

State Improvement Initiatives Improve Access to Assistive Technology

State and Territory Assistive Technology (AT) Programs focus on improving the provision of AT through comprehensive, statewide programs that are consumer-responsive. The goal of these programs is to increase access to and acquisition of AT through state-level activities and state leadership activities.

Beyond that minimum requirement, some AT Programs also engage in state improvement initiatives. This means coordinating and collaborating with other public and private entities to put AT into the hands of people with disabilities. State improvement initiatives are not part of the core required State AT program activities. They are initiatives that are above and beyond due to programs' expertise as well as being well positioned to take on more systemic state improvement initiatives.

As part of their improvement initiatives, State AT Program staff serve on advisory boards, help draft and advocate for policies that support access to AT, and provide technical assistance to a variety of agencies and entities. These initiatives result in policy, practice, or procedure improvements in AT access throughout each state.

REPORTING REQUIREMENT

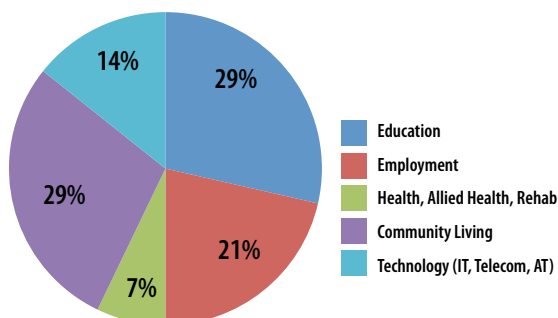
During their annual data reporting to RSA, State AT programs have the option to provide information about one or two major state improvement outcomes. The information requested is in three parts:

- 1) A description of the outcome, and specifics about what changed during this reporting period as a result of the AT program's initiative
- 2) The written policies, practices, and procedures that have been developed and implemented as a result of the AT program's initiative
- 3) The primary area of impact for this state improvement outcome

THE DATA

In FY 2011, 28 states reported major state improvement outcomes. As the pie chart demonstrates, the areas most impacted by state improvement initiatives were education and community living (29%), with employment not far behind at 21%.

AREAS OF IMPACT FOR STATE IMPROVEMENT OUTCOMES (N=28)



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Connecticut State AT Program: Collaborating to Improve Employment Outcomes

The Connecticut Statewide AT Act Program collaborated with the state department of labor, the state VR agency, the state VR agency for the blind, and the Medicaid Infrastructure Grantee to assist One-Stop Career Centers in obtaining AT devices. The purpose was to increase access to services for One-Stop consumers with disabilities.

A needs assessment was conducted, which was followed by purchasing equipment paid for by a separate grant.

The Statewide AT Act Program and the state VR agency for the blind worked on a series of presentations to train One-Stop employees and consumers on using a variety of devices. These presentations are available via the Connect-ability website: www.connect-ability.com



West Virginia State AT Program: Enhancing Community Living for Outdoor Enthusiasts

As a result of an ADA training and technical assistance project conducted by West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) at a state forest, the state division of natural resources decided to make significant changes to the accessibility of the public accommodations at the forest. They installed an accessible walkway connecting accessible parking to accessible restrooms, improved signage, and created an accessible travel route to one of the picnic shelters. The assessment, findings, and resulting actions will have a widespread impact on ADA compliance for future improvements and new construction for recreation locations within the state's park and forest system.



South Carolina AT Program: Improving Technology Access for People with Disabilities

South Carolina State AT Program staff has worked with the South Carolina Assistive Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC) under the Chief Information Officer of the SC Budget and Control Board to make information technology and web sites accessible and usable. AT program staff continue to maintain and update resources for the Web Testers Program. This program employs and trains 25 testers (many using AT) who evaluate state agency websites for accessibility and usability. The program generates reports that detail web access challenges found by web testers, which are then used by agency web designers to improve accessibility and usability of agency web sites. More information about the Web Testers Program can be found here: www.sc.edu/scatp/scwebtesters.html

Missouri State AT Program: Improving Access to Education Materials



Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) expanded its efforts to help school districts obtain Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) for students with reading disabilities. Through intensive training to improve knowledge of school districts, MoAT ranked in

the top 12% of accessible textbook downloads among NIMAC-authorized users in the nation, with an additional 1,800 accessible downloads in MO from Bookshare. The policies and procedures for obtaining AIM in Missouri can be found on the MoAT website: <http://at.mo.gov/aim/aim.html>

Kansas AT Program: Appealing to the Health Care System for Access to AT

The Kansas Health Policy Authority has previously approved augmentative communication devices (ACDs). These devices provide individuals with speech disabilities a way to communicate using recorded human or computer-generated speech. However, in the past year a practice of denial for ACDs became apparent based on reports of denial from consumers who needed such devices. The Kansas AT Program worked with device manufacturers, consumers, and their families; the Disability Rights Center; and other advocacy groups to collect and submit additional information in order to appeal the denial of ACDs. Two of the three appeals were approved, resulting in consumers receiving their much-needed devices.



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Prepared by Daria Domin and Frank A. Smith
Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston

The authors would like to thank the Assistive Technology Programs in Connecticut, South Carolina, West Virginia, Missouri, and Kansas for contributing stories for this report.

For more information, contact:

Daria Domin
daria.domin@umb.edu



www.catada.info

This publication will be made available in alternate formats upon request.