

School Policy for Assistive Technology and Hearing Aids (Effective March 9, 2023)

Background

As defined in federal law, assistive technology device means “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.”

Assistive technology service means “any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.” Services include but are not limited to evaluation; purchase or lease of a device; designing, customizing, or adapting a device; maintaining, repairing, or replacing a device; coordinating or using therapies with a device; and training or technical assistance for the child, family, and professionals.

The Role of Assistive Technology within Special Education

Assistive technology devices and/or services may be needed to enable children with disabilities to receive educational benefits. Federal and state special education laws explicitly include assistive technology devices and/or services among those services which local education agencies must provide for a child with a disability, at no cost to parents, if determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to be necessary for the student to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Such services may be required as part of special education, related services, or supplementary aids and services required to enable a child to be educated in the least restrictive environment.

IEP Team Responsibility for Determining Assistive Technology Devices and/or Services

As with every other special education service, the IEP team is responsible for determining if an assistive technology device and/or service is necessary for a child with a disability to receive FAPE. It is important to remember that assistive technology devices and/or services are not ends in themselves. The IEP team should focus on whether or not assistive technology devices and/or services are necessary for the eligible child to receive educational benefit and Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Assistive Technology included in the IEP

To the extent that assistive technology devices and/or services may be required as part of special education, related services, or supplementary aids or services, a child's IEP must include a statement describing the full extent of devices to be obtained (i.e., no, low, and high technology) and service(s) (i.e., programming of devices, back-up strategies, repairs and maintenance, training and technical assistance, and other relevant needs and considerations) as well as the amount of such service(s). The provision of assistive technology devices and/or services may not be made conditional on subsequent approval by entities outside the IEP

process (e.g., PaTTAN, Intermediate Units, Medical Assistance, etc.). It is also noted that FAPE may require that the child have the assistive technology device overnight, on weekends, and during vacations and summers, or receive assistive technology services during such breaks, which should be specified in the IEP.

Timelines and Projections

All procedural safeguards and timelines set forth in federal and state laws for completing initial evaluations, reevaluations, and developing and implementing IEPs are fully applicable to assistive technology devices and/or services when they are necessary to ensure eligible children receive FAPE. This means that evaluations must be completed within 60 calendar days upon receipt of parental consent; the assistive technology components of the IEP must be developed within 30 school days and the assistive technology component of the IEP must be implemented within 10 school days. Assistive technology devices should be secured on loan or leased if manufacturer delay is anticipated.

The assessment processes cannot be used to delay the provision of the assistive technology needed for FAPE.

Responsibility for Providing Assistive Technology Devices and Services

It is Independence Charter School's responsibility to provide without delay assistive technology devices and services when included as part of a student's IEP. Independence Charter School is responsible for the ongoing maintenance and prompt repair of assistive technology devices in order to provide FAPE without interruption.

IDEA 2004 also requires local education agencies (LEAs) to ensure that students with disabilities receive accessible instructional materials under the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) at the same time that students without disabilities receive their materials. LEAs also have the responsibility to provide accessible materials under the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Assurance of accessible materials involves the provision of assistive technology.

Independence Charter School may not delay or deny a student's receipt of assistive technology under the following circumstances:

- while it attempts to secure MA funding
- by directing the family to pursue MA or other outside funding on its own for the assistive technology.

Support Services Available to Assist IEP Teams Purchasing Assistive Technology

- PaTTAN Short Term Loan (STL) Program is a library of AT available to local educational agencies (LEA) for trial and assessment. See PaTTAN's STL program.

- Technology for Our Whole Lives (TechOWL), formerly called 'Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT),' lends AT devices to all Pennsylvanians with disabilities. See TechOWL's lending library.
- AT Manufacturers and Vendors may have equipment available to borrow or rent. AT software is often available as a free 30-day download. Visit the companies' websites to learn more.

State Board of Education Regulations

- *22 Pa. Code Section 14.102(a)(2)(i), (xi), & (xxvii)*
- *22 Pa. Code Section 14.106*
- *22 Pa. Code Section 14.131*
- *22 Pa. Code Section 711.3(b)(1), (10), & (24)*
- *22 Pa. Code Section 711.41*
- *22 Pa. Code Section 711.45*

Federal Statutes

- *20 U.S.C. Section 1401(1)(2)*

Federal Regulations

- *34 C.F.R. Sections 300.5 - 300.6*
- *34 C.F.R. Section 300.105*
- *34 C.F.R. Section 300.323(c)(1)*
- *34 C.F.R. Section 300.324(a)(2)(v)*

School Procedures for Hearing Aids

Background

Hearing aids and external components of surgically implanted medical devices for students with disabilities will be maintained by trained personnel. Independence Charter School will request and acquire devices deemed necessary by the IEP team within a timeline as agreed by the IEP team.

Services

Independence Charter School partners with Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD) for both hearing support services and educational audiology services

Hearing Support Services

All students requiring use of hearing aids and hearing support services, will be under the direct supervision of a certified teacher of the deaf. The teacher of the deaf will provide the following direct services:

- Driven instruction and practice in listening, language, and advocacy skills.
- Support in student use and understanding of their equipment

- Support in student development of understanding of hearing loss, including their personal identity as a person with hearing loss.
- IEP progress monitoring and progress reports
- IEP development related to hearing support, language and deafness
- IEP attendance
- Regular equipment checks, identification of need for repair or audio consult
- Reevaluation assessments and reports
- Guidance to school staff in equipment use and troubleshooting at the basic level
- Guidance to school staff regarding classroom accommodations and IEP driven Specially Designed Instruction
- Consultation services related to instructional practices and classroom accommodations
- Aid in developing best practices for each student
- Case Management when necessary
- Communication with families about student development, progress, equipment use

Educational Audiology Services

All students using hearing aids will receive educational audiology services based on individual IEP team decisions. The educational audiologist will provide the following services:

Equipment:

- Troubleshooting and repair of equipment.
- Coordination of equipment use among students and/or staff.
- Student and staff training on equipment use and maintenance.
- Recommending, ordering and fitting equipment. (hearing aids, remote microphone systems, ear-molds, batteries, sound-field systems, etc.)

Consult and Education:

- Collection and interpretation of audio-logic reports from outside Audiologists.
- Coordination of services with outside Audiologists/hearing aid dealers.
- Evaluation of classroom acoustics and suggestions for remediation.
- Consult with families regarding necessary follow-up with outside providers.
- Staff training on basics of Audiology.
- Classroom observations and provision of resources and written recommendations.
- Aid in developing best practices for each student.
- Audio-logic testing (at PSD) when necessary.
- IEP input and attendance.

Personnel Training

Special education teachers and general education teachers will be trained at minimum once per year on the proper use of hearing aids and equipment. They will have frequent check-ins throughout the year from the teacher of the deaf and the educational audiologist.

Maintenance

Trained personnel, including classroom teachers and the special education coordinator, will be responsible for checking assistive devices regularly to ensure that they are functioning properly. Assistive technology checks will take place monthly. Equipment will also be checked based upon parental request or any changes in student performance in school.

The special education coordinator will provide access to school owned charges and additional hearing aid batteries as needed in a timely manner once notified of need.