



# Using Interdisciplinary Teams

University of Kentucky Assistive Technology (UKAT) Project

## Interdisciplinary Involvement in AT Services

### Introduction

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Best practice indicates that Assistive Technology services be planned and monitored by interdisciplinary teams. Interdisciplinary teaming as defined in the Toolkit is the teaming of individuals from multiple disciplines who work towards common goals through a child-centered approach. Team members work together, sharing strategies and progress, while delivering individualized and collaborative services.

Assistive Technology Teams are interdisciplinary teams charged with AT planning and service delivery. These teams can serve all or part of a district, or just serve an individual school. Most often, the majority of the AT team members are the same people on the IEP team, adding district level personnel to bring additional AT expertise to the team. Composition of the AT Team will vary according to each student's needs. Such variability allows inclusion of professionals from different disciplines, including the student, parents, and staff members who work directly with the student in the educational program.

The following guidelines have been adapted from various state and local school systems, as well as texts and journal articles on assistive technology. These are referenced accordingly at the end of the section.

### Coordination of Interdisciplinary Teams

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Interdisciplinary teams function best when coordination and management responsibilities are assigned to an individual. The team coordinator should assume the following responsibilities.

#### Responsibilities Pertaining to Coordinating Interdisciplinary Teams

- Develop agendas and schedule team meetings
- Provide advance notice of meeting date, time and location to all team members.
- Conduct team meetings, keeping discussions on task
- Record minutes of each team meeting, circulate copies to all team members, and other appropriate personnel, in a timely manner.
- Provide general management of team activities.
- Provide information on AT training opportunities to team members on a regular basis.
- Coordinate AT interventions, therapies, and services.
- Facilitate follow-through of AT plans.
- Facilitate and ensure that AT timelines are met.
- Provide support for team members.

### Team Member Roles and Responsibilities

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AT decisions are best made in cooperation and collaboration with individuals who can contribute to identification of a student's functional needs. This section provides guidelines for interdisciplinary

involvement in assistive technology services, along with lists of appropriate responsibilities for each potential team member. These rolls and responsibilities are categorized according to professional areas of specialization.

Since many responsibilities should be shared by all members of an assistive technology team, this section begins with general responsibilities of all team members.

### **Responsibilities Pertaining to All Team Members**

- Attend and participate in AT team meetings.
- Assist with student information data collection including reporting gathering and assessment.
- Assist with student data analysis for AT decision making and program planning.
- Monitor and document student progress in the use of AT, modify AT services as indicated by ongoing evaluation data.
- Request school district support when appropriate and locate funding for AT services.
- Provide ongoing training to parents, paraprofessionals, and/or students.
- Provide ongoing communication regarding AT services to team members.
- Participate in AT training workshops for personal knowledge.

### **Role of the Special Education Teacher**

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The role of the special education teacher in providing assistive technology services is varied. It includes planning for AT integration into the curriculum, using AT for instruction, assessing for potential AT uses, and evaluating student progress and continued eligibility for special education services. The special education teacher may work in cooperation with the AT team coordinator, often assuming leadership roles, as appropriate.

### **Responsibilities of the Special Education Teacher**

- Provide clear and continual communication regarding AT issues with parents, student, and others.
- Oversee the student's total educational plan.
- Collaborate with family and other professionals to facilitate the educational plan.
- Collaborate with AT support personnel in implementing the AT provisions of the student's IEP.
- Identify academic, social, behavioral, emotional and physical needs in the classroom that relate to IEP objectives associated with the AT plan.
- Collect evaluation data on AT use.
- Report progress, concerns, and needed modifications to the AT team.
- Manage student time and activities during the school day to facilitate the educational plan.
- Develop and implement educational strategies, promoting participation in classroom activities for AT users in order to accomplish functional academic and social goals.
- Modify curriculum goals and educational materials to accommodate AT use.
- Provide resource support related to AT use.
- Maintain up-to-date classroom AT inventory.
- Notify the school district AT coordinator on needs for equipment maintenance.
- Request AT technical support from district and school level personnel.

## **Role of the General Education Teacher**

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The general education teacher is responsible for integration of the special education student into the regular classroom. This includes adaptation of curriculum, instruction, and the classroom environment to facilitate learning and development. The general education teacher provides important information to the AT team regarding the student's functioning in the classroom and collaborates with those who are involved in delivering special education and related services.

### **Responsibilities of the General Education Teacher**

- Provide information regarding the student's academic, physical, and social functioning levels.
- Identify academic, physical, and social needs in the classroom as related to IEP objectives.
- Collect evaluation data on AT use.
- Develop and implement educational strategies, promoting participation in classroom activities for AT users in order to accomplish student goals.
- Collaborate with family and other professionals to facilitate the educational plan.
- Manage student time and activities during the school day to facilitate the educational plan.
- Consult with the special education teachers and related services personnel.
- Maintain up-to-date classroom AT inventory.
- Notify the school district AT coordinator on needs for equipment and maintenance requirements.
- Request AT technical support from district and school level personnel.
- Integrate students who use AT into the classroom.
- Assist AT users in the classroom.
- Orient all students in class about the AT being used.

## **Role of the Instructional Assistant**

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The instructional assistant is responsible for assisting the general education teacher, special education teacher, and related service providers in the implementation of the individualized education plan. This includes instruction, adaptation, implementation, and data collection for all AT services.

### **Responsibilities of the Instructional Assistant**

- Provide information regarding the student's academic, physical, and social functioning levels.
- Identify academic, physical, emotional, behavioral and social needs in the classroom as related to IEP objectives.
- Collect evaluation data on AT use.
- Implement educational strategies, promoting participation in classroom activities for the AT users in order to accomplish student goals.
- Collaborate with family and other professionals to facilitate the educational plan.
- Manage student time and activities during the school day to facilitate the educational plan.
- Consult with the regular education teacher, special education teacher and related services personnel.
- Notify the regular education teacher on needs for equipment and maintenance requirements.
- Request AT technical support from district and school level personnel.

- Assist with integration of students who use AT into the classroom.
- Orient all students in class about the ATs that are being used.

## **Role of the Assistive Technology Specialist**

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The role of the assistive technology specialist is to provide specialized expertise and services related to assistive technology. Services may include performing assessments to determine the need for assistive and adaptive devices and services. The AT specialist may also provide consultative services to personnel who are involved in the direct delivery of AT services to students. AT specialists also train students, teachers, families, and others in the use of technologies that have been specified in a student's IEP. AT specialists may monitor all AT activities in a given school district and coordinate the AT referral, screening, and assessment system within the district. Often, the assistive technology specialist serves as the coordinator for the AT team.

### **Responsibilities of the Assistive Technology Specialist**

- Provide training to team members and distribute information on training opportunities, as available.
- Provide AT technical support to facilitate implementation of the AT plan.
- Coordinate student AT assessments.
- Suggest appropriate matches between assistive technology user and device features.
- Provide information to AT Team on acquisition and purchase of assistive technology devices.
- Assist in procuring, designing, fitting, and maintaining equipment.
- Set-up and maintain AT systems.
- Facilitate follow-up of student AT goals.
- Maintain an inventory of available AT for use across environments.

## **Role of the Rehabilitation Engineer**

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The rehabilitation engineer provides resources, information, and assistance regarding maintenance, use and purchase of equipment for assistive technology. Rehabilitation engineers also may be called upon to fabricate AT devices or equipment that may not be available commercially. As a member of the AT team, the rehabilitation engineer advises the team on feasibility, availability, and acquisition of appropriate technology.

### **Responsibilities of the Rehabilitation Engineer**

- Assist in making decisions regarding the selection and use of specific technology devices.
- Design work stations for assistive technology users.
- Assist in procuring, designing, fitting, and maintaining equipment.
- Fabricate devices to meet unique needs of students.
- Set-up and modify equipment and the environment to meet the needs of the student.

## **Role of Assessment Personnel**

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Assessment personnel are specialists who conduct thorough evaluations of students to determine their needs for AT services. They may represent several disciplines such as speech and Language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, rehabilitation engineering, special education, psychology,

adaptive physical education, medicine and allied health. Assessment personnel administer assessment instruments, interpret results, and prepare evaluation reports concerning the student's educational, intellectual, emotional, physical, communicative, and social levels of functioning. They also make recommendations that relate to the selection and use of AT devices and services.

### **Responsibilities of the Assessment Personnel**

- Assess children's abilities and levels of functioning.
- Identify the student's personal resources and perceptions that impact the selection and implementation of AT services.
- Suggest options that should be considered in making decisions about the selection of AT devices and services.
- Develop recommendations concerning implications of assessments for planning AT services.
- Prepare evaluation reports.
- Participate as members of the IEP team, as appropriate.
- Conduct follow-up evaluation and assessment regarding the impact of the use of AT and make recommendations for modifications in AT plans.

### **Role of Vision and Hearing Specialists**

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The vision and hearing specialists provide the interdisciplinary team with highly specialized information about the student's vision and auditory functioning. Vision and hearing specialists may specify vision and/or hearing evaluations, special equipment, and referral for additional assessment.

### **Responsibilities of the Vision and Hearing Specialists**

- Evaluate student's ability to see and hear as needed for learning in the classroom.
- Identify specific environmental demands that impact on vision and/or hearing.
- Suggest ways to maximize student's visual and auditory abilities in order to function in the home and educational environments.
- Assist in development of instructional activities that relate to visual perception and auditory skill.
- Assist in designing and developing visual and auditory aids and suggest strategies for facilitating their use.
- Facilitate integration of vision and hearing development into educational curriculum.

### **Role of the Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP)**

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The role of the speech/language pathologist is to evaluate the speech, language, and communication strengths and weaknesses of students, design and deliver therapy to improve communication ability. As appropriately qualified to do so, speech/language pathologists assume primary responsibility on the AT team for making recommendations about augmentative communication aids and services.

### **Responsibilities of the Speech/Language Pathologist**

- Evaluate student's ability to use speech and language.
- Identify specific environmental demands that impact on communication.
- Suggest ways to maximize student's speech, language, and communication.

- Assist in designing and developing communication aids and suggest strategies for facilitating their use.
- Facilitate integration of speech and language development into educational curriculum.
- Recommend augmentative communication devices, as appropriate.

### **Role of the Occupational Therapist (OT)**

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The occupational therapist provides services to enhance fine motor development, self help skill acquisition, eating/feeding skill development, sensory processing, positioning, splinting, and seating, augmentative communication/computer access, cognitive, behavioral and interpersonal skill development and community living skills. As a member of the AT team, the occupational therapist shares expertise regarding such activities as daily living skills, environmental control, writing, and keyboarding. The occupational therapist is trained to provide information and resources on design, development, and clinical application of assistive technology devices.

#### **Responsibilities of the Occupational Therapist**

- Evaluate fine motor and gross motor skills in relation to AT devices, including range of motion, keyboarding, and handwriting.
- Assist in determining most reliable motor response for switch placement.
- Complete fine motor sections of AT assessments.
- Assist in adapting and customizing AT equipment to facilitate fine motor abilities and increased response.
- Evaluate student's posture and mobility as related to daily living activities.
- Recommend and implement student positioning procedures and devices which will meet seating and mobility needs.
- Assist in determining devices and strategies for student to access other technologies for learning, communication and mobility.
- Fabricate low-tech adaptations, as appropriate.
- Recommend environmental control solutions or other environmental adaptations
- Assist in student's achievement of independence in daily living skills.

### **Role of the Physical Therapist (PT)**

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Physical therapists work directly with the student to maintain or enhance range of motion, improve muscle strength, and increase physical functioning for students who exhibit physical limitations. As a member of the AT team, the physical therapist provides information, consultation, training, and resources regarding the student's gross motor, travel and mobility needs.

#### **Responsibilities of the Physical Therapist**

- Evaluate gross motor abilities.
- Identify optimum positioning of student and equipment for optimal use of assistive technology.
- Assist in adapting and customizing AT equipment.
- Complete gross motor sections of AT assessments.
- Identify any existing physical conditions, which impact student's performance.

- Evaluate student's posture and mobility.
- Recommend and implement techniques, devices, and strategies for appropriate positioning of student for comfort, development, safety and increased mobility.

### **Role of the Adaptive Physical Education Specialist**

The adaptive physical education teacher is responsible for integration of the special education student into physical education activities. This includes adaptation of curriculum, instruction, and the physical education environment to facilitate learning and development. The adaptive physical education teacher provides important information to the AT team regarding the student's gross motor and social functioning in fitness, sports, leisure, and recreation activities and collaborates with those who are involved in delivering special education and related services.

#### **Responsibilities of the Adaptive Physical Education Teacher**

- Provide information regarding the student's social and physical functioning.
- Provide clear and continual communication regarding AT issues with parents, student, and others.
- Collaborate with family and other professionals to facilitate the educational plan.
- Collaborate with AT support personnel in implementing the AT provisions of the student's IEP.
- Identify social and physical needs in physical education that relate to IEP objectives associated with the AT plan.
- Collect evaluation data on AT use.

### **Role of the School Psychologist**

The school psychologist administers and interprets assessment instruments, measuring intellectual, social, emotional, and behavioral functioning. The school psychologist provides recommendations having implications for the educational placement of students. As a member of the AT team, the school psychologist provides information on the student's functioning level, limitations, potentials, and motivation that impact AT decisions.

#### **Responsibilities of the School Psychologist**

- Assess student's intellectual abilities.
- Assess student's preferences for learning.
- Provide academic assessment of student, as appropriate.
- Provide information to AT team on student's emotional, behavioral and psychological needs.
- Provide recommendations on support of student's mental health.
- Provide consultation with student's family and peers, as appropriate, regarding emotional and psychological support.
- Consult with teachers regarding discipline and adjustment problems.
- Provide information and recommendations about how all of the prior assessment might impact on the selection and use of AT devices and services.
- Provide training regarding psychological and emotional factors that might impact on AT use.

## **Role of the School Nurse**

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The school nurse provides general nursing services, such as medical assessment, referral, consultation, instruction, and administration of medication. As a member of the AT team, the school nurse is an important resource, providing needs assessment, medical information, risk analysis, and medically related services. School nurses also provide training to school personnel who may need to operate devices that are used to maintain the vitality of medically fragile children.

### **Responsibilities of the School Nurse**

- Address medical issues and monitor medical complications.
- Monitor and report nutritional needs and recommendations.
- Provide training on medical needs and issues.
- Provide information to the team regarding medical risks.
- Evaluate student's medical condition on an ongoing basis.
- Provide general therapeutic management.

## **Role of Medical Specialists**

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Medical specialists serve an important role in facilitating implementation of medical treatment plans. Medical specialists include physicians and allied health personnel such as ophthalmologists, audiologists, orthopedic surgeons, neurologists, and others. Medical specialists diagnose problems, develop and prescribe treatment plans and medications, authorize third party reimbursements for medical services, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. As members of the AT team, they make recommendations about health-related factors that might affect the selection and use of AT devices and services.

### **Responsibilities of the Medical Specialists**

- Address medical issues associated with AT use.
- Monitor medical complications.
- Prescribe seating and mobility devices.
- Assist in procuring third party funding, as appropriate.

## **Role of Supervisors and Other Administrators**

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Supervisors and administrators provide financial resources, personnel, operations management, support, as well as vision and leadership. As members of the AT team, supervisors and administrators provide the necessary resources and interpretation of policies and procedures related to the implementation of assistive technology services.

### **Responsibilities of Supervisors and Other Administrators**

- Provide leadership and ongoing support to the team.
- Interpret policies and procedures related to the delivery of AT services and ensure that they are followed.
- Allocate, support, and implement staff resources for participation in AT activities.
- Provide support for planning and implementing assistive technology services.

- Provide appropriate budget planning, supervision, submission and implementation for assistive technology services.
- Obtain necessary resources for the delivery of AT devices and services.
- Monitor progress of the AT program.

## **Role of Parents or Surrogate Parents**

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Parents provide necessary nurturing, guidance, and support for their children, as well as training in basic self-care and social skills. Parents are the most important influence in the lives of school age children. As legally mandated members of the AT team, parents often provide the most important information regarding the assistive technology user's functioning in the real world environment. Parents also play an important role in the facilitation of educational plans.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Surrogate Parents**

- Provide input on current levels of functioning in the home and school environments.
- Provide information on needs in the home and school environments that may be supported by AT devices and services.
- Provide information on preferences in types of equipment and history of AT strategies used.
- Provide evaluative information on success of AT strategies, which have been employed.
- Participate in AT training opportunities, as appropriate.
- Provide information to the AT team regarding use of resources in the home.
- Facilitate the use of AT in the student's acquisition of real world knowledge.
- Function as an advocate for the student when AT decisions are being made.
- Assist in student's development of confidence, self-esteem, and independence.
- Facilitate the use of AT in the home environment where appropriate.
- Evaluate the use of AT in the home environment.

## **Role of Peers**

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Peers are important for social, emotional, psychological and physical development. They provide emotional support, cooperation, criticism, companionship, as well as opportunities for collaboration, competition, and age appropriate discourse. As members of the AT team, peers can be valuable resources for assessment of functional need, assistance in use of assistive technology, and information on the general well being of the AT user.

### **Responsibilities of Peers**

- Provide support for the AT user in academic and social activities.
- Provide functional assistance for the AT user.
- Serve as tutor for the AT user.
- Provide emotional support for the AT user.
- Provide models of typical behavior for AT users.

## **Role of the Student**

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Students can often be their own best advocates in relation to developmental and educational needs. It is important that the information they provide be considered in development of educational plans. As

members of the AT team, the students provide authentic and real world feedback and recommendations regarding their use of assistive technology.

### **Responsibilities of the Student**

- Express preferences for selecting AT devices when options are available.
- Provide information on the functionality of AT devices.
- Provide feedback to the team regarding motivational, social, emotional, and related issues associated with their use of AT.
- Participate in the evaluation of their use of AT.

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