

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, cont. . .

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- If the team determines the student would need AT to receive FAPE, the team will address a comprehensive evaluation to determine what type AT devices and/or services are needed. The evaluation may include an assessment of the student's functioning in several areas: cognitive, academic, auditory, vision, speech/ language, and motor skills, and must consider AT needs and identify appropriate devices and/or services.
- If the student is determined ineligible for Special Education Services, AT may be accessed through the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. See Appendix A for more information on obtaining AT through ADA or Section 504.
- It is the program planning process (the IEP) that is important in determining whether the school system is the appropriate entity to obtain AT for a child. If the IEP team determines that an assistive device and/or service is needed for the child to successfully meet the goals and objectives of the IEP, the school system **MUST** provide the individual with the specified AT device and/or service at no cost to the parents, as part of the student's FAPE.
- The school system may provide the AT device or service by:
 - using existing resources (equipment) that they already have;
 - obtaining the needed device through equipment lending libraries;
 - locating other sources of funding outside the school district, such as Medicaid;
 - asking the parents if they want to obtain the device through their private insurance company, if coverage exists; or
 - purchasing the device with district funds. Thus, once the need for AT is written into an IEP, the school district **MUST** ensure that the student obtains the specified AT device and/or service. If parents choose not to use their private insurance, school systems cannot require them to do so.
- Once the school has made a commitment to obtain the specific AT, the child should receive proper training and follow-up to insure that the child will benefit from using the device. In addition, the child's parents, teachers, and support staff should receive training on how to use the device and how to maximize the child's use of the device at school, at home, and in the community.
- Just because a parent wants a particular device for his/her child does not mean that the need for that device will be written into the IEP. Although the parent is a member of the IEP team, any and all decisions are **TEAM** decisions. The IEP team must decide whether a particular assistive technology is educationally necessary for the child. Team decisions can occasionally place the parent at odds with other team members. There is a process for resolving disputes if the parent feels that the IEP does not meet the needs of the child. (See "Appeals Procedures" above.)
- If the school district purchases an AT device, the device remains the property of the school system. On a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased AT devices in a child's home or in other settings is required if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices in order to receive a FAPE.
- When developing transition service plans, be sure to address any AT issues. For example, if the school district has purchased the device, the device stays with that school system when the student graduates, leaves school or even moves to another district. However, a formal mechanism allows school districts to sell or transfer AT devices to parents, other state agencies, or other school districts. For more information, refer to the "Technical Assistance Document: Assistive Technology for Children and Youth with Disabilities."
- The Assistive Technology Program for Oklahoma Public Schools is a collaborative program between the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services and ABLE Tech.
- The Assistive Technology Program provides school personnel opportunities for awareness and advanced level training through presentations at state and local education conferences and regional training courses.
- School personnel and families have access to ABLE Tech's AT short-term loan program. Short-term loans are available for assessment, preview, trial purposes, accommodation, as a loaner while the student is waiting for device repair and professional development. The AT short-term loan is for six weeks.