
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FUNDING IN THE SCHOOLS



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**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
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ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FUNDING Questions and Answers

- **Are schools districts required to pay for assistive technology devices and services?**

Yes. It is the responsibility of the school district to provide the equipment, services or programs recommended in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). If the assistive technology devices and services appear in the IEP, then the school district is responsible for providing the identified assistive technology need(s). The school district may purchase the equipment, service or programs using federal, state, or local funds. The school district may also choose to access other sources such as Medicaid, Vocational Rehabilitation, and/or private health insurance policies to pay for the devices and services.

- **Can school districts require parents to use their private insurance to pay for necessary assistive technology devices and services?**

No. The "free" in FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) is extremely significant regarding children with disabilities who may require assistive technology devices or services. As stated in IDEA and its regulations, all aspects of special education and related services must be provided "at no cost to the parents." If the family agrees to allow the school district to access their private insurance, this decision must be strictly voluntary.

- **Can families be asked to purchase the devices or augment the identified assistive technology needs of their child?**

Education is a shared responsibility between school, families, employers, and community. It is well recognized that assistive devices and services are used across a broad spectrum. These devices and services serve functional as well as educational needs. When viewed in this manner, the possibility of joint funding is entirely appropriate as long as the parents' willingness to share the financial responsibility is voluntary. Even if the family does purchase the assistive

technology device, the schools cannot mandate that the device be brought to school. Families can insist that another device be provided for school use.

- Are there other options for schools districts to consider in lieu of purchasing the assistive technology device?

Yes. There are times when the outright purchase of equipment or devices is not necessary or even advisable. In instances such as these, school districts might consider rental or long-term lease/ purchase options. Equipment rentals or long-term lease/purchase options are not intended to be less costly than purchase. There are certain advantages worth considering depending on the individual needs of the student. For example, renting equipment might be a reasonable strategy if the child's condition is considered temporary; if the child's condition is expected to improve or deteriorate; or, when it is necessary to try-out the equipment before purchase for a student. Long-term leasing or lease/ purchase agreements also have potential benefits for schools which include: no obligation on behalf of the school to purchase the device; reduction of obsolete inventory; flexible leasing terms; use of equipment without a lump sum purchase; upgrading of equipment as more improved technology becomes available; and, upgrading of equipment as the student's needs change.

- Can school districts share the funding responsibilities of providing assistive technology devices and services?

Yes. This practice is especially appropriate for children with disabilities who are transitioning from WV Birth to Three programs into public school preschool programs or transitioning from public school to adult services through Rehabilitation Services. Ownership of the device is an important issue to consider by IEP teams especially during times of transition.

- Do school districts have responsibility to pay for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) regarding assistive technology?

As part of IDEA procedural safeguards, a parent has a right to an IEE at public expense if the parent disagrees with an

evaluation obtained by the public agency. The requirements for an IEE are outlined in WV Policy 2419: Regulations for the Education of Exceptional Students. Whenever an independent evaluation is obtained at the school district's expense, the criteria under which the evaluation is obtained, including the location of the evaluation and qualifications of the examiner, must be the same as criteria used by the school district. Regardless of who pays for the independent evaluation, the results must be considered in any decision regarding the provision of FAPE to the student.

- Are school districts responsible for customization, maintenance, repair, and replacement of assistive technology devices?

AT services such as customization, maintenance, repair, and replacement are included as considerations in the acquisition of equipment or devices purchased/ provided by the school district. It is the responsibility of the school district to ensure that students who require assistive technology devices also receive the necessary assistive technology services that will make the technology meaningful to the student. This requirement reflects the "individualization" of a specific type of device.

If family owned AT is used by the school, is listed in the Individual Education Program (IEP), and is necessary for providing Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the school district is also responsible for maintenance, repair, and re-placement. Responsibilities for these services should be identified in the IEP.

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