



Guiding Document Including Assistive Technology in the IEP

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) requires each individual educational program (IEP) team to consider a student's need for assistive technology (AT). In order to be effective, the team must also document, within the IEP, the decisions that are made about the student's need for AT devices and services. The indicators for Including Assistive Technology in the IEP guide the team in writing IEPs for individual students and offer suggestions for the things that might be discussed as an agency provides information to educators about creating IEPs which include AT. This document includes specific suggestions for addressing each IEP indicator.

1. The education agency has **guidelines for documenting assistive technology needs in the IEP and requires their consistent application.**

Intent: The education agency provides guidance to IEP teams about how to effectively document assistive technology needs, devices, and services as a part of specially designed instruction, related services, or supplementary aids and services.

IDEA does not specify how or where AT is to be included in the IEP. Review of effective practice indicates that successful state and/or local education agencies provide specific guidance and ensure consistent application. Comprehensive agency guidelines address the inclusion of AT in development, review, and revision of the IEP. It is important to clearly document the AT devices and services that will be provided so that any team member who is implementing the IEP can clearly understand what AT is required as well as when, where, and the purpose for which it is to be used.

Key Questions

- Does the agency have clearly written guidelines for documenting AT in the IEP?
- Are the guidelines systemically disseminated?
- Has a person been designated to provide support and guidance in addressing the guidelines and their implementation?
- Does the IEP team have a working knowledge of these guidelines?
- Are the guidelines consistently implemented?

For samples of AT in the IEP operating guidelines, see the Resources section of the QIAT Web site at <http://www.qiat.org>.

2. All **services** that the IEP team determines are needed to support the selection, acquisition, and use of assistive technology devices are designated in the IEP.

Intent: The provision of assistive technology services is critical to the effective use of assistive technology devices. It is important that the IEP describes the assistive technology services that are needed for student success. Such services may include evaluation, customization or maintenance of devices, coordination of services, and training for the student and family and professionals, among others.

Under federal law AT may be provided as a part of a student's special education, related services, or supplementary aids and services. As a result, AT may be documented in any of those areas. Each area is equally powerful. There is no "right or wrong" place to document AT needs. Rather, the task of the IEP team is to document AT in the places in the IEP that are the most appropriate to the device and services provided. The most important factor is that the documentation makes sense to individuals who must implement the student's individualized program. The sections of the IEP addressed below include special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, accommodations and supports for school personnel.

A. Special Education: When AT devices and/or services are provided as part of a student's special education, documentation is found in the annual goals. When developing annual goals, the IEP team determines whether or not the student needs AT in order to accomplish them. First the goals are developed and then the need for AT is addressed. In most cases, AT is not the goal; rather, it is the means to achieving the goal.

The following examples are provided to assist IEP teams in addressing AT in the annual goals of the IEP:

Susie will express basic wants and needs in 80% of the opportunities using single word utterances and a voice output augmentative communication system.

John will compose a three or more sentence paragraph with less than two spelling errors when using a hand-held spellchecker.

On occasion, if the student does not have skills to use the AT that is needed to achieve other goals, a goal may be written to address those operational skills. For example, Jane had goals in her IEP about written productivity. The team determined that she needed voice recognition software to accomplish those goals. They realized that to use this AT effectively and efficiently, she needed instruction on the operation of the AT until she was able to use it functionally.

In IDEA there is no requirement for benchmarks, and short term objectives for students with disabilities who are participating in the general education curriculum. They are only required for students participating in assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards. However, some states still require benchmarks and objectives for all students receiving special education. If short term objectives or benchmarks are required, a student may have objectives to learn to use a specific AT device. The training that the student needs is an AT service, and both will be documented in the IEP.

An example is:

Scott will achieve language arts standards for the fifth grade.

Scott will read Braille at the literacy level commensurate with his peers in the fifth grade.

Scott will have some literacy skill that the fifth grade kids need and Joan will figure out what that is.

Key Questions

- Does the student need AT devices or services to achieve annual goals?
- Will it be documented in an existing goal, a new goal, an objective or benchmark under a goal?

B. Related Services: When AT is provided as a part of a related service, it is documented in the IEP form’s listing of related services. Documentation must include the anticipated amount of time and frequency of the service. If AT is listed in the IEP form’s related service section, it is important to remember that additional information may need to be added in other sections of the IEP to clarify the types of technology that will be used, the environments and tasks in which the technology will be used, and the staff responsible for supporting the use of the technology.

The following are examples of how IEP teams might address AT in this component of the IEP:

Related Services	Frequency	Duration	Location
<i>Speech-Language Therapy (including training to use a voice output communication device)</i>	<i>1 hour per week</i>	<i>9-15-13 to 5-28-14</i>	<i>Across all school environments</i>
<i>AT Specialist Support for Access to Computers</i>	<i>2 hours per month</i>	<i>9-15-13 to 5-28-14</i>	<i>Classroom</i>

Key Questions

- Does the student need AT devices or services as a part of a related service in order to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) or to benefit from special education?
- Will the provision of AT devices or services become part of the services of a current service provider?
- Will additional personnel be needed to provide the AT services?

C. Supplementary Aids and Services: AT may also be addressed in the supplementary aids and services component of the IEP. AT is often provided as a supplementary aid and service when required for a student to participate in general education classes or other education-related activities among children without disabilities. While federal law does not require that the provider of supplementary aids and services be identified specifically in the IEP, some state and district IEP forms do ask for this information. It is recommended that IEP teams identify the provider(s) during their discussions even if it’s not on the form.

The following are examples of how AT may be addressed in the supplementary aids and services section:

Supplementary Aids and Services	Frequency	Duration	Location
<i>Portable word processor with built-in spell check output</i>	<i>all note-taking</i>	<i>9-15-13 to 5-28-14</i>	<i>general education classes</i>
<i>AAC System with Science unit vocabulary</i>	<i>daily/ 1 hour</i>	<i>9-15-13 to 5-28-14</i>	<i>science class</i>
<i>Acquisition of instructional materials in specialized formats by case manager</i>	<i>For all core instructional materials</i>	<i>9-15-13 to 5-28-14</i>	<i>In all core curriculum classes</i>

Key Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student need AT supports and services in order to participate and achieve in the general education classroom and other educational settings? • How, when, and where will these aids and services be provided? • Who will provide the supports and services?

D. Accommodations Needed for Participation in State-wide and District-wide Assessments:

The IEP team must determine the accommodations that the student requires in order to participate in state-wide and district-wide assessments. For some students with disabilities, AT may be a required accommodation.

Students who use AT in their daily educational program may need the same technology in order to participate in state-wide and district-wide assessments. If a team determines that a student needs AT for participation in an assessment, it is important to review the state and local guidelines for testing accommodations. If limitations in guidelines affect the student’s use of the AT, the team can discuss other strategies for the student’s participation in high-stakes assessment.

Conversely, the IEP should never indicate that a student will use AT to complete a state assessment if the student does not use the same AT regularly for participation in educational activities.

The following examples are provided to assist the IEP team in addressing AT in this component of the IEP:

Marcus’ team has determined that he needs his auditory trainer to optimize his ability to listen to verbal directions. There are verbal directions provided by the examiner during state assessments. This is an allowable accommodation in his state. Marcus will use his auditory trainer during state assessments.

Due to her severe visual impairment, Shantae requires that all testing materials including directions, and answer sheets, if appropriate, be provided to her in Braille.

In order to complete classroom written work longer than one paragraph, Stephen uses his portable word processor. The team planned to explore whether this was an allowable accommodation on his state's writing assessment. If not, Stephen's team has determined that he will dictate his writing assessment to a qualified scribe.

Note: Teams are encouraged to look at local and district assessment guidelines when determining whether accommodations/modifications are allowable in those assessments.

Key Questions

- Does the student use AT in the classroom as a part of the instructional program?
- Does the student need AT to participate in statewide and district assessments?
- Is the use of that AT an allowable accommodation under the testing guidelines?
- If not, how will the student participate?

E. Supports for School Personnel: The IEP team should address the supports that the school staff needs in order for them to effectively provide AT devices and services to the student.

The following are examples of how AT might be addressed in this section of the IEP:

The AT resource person will work with Paul's teachers in the special education classroom for one hour weekly for six weeks. Training will include programming, operation, and use of his augmentative communication device. All team members will participate in identification of needed vocabulary.

Kelly's special education and general education teachers will be provided with follow-up training and technical assistance to aid them in integrating the use of her AT devices (spell checker, word processor) into her school curriculum. Training will occur in the classroom during three one-hour sessions before November.

The educational assistant for the fourth grade pod will scan daily worksheets from the social studies workbook into the computer for use with the scan and read program.

Key Questions

- Do school personnel need training to develop and/or enhance skills needed to implement the student's AT program?
- Do school personnel need technical assistance and support to enable them to develop and implement the student's AT program?

3. The IEP illustrates that assistive technology is a tool to support achievement of goals and progress in the general curriculum by establishing a clear

relationship between student needs, assistive technology devices and services, and the student’s goals and objectives.

Intent: Most goals are developed before decisions about assistive technology are made. However, this does not preclude the development of additional goals, especially those related specifically to the appropriate use of assistive technology.

AT is one of the special factors that must be considered in the development, review, and revision of each student’s IEP. The team’s primary responsibility during consideration is to think about whether the student needs AT devices and/or services to participate and make progress in the general education curriculum or to benefit from specially designed instruction.

Minimal compliance with the requirement to consider AT is responding to a statement in the IEP such as “Does the student require AT devices and services?” Yes No

Although minimal compliance for considering AT may be simply checking “yes” or “no” to the consideration question, best practice is for IEP teams to use a systematic process for considering a student’s AT needs and to document the outcomes of the consideration in the IEP. In most instances, it is just as important to document when a student does not require AT as when a student does require it. Documentation of the issues that were addressed during AT consideration can be especially helpful to future IEP teams.

There are many places in the IEP where tools to support achievement of goals may be documented (e.g., consideration, accommodations, present levels of academic achievement, minutes). The following are examples of documentation in the IEP:

*Does the student require AT devices and services? Yes No
Describe: John requires the use of a talking calculator for all math activities that require calculation.*

*Does the student require AT devices and services? Yes No
Describe: Paula needs to use adaptive seating and positioning equipment (prone stander, wedge) in her classes in order to participate in her educational program.*

*Does the student require AT devices and services? Yes No
Describe: Karen uses an eight location augmentative communication device with speech output to supplement her current communication skills. See present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and annual goals and objectives for additional information.*

*Does the student require AT devices and services? Yes No
Describe: Eduardo is struggling with completing writing assignments. We discussed the need for AT but decided his problem relates more to attention. Positive behavior supports are being used to address the issues at this time.*

Key Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would a person reading the IEP be able to determine what AT devices and services

were considered and the basis of the decisions that were made?

- Does the AT discussed in consideration relate to the student's identified educational needs?
- Does the student's use of AT assist in the achievement of individualized goals?
- Is AT needed to remove barriers to participation in the general education curriculum?
- Is AT needed to complete educationally relevant tasks?

4. IEP content regarding assistive technology use is written in language that describes how assistive technology contributes to achievement of measurable and observable outcomes.

Intent: Content which describes measurable and observable outcomes for assistive technology use enables the IEP team to review the student's progress and determine whether the assistive technology has had the expected impact on student participation and achievement.

The team writes a clear description of the change in student performance that is expected as a result of the student's use of AT. This description will include what the success will look like, how it will be measured and the criterion that will indicate mastery.

Criteria vary with the type of task (e.g. crossing the street vs. requesting the toilet), the student's abilities (e.g. has never completed the task vs. can complete the task 50% of the time) and the situation (e.g. being asked to choose food items when known to be hungry vs. when state of hunger isn't known).

John will compose a paragraph with three or more sentences with less than two spelling errors on 80% of assignments, when using a hand-held spellchecker.

In the following example, Yadira has two interrelated goals. The first describes her functional use of speech recognition software. In the second goal, her ability to operate the AT is addressed. The use of her speech recognition software may also be described in other areas of the IEP, (most commonly in supplementary aids and services).

Based on the general education grading rubric, Yadira will satisfactorily complete 100% of written assignments of more than one paragraph.

Yadira will demonstrate competency using speech recognition software to dictate three paragraphs of 90 words or more with 85% accuracy.

Key Questions

- Did the team describe the expected changes in achievement?
- Have objective ways to measure changes in student achievement related to a goal been clearly described?
- Have meaningful criteria for success been determined?
- Does everyone understand the criteria?

5. Assistive Technology is included in the IEP in a manner that provides a clear and complete description of the devices and services to be provided and used to address student needs and achieve expected results.

Intent: IEPs are written so that participants in the IEP meeting and others who use the information to implement the student's program understand what technology is to be available, how it is to be used, and under what circumstances. "Jargon" should be avoided.

When IEPs are well written, participants in the IEP meeting and others, who use the information to implement the student's program, understand what technology is to be available, how it is to be used, and under what circumstances.

There is no need to be redundant or repetitive when including AT in the IEP. If a device or service is clearly described in one place, the identical information does not need to be repeated in other sections. However, the complete IEP should provide a full, clear description of the AT devices and services that a student is receiving. When including AT in the IEP, it is generally preferable to describe the necessary features of the AT rather than naming a specific product. This is important because specific product features frequently change or particular products have not yet been identified.

Goals and objectives, present level of academic achievement and functional performance, notes or minutes of an IEP and transition planning are places where clear and complete description is critical. State or local educational agencies may have additional places where AT can be described.

A. Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance: In this section, the IEP team addresses the student's strengths and weaknesses in academic and functional areas. It provides a natural place to document AT that is currently being used and how it is used to compensate for barriers to achievement, participation, and independence. When documenting AT in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, the specific type(s) of technology that is provided, as well as the manner in which it is used, should be described.

The following examples are ones in which the student demonstrated greater success with a specific product:

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Cleo requires the use of a word prediction program to assist her in completing classroom writing assignments. She has been successfully using "Help Me Write Right" on the classroom computer.*

Jeff has been successfully using an "XYZ Communicator" to communicate his wants, needs and information. For the last six years, Jeff has been creating novel utterances of 5-7 words as well as retrieving pre-stored familiar messages frequently and spontaneously throughout the day and across environments and listeners.

The following are examples of how AT may be addressed in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance of the IEP without naming specific equipment:

John exhibits a severe expressive communication impairment. He communicates with peers and adults within his environment using vocalizations and an eight location voice output augmentative communication device. He uses the device in all educational settings and appropriate vocabulary is programmed for each setting.

Due to her significant visual impairment, Susan is not able to access standard print instructional materials such as textbooks, worksheets, and written tests. She requires that all print copies be enlarged through the use of a photocopier or closed circuit television system. Computer-based materials are enlarged using a text enlargement software application.

Key Questions

- Does the student currently use AT devices to participate and make progress in the general education curriculum?
- For what tasks is the AT used?
- Is the AT effective in completing the tasks?
- In what environments is the AT used?
- Are services currently being provided to help the student use AT?
- Are there any other tasks for which AT is not currently being used, but for which AT might be effective?
- Does documented data indicate that a particular device is needed?

B. Minutes of the IEP Meeting: Some states and/or districts include minutes of the IEP meeting as part of the IEP document. The need for AT devices and services may also be addressed in the minutes of the IEP meeting. This provides a place to clearly describe information that may be important not only now but in the future when planning and implementing a student's individualized educational program. It is required to include the AT in the actual IEP document if the team has determined that AT is needed. The minutes serve to clarify and expand on the AT that is included in the plan.

The following are examples of statements that might be included in minutes regarding AT:

The team considered Tim's need for AT. It was determined that Tim was making adequate educational progress without the need for any additional accommodations or modifications, including AT.

Carlota's mother indicated that she would like to have training about how to support her communication in the home.

C. Documenting AT in Transition Services: Another place where a clear description is important is in the section describing planned transitions. When addressing transition services for a student who needs AT, it is important to address the AT devices and services currently used by the student and those that may be required in the new environment.

In the following example, Colin has successfully been using a voice output device for several years. His AT use will be addressed in the transition section of the IEP.

The case manager from the Department of Human Services will contact public and private agencies to assist in obtaining funding for the voice output communication device before the team's November meeting.

The speech and language pathologist will identify potential sources of technical support after he leaves high school by January.

Key Questions

- Will the student's current AT devices be useful in the new environment?
- Does the student need new AT devices and/or services in the new environment?
- Have AT service providers been identified for the potential new environments and invited to participate in transition planning?
- Does the transition plan address the use of AT in the new environment?

Summary

An IEP is a powerful document for ensuring that students with disabilities have the AT devices and services that they need to participate in and benefit from their educational programs. AT devices and services should be clearly documented in the student's IEP. The type of technology that the student requires and the manner in which it will be used should be clearly described so that all parties to the IEP, including parents, have a clear understanding of the AT and how it will be used. Once AT has been documented in the IEP, it must be provided as specified. When AT devices are included in a student's IEP, they should be provided to the student in a timely manner, customized to meet the student's individual needs, and integrated into instructional activities within the classroom. Implementing the Quality Indicators for Including Assistive Technology in the IEP can help ensure that this happens.