

SECTION I

Introduction to Assistive Technology
and Oklahoma ABLE Tech

WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

Assistive technology is devices and equipment designed to make your life easier, or to help you perform specific tasks. If you are one of the 680,000 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 includes any mechanical, electronic or computer-based equipment, non-mechanical or nonelectric aid, or specialized instructional materials that people with disabilities can use to assist them in learning, making their home and/or work environment more accessible, competing in the work force, enhancing their independence or improving their quality of life and full inclusion at home, school, work and in the community. Assistive technology can help people with disabilities function more independently and includes computers, wheelchairs, listening devices, communication devices, environmental controls, ramps and many other devices and modifications.

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.

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.



Adapted Toys & Games: adapted toys and games for young children such as battery operated toys for use with a single switch, adapted non-mechanical toys, and play boards.



Aids for Daily Living: devices for use in activities of daily living such as eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, grooming, cooking, cleaning, and home maintenance.



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



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



Augmentative Communication: devices that provide a means for expressive and receptive communication for persons with limited speech such as electronic devices with speech output and nonelectronic devices (i.e., communication boards).



Computer Applications: devices that enable persons with disabilities to use a computer such as special input devices (i.e., modified or alternate keyboards, switches), alternative access aids (i.e., mouthsticks, light pointers), special output devices (voice, braille), and special software.



Educational Devices & Adaptations: devices and adaptations that enable persons with disabilities of all ages to learn and benefit from educational programs such as computers, page turners and book holders, software, adapted instructional materials, and other modifications of the learning environment.



Environmental Controls: primarily electronic systems that enable someone with limited mobility to control various devices such as appliances, electronic aids, and security systems in his or her home, school, worksite, or other setting.



Home Modifications: structural adaptations and fabrications in the home that remove or reduce physical barriers for an individual with a disability (i.e., ramps, wider doorways, bathroom changes).



Hospital Beds: special beds that allow for adjustments in positioning for persons with physical disabilities.



Medical Devices & Supplies: devices and supplies that are needed for persons with health related conditions; such as, electronic glucose monitors, respirators, suctioning machines, and many other types of devices and related disposable supplies.



Prosthetics & Orthotics: devices that a) replace or substitute for a missing body part such as artificial limbs (prosthetic device) or b) support or enhance the function of a malfunctioning body part such as splints and braces (orthotic device).



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.



Seating & Positioning Equipment: individualized modifications to a wheelchair or other seating system 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).



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



Wheelchairs & Mobility Aids: devices to improve personal mobility for persons with physical disabilities; such as, manual and electric wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, motorized scooters, and other utility vehicles.



Worksite & Office Modifications: structural adaptations and fabrications in the worksite that remove or reduce physical barriers for an individual with a disability (i.e., ramps, wider doorways, bathroom changes).

What is Oklahoma ABLE Tech?

Oklahoma ABLE Tech is a service of the Oklahoma State University Seretean Wellness Center, which is the lead agency for the "Tech Act" grant as designated by Governor Frank Keating. The purpose of ABLE Tech is to make assistive technology devices and services more available and accessible to individuals with disabilities and their families. In addition, ABLE Tech collaborates with state agencies and organization to enhance the understanding and access to AT. ABLE Tech is funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Service Administration. 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 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 specialized equipment available.
- 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.
- An "AT Equipment Exchange" Program. This 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>.
- A low interest bank loan through a partnership with BancFirst and the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation also offers an Alternative Financing Program (AFP). The AFP provides Oklahomans with disabilities or those that have a dependent with a disability the opportunity to borrow money for the purchase of needed AT.
- A low interest bank loan through a partnership with BancFirst and the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Foundation also offers an Access to Telework Fund (ATF) bank loan program. The purpose of the ATF is to provide an opportunity for Oklahomans with disabilities that want to telework to borrow money to purchase computers and other equipment.
- Educational and training workshops on assistive technology to consumers, parents, and professionals that serve individuals with disabilities. Training agency staff development, programs, and services, technical assistance, public/private funding sources, and information technology.
- Assistance to farmers and ranchers through the Oklahoma AgrAbility program. An AgrAbility specialist provides on-site assessments, information, and referral to Oklahoma farmers and ranchers with disabilities to assist them in maintaining their agricultural lifestyle.
- 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, and a limited amount of vendor and evaluation information.
- Technical assistance and training on accessible electronic and information technology to state agencies and other public and private entities.