

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and California special education law require that Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams consider whether students need assistive technology services and devices when developing their IEPs. It is the policy of the Humboldt-Del Norte SELPA (SELPA) that as part of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), assistive technology devices and/or services are made available to a student with a disability, if required as part of the student's special education program and/or related services, as specified in his/her Individualized Education Program (IEP), at no charge to the family.

Assistive Technology Devices and Services

Assistive technology devices and services are defined in the IDEA as:

- An Assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a student with a disability.
- An Assistive technology service is any service that directly assists a student with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. This includes: (a) evaluation; (b) providing for the acquisition of assistive technology equipment; (c) selecting, designing, maintaining, repairing, or replacing the equipment; (d) coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices; and (e) training or technical assistance for the student, family and other professionals who work with the student.

Equipment Acquisition and District Responsibilities

If the IEP Team determines that a student requires assistive technology to access education, then it is the district's responsibility to provide this equipment.

Home Use

Special education laws and regulations require that if the IEP team determines that a particular assistive technology device is required for home use in order for the student to achieve the goals and objectives on the IEP, the equipment must be provided for use at home. The IEP team should base its decision for home use on the educational and instructional activities that must be completed outside of the school setting. Districts can have parents sign an "Equipment Loan Agreement," found in the SEIS Document Library under "Request for Assistance and Referral Forms."

Graduation

Assistive technology devices and services provided for a student enrolled in the district must be returned to the district upon graduation or receipt of certificate of completion. If assistive technology devices and services have been provided as part of the student's school program, the IEP team must make a determination regarding continued requirements for access to assistive technology after graduation or receipt of certificate of completion. Provisions for non-school support for assistive technology devices and services, after graduation, should be specified as part of the IEP, when appropriate, to assist the student

in obtaining such devices and services when they leave school.

Section 504

Students with disabilities who do not require special education or do not meet the eligibility requirements of IDEA are entitled to assistive technology devices and services if it is determined by a Section 504 team that assistive technology devices and services are a reasonable accommodation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Guidelines for IEP Teams

The need for assistive technology devices and services is determined through a consideration process conducted by the local school site's IEP team staff. For the student who is or may be eligible for special education services, consideration of the need for assistive technology (AT) should be an integral part of a comprehensive review for students in all areas related to his/her disability and educational needs. School sites should utilize a collaborative approach when considering assistive technology for students with disabilities that includes soliciting input from service providers who are knowledgeable of the disability and assistive technology resources commonly associated with the disability. In some cases, school site staff may not have sufficient knowledge to make appropriate assistive technology recommendations by themselves for those students with more complex needs. Information or guidance could be requested from the Humboldt - Del Norte SELPA Assistive Technology Program for consideration support.

Assistive technology is one aspect of a multifaceted approach to addressing the strengths and needs of a student with disabilities. The level of assistance provided needs to be considered in relation to the student's learning goals, motivation, chronological age, developmental level, and curriculum access needs. Assistive technology is a *tool* for access that may change over time as the student's needs and curricular demands change and as advancements are made in technology.

The definition of assistive technology in the law is broad and includes almost any type of device or service used to support the education of a student with a disability. Assistive technology is designed to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals. The word "technology" in the phrase *assistive technology* does not imply a requirement for electronic components. For all students with disabilities, it is important for IEP teams to recognize that assistive technology encompasses a range of devices from no- or low-tech (e.g., picture boards, wide-lined paper, pencil grips, calculators, and portable keyboards) to high-end technology, which may include computing devices, or equipment that provides access to computing devices.

Assistive technology is not instructional technology. The purpose of instructional technology is to increase, maintain or improve learning outcomes. As students engage in 21st century learning, they are provided technology to support skill acquisition for critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. Instructional technology should not be specified in the IEP. Assistive technologies provide access to the curriculum.

IEP teams are required to consider the need for assistive technology to address the student's ability to access curriculum. IEP teams must ask the question, "What does the student need to do that they cannot

do because of their disability?" Consideration does not imply a mandate for an assistive technology assessment or for the actual provision of devices for every child with a disability. For example, if a student's performance is functional in relation to curriculum goals, the consideration should be an IEP discussion and consensus should be reached relatively quickly with the conclusion that assistive technology is not needed at this time.

In some cases, the IEP team consideration may lead to a recommendation for a short-term trial with new strategies or devices available at the school. The IEP team should plan a subsequent meeting to review the results of the trial period or to provide other considerations for assistive technology.

IEP teams must specify the type of device the student needs (e.g., pencil grips, word processing software, augmentative and alternative communication system). The IEP team should not specify brand names.

Note: Assistive Technology excludes surgically implanted devices or replacement of such devices.

Prior to the IEP Meeting

Every IEP team member is responsible for the consideration of a student's need for assistive technology. In order for that consideration to be valid, information and data shall be available prior to the IEP meeting regarding the child's strengths and functional needs. Include information about the adaptations, accommodations, and AT options tried to date. Appropriate school personnel with knowledge of school site assistive technology resources and options, should attend the IEP meeting if the need for additional adaptations, accommodations, and/or equipment trials is anticipated.

During the IEP Meeting

[Documenting Assistive Technology Quickguide](#)

IEP team members will do the following:

- During discussion of present levels of performance, present the information gathered prior to the IEP meeting, and record that information in *Present Level of Performance* of the IEP for each performance area, as appropriate.
- If the IEP team recommends that the student does not require assistive technology devices or services, indicate "No" on the *Special Factors* page, and write a rationale in the Assistive Technology box on the Special Factors page.
- If the IEP team recommends assistive technology supports are necessary for the student's educational access, the team will:
 - Check 'yes' on the Special Factors page of the IEP form to the question, 'Does the student require assistive technology devices and/or services?' and then provide a rationale for the AT need.
 - In addition, assistive technology supports could be listed in the *Accommodation, Modification, and Supports* section of the Services-Offer of FAPE page in the IEP.
- If the IEP team determines that it requires more information to determine the need for assistive technology, the team will:
 - Identify specific areas of need and document in Present Levels and/or IEP notes.

- Consider using the SETT (Student, Environment, Tasks, Tools) process.
 - Select possible assistive technology to trial.
 - [Resource for assistive technology options](#)
 - [Resource for augmentative and alternative communication options](#)
 - Determine a plan to trial technology with the student.
 - [AT Trial and Implementation Guide](#)
 - Specify what steps are needed to trial, including timelines and responsible IEP team members.
- After the trial is complete (usually 30-60 days), hold an IEP amendment meeting to review assistive technology trials and next steps for acquisition and implementation.

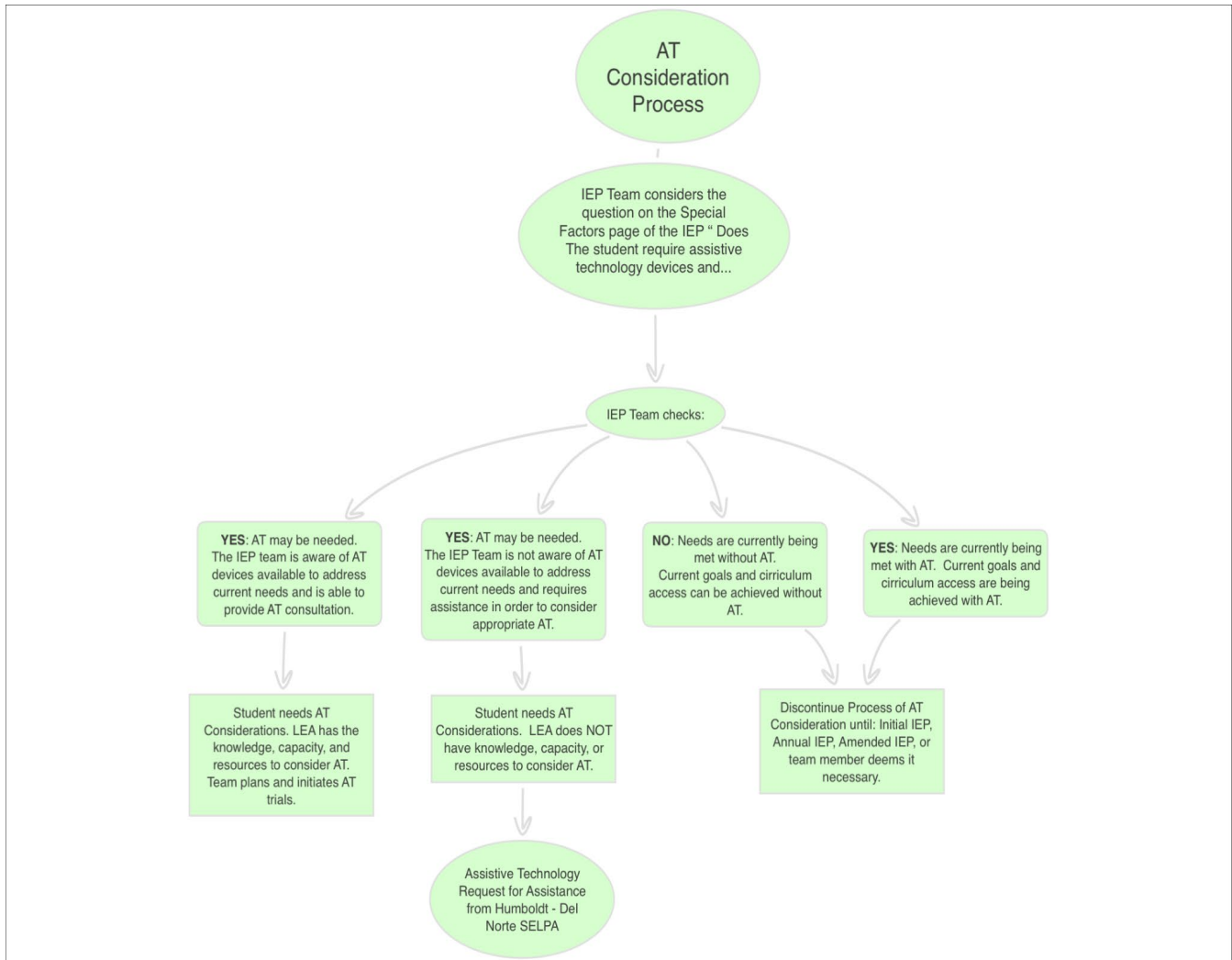
After the IEP Meeting

If an IEP team determines that a student requires an assistive technology, it is the responsibility of the school to:

- Provide or arrange for the provision of the device(s) as soon as possible.
- Provide or arrange for the provision of any needed staff training regarding the use of the device(s).
- Provide or arrange for the training of the student in the use of the device(s).
- Maintain the device(s) in good working order.
- Evaluate and document the effectiveness of the device on an ongoing basis and present such information at the IEP review.
- If attempts to use assistive technology are not successful, an IEP team may request consultation from the SELPA by completing the appropriate Request for Assistance. (See next section.)

If the IEP team needs assistance outside of the district to consider assistive technology options for a student, the team can request support from the SELPA by filling out the appropriate Request for Assistance. The primary role of the SELPA is to build capacity among Humboldt and Del Norte County school district professionals who are doing the daily work of helping students with disabilities to access their education. The IEP team is required to consider assistive technology for all students. SELPA specialists can support teams and offer recommendations, but they are not the primary decision-makers.

- The SELPA offers an Assistive Technology Specialist who can support IEP teams requiring additional support during the AT Consideration process on behalf of students on IEPs or 504s. The SELPA encourages teams to work through the AT Consideration process described above for most students, and request assistance from the AT Specialist for more complicated considerations. The AT Specialist's role is to work closely with the IEP team to consider needs related to the student, environment, tasks, and finally tools that might help the student with educational access.
- If the IEP team requests consultation from the SELPA AT Specialist, IEP team members are expected to participate in the consultation and carry through with AT trials and implementation.



Humboldt-Del Norte SELPA Support Process

Prior to Intake

- School teams should implement and document outcomes of assistive technology options that have been implemented. Examples of tools and strategies are in the link below:
 - [Resource for assistive technology options](#)
 - [Resource for augmentative and alternative communication options](#)

Intake

- *Request for Assistance (RFA):* Within the SEIS Document Library, select “Request for Assistance and Referral Forms,” and then download the document “SELPA Assistive Technology Request for Assistance.”
- Fill out the form and Release of Confidential Information (ROI), get signatures, and send the

completed packet to support@hdnselpa.org.

- State student needs and assistive technology (tools and strategies) that have already been tried.
 - As a reminder, if no assistive technology tools and strategies have been tried by the team, you must attempt to implement assistive technology tools and strategies.
- The specialist will contact the district ten working days after receiving the approved RFA from SELPA administration to set up an appointment.

Information Gathering

- The SELPA consultant may look at records, interview the student and team members, and do observations to determine student needs related to the environment and tasks that the rest of the students are doing. A team meeting may be necessary.

Next Steps

Once the student's access needs are determined and prioritized, the consultant will make recommendations. This could happen during a SELPA Consultation, a Team Meeting, 504 Meeting, or IEP Meeting. Recommendations could include:

- Tools and strategies that the team might trial.
- The provision of any needed staff training regarding the use of the device(s) or strategies.
- Training the student in the use of the device(s) or strategies.
- Procurement of equipment that has been successful during trial.

For More Resources

Go to the SEIS Document Library - Assistive Technology Resources