such child

According to Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 300.105), each public agency must ensure that assistive technology devices or assistive technology services, or both, as those terms are defined in §300.5 and 300.6, respectively, are made available to a child with a disability if required as part of the child's –

1. Special education under § 300.36;
2. Related services under § 300.341; or
3. Supplementary aids and services under §§ 300.38 and 300.114(a)(2)(ii).

On a case by case basis, the use of school-purchased assistive technology devices in a child's home or in other settings is required if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices in order to receive FAPE. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(1), 1412(a)(12)(B)(i))

### Assistive Technology Process

Every IEP team needs to consider each student's need for assistive technology (AT) devices and/or services. To do this effectively, at least one member of the team needs to have some knowledge about assistive technology. This knowledge base can be gained by reviewing these guidelines, researching available resources, and/or obtaining specialized training in assistive technology.

Parts of the following Assistive Technology Process were adapted from the article, *"Has technology been considered? A guide for IEP Teams"* written by A. C. Chambers and published by CASE in 1997. Other resources utilized are from the Georgia Project for Assistive Technology (GPAT) and Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI). *Guidelines have been adapted with permission from Riverside County SELPA.*

#### Step 1

- Through evaluation and IEP team meeting, determine the student meets special education eligibility criteria and identify disability condition(s)
- Review the student's present levels of performance
- Develop annual goals, with benchmark objectives as appropriate
- Based on evaluation results and/or observations, determine what special factors need to be considered
  - If the IEP Team determines (1) **no** AT devices and/or services **and** (2) **no** low incidence services, equipment and/or materials are needed, complete the IEP process
  - If the IEP Team determines (1) AT devices and/or services **or** (2) low incidence services, equipment and/or materials are needed, move to Step 2

#### Step 2

- Consult with colleagues and the District Office to determine need to expand IEP team members to include special education director/coordinator, nurse, occupational therapist, speech pathologist, program specialist, and/or outside agencies, such as California Children's Services prior to scheduling the meeting.
- Utilize the **Assistive Technology Consideration Resource Guide** (Appendix 1) to help identify strategies to meet the student's AT needs.
- Prior to or during the IEP Team meeting, complete the **Assistive Technology Consideration Worksheet** (Appendix 2) to:
  - Identify task(s) you want the student to do, that s/he is unable to do at a level that reflects his/her skills/abilities, leaving blank any tasks which are not relevant to the student's IEP
  - Identify special strategies or accommodations the student uses to complete task(s)
  - Describe available assistive technology (either devices, tools, hardware, or software) that could be used to address this task(s)

- Describe new or additional assistive technology to be tried
- Transfer IEP team decisions documented on the worksheet to the student's IEP (Special Factors and/or Services page)
  - If information is sufficient, implement IEP as written
  - If more information is needed, implement IEP as written and move to Step 3

### **Step 3**

- Consult with district special education director/coordinator about who will conduct assistive technology evaluation (See Appendix 1, Who can conduct and Assistive Technology Assessment)
- Initiate Prior Written Notice and Assessment Plan to parent/ed rights holder
- Give referral to appropriate assessment personnel
- Assessment Personnel
  - Review the Shasta County SELPA Special Education Assistive Technology Guidelines
  - Review student's records
  - Consult with IEP Team members
  - Observe student in appropriate setting
  - Conduct needed evaluation using appropriate tools, instruments, strategies
  - Write evaluation report, providing a copy to all IEP Team members (including parent)
- Schedule/hold IEP Team meeting to discuss results of the AT Evaluation
- Complete **Assistive Technology Report Summary and Implementation Plan** (Appendix 3)
- Attach completed form to the IEP and document team decisions on IEP Special Factors and/or Services pages
- Provide a copy of the IEP to all personnel serving the student and the parent; place a copy in the student's confidential file
- Implement the IEP as written

### **Step 4**

- If necessary, order any required AT device, monitor receipt, and deliver to student ASAP – Document on the **Assistive Technology Implementation Plan**
- If necessary, provide any required training to the student, family, and or school personnel ASAP – Document on the **Assistive Technology Implementation Plan**
- Implement direct AT support services as written in IEP
- Monitor the student's use of the assistive technology device and/or services via
  - **Assistive Technology Implementation Plan**
  - Progress reports
  - Annual review
  - Triennial reevaluation
- Initiate the AT consideration, evaluation, IEP team meeting and implementation phases as needed

### **Consideration Phase**

It is important that members of the IEP team recognize that technology is just one strategy in a multi-faceted approach in addressing the needs and strengths of students with disabilities. IEP teams will therefore need to balance the degree of technology assistance with student's learning potential, motivation, chronological age, developmental level and goals/objectives. Options to consider include:

Low Tech: Equipment and other supports readily available in schools, including off-the-shelf items to accommodate the needs of students, which can be provided by general and/or special education through

Student Study Team (SST) documents, a Section 504 Accommodation Plan, and/or IEP processes (e.g. calculators, speech to text, recorder, pencil grip, and larger pencils).

**High Tech:** Supports for students who may need more specialized equipment and support services beyond basic assistive technology; often students with low incidence and/or significant/severe disabilities, who require more in-depth assessment (e.g. FM systems, augmentative communication devices, sound field systems, alternative computer access, and specialized software).

It is important to consider and use the technology resources purchased with state and federal technology funds for **all** students (e.g. computers, basic software) to determine if the standardized materials available in the classroom can meet the child's needs. Students with a low incidence disability (deaf, blind, deaf-blind, orthopedic impairment) generate additional funds at the December 1 pupil count specifically for the potential need for specialized or assistive technology devices. Some specialized equipment and/or assistive technology devices may be provided by California Children's Services (CCS) but that authority rests with them, not the IEP team. In all instances where additional expenditures may result from the IEP team consideration, it is important to consult with the Special Education Office of your school district prior to completing the AT evaluation and IEP process to minimize any delays in purchasing.

Every IEP team is required to "consider" the child's needs for assistive technology devices and/or services for every child in special education, as part of the Special Factors requirement in IDEA 2004. When considering a child's needs for AT, there are only four general conclusions that can be reached:

1. The first is that current interventions (whatever they may be) are working and nothing new is needed, including AT.
2. The second possibility is that AT is already being used (or there is a trial with AT) so that we know that it does work. In that case the IEP team should write the specific AT into the IEP to ensure that it continues to be available for the child.
3. The third possibility is that the IEP team may conclude that new AT should be tried. In that case, the type of AT to be tried needs to be described in the IEP.
4. The last possibility is that the IEP team will find that they do not know enough to make a decision. In this case, they will need to gather more information. That could be a simple process of calling someone for help, or gathering resources to help them better "consider" what AT might be useful. It could also be an indication that the need to make a referral for an evaluation of the child's need for assistive technology.

To help IEP teams determine needs, Open Access Learning and Participation for All (Open Access) Assistive Technology Consideration Guide is available on their website. This resource guide lists samples of functional tasks required in schools such as writing, reading, etc. and provides examples of common standard classroom tools, modifications, and accommodations of tasks and expectations, and possible AT solutions. This framework is often useful for team members to use to get started in the consideration process and/or as a resource for making recommendations prior to or after the evaluation phase. You can find this information at [www.openaccess-ca.org](http://www.openaccess-ca.org)

The Shasta County SELPA has adapted the Open Access Assistive Technology Consideration Guide as a worksheet format (Appendix 2) to help the IEP team through a series of activities designed to help them determine whether the student does or does not "need" assistive technology devices or services. Those activities are:

1. Identification of the task(s) we want the student to do, that s/he is unable to do at a level that reflects his/her skills/abilities, leaving blank any tasks which are not relevant to the student's IEP.

2. Identification of special strategies or accommodations the student uses to complete tasks.
3. Description of available assistive technology (either devices, tools, hardware, or software) that could be used to address this task(s).
4. Description of new or additional assistive technology to be tried. It is recommended that the IEP team utilize the Assistive Technology Consideration Resource Guide to complete this section.
5. Transfer of IEP team decisions onto the student's IEP (Special Factors and/or Services pages) and/or initiation of Prior Written Notice and an Assessment Plan.

### Evaluation Phase

Assistive technology is a tool for access (e.g. school environment, core curriculum) and for independence (e.g. communication, mobility) and will therefore change as the student's needs change and as technology continues to change. Members of the IEP can identify specific needs based on the knowledge of the student from prior assessments, classwork, and other interactions. A formal assessment is not needed to trial assistive technology. Teachers and other providers can utilize AT as part of their curriculum and practice. As AT is specific to each student's needs and environment, the trialing of various AT can be more informative and impactful than a formal assessment.

Assistive Technology can be an integral part of a comprehensive assessment for students with disabilities in all areas related to their disabilities . and must be considered by the IEP team, based upon the student's assessed needs and strengths. It is important to use a collaborative school-based team approach in education settings for assessment, planning, and provision of needed AT, which includes individuals who are knowledgeable about the student's disabilities, needs and strengths in the area of AT.

### **Evaluation Report**

As with any evaluation, the personnel who assess the pupil shall prepare a written report, or reports, as appropriate, of the results of each assessment. A copy of the assessment report and documentation of determination of eligibility shall be given to the parent or guardian (EC 56329 (a)). If an assistive technology evaluation is completed by an outside agency, whether initiated by the district or parent, the IEP team must consider the results of the independent educational evaluation. If an assistive technology evaluation is completed by school personnel or their agent, the following evaluation report components are recommended.

- Demographic information
- Reason for referral
- Background information, including educationally relevant health-development medical findings (if any), school history, and documented interventions
- Eligibility for special education services, including handicapping condition and basis for making the determination that the pupil needs special education and/or related services; for pupils with learning disabilities, whether there is such a discrepancy between achievement and ability that it cannot be corrected without special education services
- Relevant behavior noted during the observation of the pupil in an appropriate setting and the relationship of that behavior to the pupil's academic and social functioning
- Present levels of performance in adaptive behavior functioning, academic achievement levels, cognitive abilities, psychological processing areas, emotional behavioral functioning, language/communication skills, and career/vocational (as appropriate)

- A determination concerning the effects of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (when appropriate)
- Results of tests administered, including statements regarding validity of the assessments and whether test results are valid
- For pupils with low incidence disabilities, recommendations regarding the need for specialized services, materials, and equipment
- Recommendations regarding strategies, accommodations and/or modifications, and assistive technology devices or service the child may need to progress and be involved in the general education curriculum and/or setting based the assessment results
- The name(s) and title/position(s) of the person(s) who assisted in compiling the report

### IEP Team Meeting and Implementation Phase

To facilitate communication, the team may use an AT Implementation Snapshot (Appendix 3). This worksheet is from Open Access which has multiple tools for similar purposes available.

### **Documenting Needs, Device, and Services**

Going through the consideration phases described herein helps the IEP team determine what the child's needs are as related to assistive technology devices and/or services. The term "assistive technology device" means any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability. The term "assistive technology service" means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Explanations of each component to consider are included herein.

### **Evaluation**

When the referral and/or IEP team is in the process of developing an assessment plan to evaluate all areas of suspected disability is the appropriate time to determine if information on hand is sufficient to consider the student's need for assistive technology or if a more in depth functional evaluation of the child in her/her customary environment is needed. When a need for assistive device and/or service is suspected, it is recommended that the team members follow the consideration, evaluation, and IEP team planning and implementation phases delineated herein. Since evaluation is an ongoing process, the team will need to determine and document if or when a follow-up formal evaluation will need to be conducted (i.e. annual evaluation, triennial review).

### **Providing Device**

The purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of the assistive technology devices for the student is typically a one-time event. The specific device(s) must be listed on the IEP Special Factors page and provided as soon as possible. If the device is not readily available, a "loaner" may be assigned temporarily and/or a timeline for ordering and receiving the device should be noted. If needed, a member of the team should be designated to complete any necessary ordering form, submit it to the LEA's Special Education office, monitor its delivery, and notify IEP team members of its receipt. The assistive technology devices are the property of the LEA. The IEP team can provide the device to the family for use outside of the school setting at their discretion.

### **Monitoring**

The IEP team needs to discuss who will be responsible for designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing the assistive technology device. Some low-tech materials (i.e. pencil grip) may be easily managed by the case carrier while other high-tech materials (i.e. FM system)

may need to be monitored by a specialist. If such monitoring is needed (i.e. DHH Itinerant Support), it must be noted on the IEP Services page under supplementary aide and services provided to the child or on behalf of the child.

### **Coordinating Services**

In planning how the AT device and/or service will be implemented, it is important for the team to discuss how they will be coordinated with other therapies, interventions, or services so that the child's daily use of the device or periodic service are understood by all team members and others as appropriate.

### **Training**

The law requires that the IEP team consider needs for training or technical assistance for the student, or, when appropriate, the family of the child, and for the professionals providing educational support, rehabilitation services, or otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of the student. Sometimes the producers of assistive technology devices provide training and other times this may fall to school or contracted personnel to provide. If such training is needed, it must be noted on the IEP Services page under supplementary aids and services provided to the child or on behalf of the child. A member of the IEP team should be designated to monitor the provision of necessary training components.

### **Progress Monitoring**

It is important to discuss how progress will be monitored. The use and benefits of the AT device or service may be informally reviewed when progress toward goals is reported. If adequate progress is being made, a more formal discussion may be held at the annual review IEP team meeting. As the triennial review approaches, the team will need to determine if they need to go through the consideration and/or evaluation phases again.

## **Appendices**

Who can provide Assistive Technology (Appendix 1)

Assistive Technology Consideration Worksheet (Appendix 2)

Assistive Technology Implementation Snapshot (Appendix 3)