

WisTech

Assistive
Technology Program

WisTech Best Practices: Vendors of Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) is any product or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities. AT services can include any or all of the following: evaluation, funding, design, customization, modification, maintenance, repair, training, and technical assistance.

AT devices may be purchased or obtained from any of the following:

- Medical equipment dealers
- Online stores
- Manufacturer representatives
- Private sales
- Donation programs
- Non-profit agencies

Decision making for AT devices and solutions may be based on any of the following:

- AT was recommended through a professional assistive technology assessment.
- AT was recommended or prescribed by a rehabilitation specialist, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist.
- AT may have been demonstrated or loaned to an individual to try out.
- Product research online, at a community event, or in a retail store.
- An AT product demonstration or through word-of-mouth.
- AT might have been suggested by a product vendor.
- Current AT may need replacing or updating.

Consumer protection

- AT is a consumer product and Wisconsin consumer protection information applies. https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ConsumerProtection.aspx
- Wheelchair Lemon Laws: [Wisconsin Stat. § 134.87](#) entitles owners of eligible DME that meets the statutory definition of a "lemon" to a refund or a replacement.

Qualifications of vendors

Vendors must have sound knowledge of anatomy, physiology, disabilities, and disease processes. This knowledge should relate to the technical aspects of the AT and durable medical equipment (DME) they provide. Vendors are expected to engage in ongoing learning to maintain and increase their knowledge. This could be done through conferences, courses, trade shows, and research.

Sound knowledge can be defined as having the background and skills to provide comprehensive AT information and services to individuals with disabilities, their family members, or representatives. This may be in the form of formal education, professional certification, personal experience, or in-depth training by a product manufacturer.

General responsibilities of assistive technology vendors

- Consider background information such as the individual’s disability, functional capabilities, the environment in which the AT will be used, and the individual’s goals related to AT.
- Explain the range of options that could meet the needs of the consumer, including free technology, no-tech to high-tech options, commercially available or custom-made technology.
- Provide the opportunity for the individual and their caregivers (if applicable) to try out the AT devices and solutions prior to purchase (if available).
- Be transparent regarding the scope of products, services, and manufacturer relationships.
- Remain objective when providing comparisons of the technology options.
- Use appropriate tools and measurements to ensure the correct fit and function of the equipment.
- Provide delivery, setup, instruction or training, and adjustment of equipment.
- Provide information about additional training and possible resources for that training.
- Provide information on updates, maintenance, and repairs, including costs and who will cover the costs.
- Provide AT solutions on the basis of meeting the individual’s needs cost-effectively.

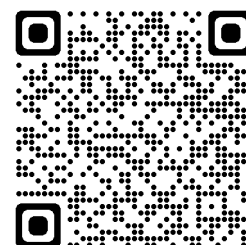
Vendor responsibilities—financing process

- Share accurate cost of the AT devices and services.
- Provide information about any copayments, reimbursement requirements, or other costs.
- Provide clear information about related funding options available for the equipment.
- Obtain prior authorizations or other required approvals for purchase.

Vendor responsibilities—ongoing support and service

- Provide clear information about the equipment warranties and response times for services.
- Provide clear information about the vendor’s ability to provide long-term service and support for the AT and whether this support is through the vendor or the manufacturer.
- Maintain knowledgeable and qualified staff to provide training.
- Maintain an adequate inventory of replacement parts to provide timely service or repair or a loaner device (if applicable).
- Provide a written estimate of costs and a timeline for repair work (if applicable). Maintain adequate levels of professional liability insurance and/or product liability insurance.

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