



PENews

Fall/Winter 2008

"Respecting the Rights of Parents to Make Educational Decisions for Their Children"

What is Assistive Technology?

This issue of PENews features topics of general interest to parents of children with disabilities. Are there special education issues you would like to know more about?

Parents can email or telephone PEN with suggestions for future articles.

NOTE: We are updating our PENews mailing list. Please let us know if your mailing information is incorrect.

Email:

Assistive technology (AT) is any kind of technology that can be used to enhance the functional independence of a person with a disability.

Often, for people with disabilities, accomplishing daily tasks such as talking with friends, going to school and work, or participating in recreational activities is a challenge. Assistive Technology devices are tools to help to overcome those challenges and enable people living with disabilities to enhance their quality of life and lead more inde-

pendent lives.

Assistive technology can be anything from a simple (low-tech) device such as a magnifying glass, to a complex (high-tech) device, such as a computerized communication system.

It can be big, such as an automated van lift for a wheelchair or small, such as a Velcro grip attached to a pen or fork for example, for eating and writing. Assistive technology can also be a substitute — such as an augmentative communication device that provides vocal output for a child who cannot com-

municate with her voice.

It is important for families to understand how Federal laws affect their child's right to Assistive Technology and special education.

*The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 300.105 states that **each public agency must insure that AT devices and/or services are made available to a child with a disability if required as part of the child's IEP.** For more information about IDEA, you can visit the following website:*

Wraparound Services Differ From Educational Services

The PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW) defines "wraparound" services as a nickname for Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS). This Medicaid-funded program provides trained professional support for children under age 21 to reduce or replace problem behavior with positive, socially appropriate behavior.

Parents should be aware that there are significant differences between wraparound services and educational services.

School services are designed to *meet the goals of IDEA and focus on functional and academic skills* that prepare a student for independent living, a job or further education.

the child learn skills to become independent in their daily environments. These "environments" can include recreational, community and educational facilities. Long term goals are addressed in a *Behavioral Treatment Plan*.

Education services occur in a school setting. School services for chil-

meet legal obligations to provide the student access to the general education curriculum, and individualized services that support a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Education goals are addressed *in the child's IEP*. Do you have more questions about wraparound services? Contact the Dept. of Public Welfare at:

PEN

Parent Education Network
2107 Industrial Highway
York, PA 17402

Tel: 800 . 522 . 5827 V/TTY
800 . 441 . 5028 Spanish
Fax: 717 . 600 . 8101
Email: pen@parentednet.org

recommendation for specific devices

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 11
EMIGSVILLE, PA
17318

... More about Assistive Technology

Did you know?

Parents often ask how can they determine what type of AT their child needs? An assistive technology evaluation will help match your child's strengths and challenges with appropriate AT devices and services. Evaluations can be conducted by schools, independent agencies and individual consultants.

Some things to consider during the evaluation are:

1. Your child's areas of difficulty
2. Your child's strengths and preferences
3. The environments where your child interacts with others

The evaluation should result in a

and services. AT services also include training to help you and your child use and maintain the device (s).

For additional information and resources concerning assistive technology, parents can contact **PEN** or these websites:

Parent Training and Information Centers:

www.taalliance.org

US Department of Education:

<http://www.ed.gov>

Family Center on Technology and

Disability: **<http://www.fetd.info>**

PA. Youth Leadership Network would like to invite interested youth to become members of their Governing Board. If you are passionate about making a difference in the lives of youth with disabilities, please contact The Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network:

pyln.gb@gmail.com

ConsultLine—1-800-879-2301

(Voice/TTY/TDD)

is a toll-free help line, established by the PA Dept. of Education Bureau of Special Education, for families and Advocates of children with special needs. ConsultLine specialists are able to assist you with the information you may need about; special education regulations, rights, protections and other school related concerns.

Parents Can Support Self-Determination and Successful Transition

Self-determination is a belief that all individuals have the right to direct their own lives. Students who possess self-determination skills achieve positive outcomes as adults.

How can parents promote self-determination skills, and assist their transition age son or daughter? **The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition** offers families these tips:

1. Promote opportunities for personal choices

2. Involve your son or daughter in everyday activities and volunteering
3. Hold high expectations for your child
4. Involve your child in educational, medical and family related decisions
5. Teach your child how to build safety nets through family members, friends, schools and others
6. Teach problem solving skills
7. Allow your child to "own" his or

8. Promote self-advocacy and communication skills
9. Support the development of personal goals, priorities and values
10. Assist your child in developing a sense of belonging in their school and community
11. Be a model for positive self-confidence and self-esteem
12. Help your child understand his or her disability
13. Involve your child, if appropriate,