### Getting the Assistive Technology Your Child Needs: How Your Primary Care Provider Can Help

any children and adolescents with developmental and other disabilities are eligible to receive individualized instruction and services through their local public schools, at no cost to families. As a parent, you play an important role on your child's education team to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will help your child succeed in school. This may also include the support you provide to adolescents to contribute to their IEPs in a meaningful manner. The IEP describes the goals the team has set for the child for the school year, as well as any special supports that are needed to help achieve those goals. The federal government requires that all children with an IEP be considered for assistive technology (AT) as a part of the Planning and Placement Team meeting (see http://www.cpacinc.org/pdfs/PPT\_meeting.pdf and http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/ edpicks.jhtml?src=ln for more information). The need for AT is based on the question "What IEP goals is the child having trouble meeting that AT might assist?"

### What is Assistive Technology?

Appliances, materials, and supplies that are used to assist people with disabilities to write, read, move, speak, hear, and otherwise conduct activities of daily living. Assistive Technology includes the services and supports to determine and sustain the AT.

# What is important to consider when determining if my child needs AT?

• Does the IEP team have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions? If there is no AT specialist on the team, ask your child's doctor to recommend a physical medicine and

- rehabilitation specialist (i.e. physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist, Rehabilitation Engineer, etc.) appropriate for your child's needs.
- *Is a continuum of AT devices and services explored?* For balanced information on AT and rehabilitation equipment that may be useful for a specific disability see http://www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm?pageid=19327&ksectionid=19327.
- Does the IEP team use a good team process to make decisions? All members of the team, including you, should take part in making decisions.
- Are decisions made based on IEP goals and objectives? It is most important to remember the reason AT is being considered, to help meet an IEP goal that would otherwise go unmet.

# How can my child's primary care provider help?

- Your child's primary care provider (PCP) can be your ally in helping you get the services that your child needs. Ask him or her to attend an IEP meeting. If that is not possible, ask for recommendations, physician order and/or input before the meeting.
- Your child's PCP can refer you to a specialist who is knowledgeable about disabilities and how your child may benefit from the use of AT. Take a copy of the specialist's recommendations to the IEP meeting.
- If you are trying to obtain AT needed for medical purposes through your health insurance plan, ask your child's PCP to write a letter explaining why a device is "medically necessary". In order to do this, he or she must

be familiar with how this term is defined in your insurance policy, as this may vary.

#### **Washington, DC Resources**

## **Assistive Technology Program for the District** of Columbia

University Legal Services 220 I Street, NE, Suite 130 Washington, DC 20002

Program Manager: Alicia C. Johns

Phone: 202-547-0198 TTY: 202-547-2657 Fax: 202-547-2662

E-mail: ajohns@uls-dc.org Web: http://www.atpdc.org

### District of Columbia Assistive Technology Resource Center (DCATRC)

810 First Street, NE, Ninth Floor Washington, DC 20002 Voice:202-589-0288 TTY:202-589-1260

E-mail: democenter@mindspring.com

National Center for Cultural Competence Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Web: http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/nccc/

nccc4.html

#### **Assistive Technology Publications**

**Georgetown University** 

#### Center for Child and Human Development

University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disibilities

Web: http://gucchdgeorgetown.net/ucedd/publications.html#assistive

#### **National Recources**

stateprograms.html

#### **State Assistive Technology Programs**

The Assistive Technology Act of 1998 funds State Assistive Technology Act Program to work to improve the provision of assistive technology to individuals with disabilities of all ages. To review the state contact list or learn more see http://www.resna.org/taproject/at/

For more information on assistive technology and how it can help your child including guidelines for making AT decisions and ideas about where to look for money to pay for equipment see the "Family Guide to Assistive Technology" http://www.pluk.org/AT1.html.