

## **KEY Questions to Ask Consumers Who Need Funding for Assistive Technology**

Individuals with disabilities, their family members, advocates, and other interested parties may use this series of interview questions to help identify potential sources of funding for assistive technology (AT) devices and services. Having the answers to these questions will help speed along the process, narrowing down alternatives to consider as funding for AT is pursued.

-  **What kind of assistive technology does the person need?**  
Identify the “function” that the device will facilitate, maintain, or improve. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find coverage for some categories of AT (such as devices that facilitate participation in leisure and recreation). Some non-profit entities focus on specific kinds of AT as a part of their mission (e.g. Sertoma’s priority emphasis on communication; and Lion’s Clubs emphasis on vision).
  
-  **Does the person require an evaluation to determine the (specific) devices and services that meet those needs?**  
This may be necessary if the consumer does not know what assistive technology options are available, which option is best for him/her, or to document the need for the assistive technology. Some funding sources will require an evaluation by a specific licensed / certified professional. A hands-on trial period with the device may be advisable and in some cases, required. The assistive technology device AND service needs should be fully identified prior to seeking funding.
  
-  **How old is the person who needs the assistive technology?**  
Knowing the consumer's age will help to determine appropriate funding sources. Age (e.g. 21<sup>st</sup> birthday; 60 years old or older) is frequently a “cut-off” or entry criteria for eligibility for certain programs.
  
-  **What is the person's disability or disabilities?**  
A disability-specific organization may be a source of funding. Consumers with certain disabilities may be eligible for specific public programs. For example, consumers who have a diagnosis of intellectual disability may be able to obtain assistive technology through a Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver specifically for people with intellectual disabilities.



**Does the person have health insurance coverage(s)?**

The assistive technology may be covered under the consumer's insurance plan. If the consumer has more than one health insurance coverage, you will need to determine which one(s) need to be approached first for payment. Providers of health coverage, including Medical Assistance and Medicare, typically require the assistive technology meet their definition of "Durable Medical Equipment".



**Does the person want to work? Is the person currently employed?**

Vocational rehabilitation or the consumer's employer may provide the assistive technology devices and services necessary to get or maintain employment. If the consumer's disability is the result of a work-related injury or illness, assistive technology may be provided through worker's compensation benefits.



**Does the person go to school? If so, where?**

Find out if the student is enrolled in a public school. Charter schools are considered public schools. The school district may be responsible for providing assistive technology under the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or as part of a "service plan" for students with disabilities who do not receive special education. Higher education institutions may be responsible for providing assistive technology as a reasonable accommodation.



**Is the person low-income?**

Some programs have income limitations, e.g. they only serve people with incomes at the federal poverty level or some multiple of that level. In addition to income criteria, some programs may limit the amount of financial assets a person can have to be eligible for the program.



**What is the person's county of residence?**

Some counties (but not others) have programs that may provide assistive technology for people with disabilities. This is particularly true with home modifications programs.



**Where does the person live?**

Some funding sources prohibit the purchase of AT for individuals who reside in skilled nursing facilities (for example, Medicare's "place of service" limitation). There are some funding sources specifically for individuals in nursing homes, or for people currently in their own home who are trying to avoid nursing home placement. In addition, certain settings may have a legal responsibility to provide AT (e.g. Intermediate Care Facilities for persons with intellectual disabilities [ICF/MR]).



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**Is the person or their family members affiliated with civic groups, churches, or lodges?**

These groups may contribute towards, purchase and/or donate assistive technology. They may also conduct fund raisers to purchase assistive technology.



**Is the person a veteran with a favorable discharge status?**

Assistive technology may be provided through veterans' benefits.



**Would the individual be interested in borrowing money or be able to repay a cash loan?**

There are national and state organizations (such as the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation, [www.patf.us](http://www.patf.us)) that may be able to offer the individual a loan, with favorable terms, for the purpose of purchasing assistive technology.

To request this document in alternate format, or for additional information on funding for assistive technology, contact Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) at the Institute on Disabilities, 800-204-7428 Voice / TTY or [atinfo@temple.edu](mailto:atinfo@temple.edu). Additional information is also available on our website: <http://disabilities.temple.edu>.

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