

NewsLine

Newsletter of The Federation for Children with Special Needs



Assistive Technology

by Mary Loughlin, Director of Central Mass. Parent Training & Information at the Federation
Adapted from: AOTA. *Integrating General and Assistive Technology into School-Based Practice. Occupational Therapy: Making a Difference in School System Practice.*

Technology has the power to open new worlds of competency for students. Assistive technology can be used for students at school and at home to:

- Increase independence in day-to-day activities
- Enable faster and more efficient movement
- Increase endurance and reduce fatigue during an activity
- Provide motivation to engage in an activity
- Provide physical, visual, and auditory access to computers and other information sources
- Enhance motor, perceptual, and cognitive development
- Improve the quality of written expression
- Enable and increase language, communication, and socialization
- Optimize inclusion of students with disabilities
- Make teachers, support staff, other students and parents more aware of the potential of students with disabilities.

Unfortunately, there are many barriers a parent faces in trying to access assistive technology for his or her child. Some of these barriers include:

- School districts cannot afford the technology for every child who could benefit from it.

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Congress Passes the Assistive Technology Act of 2004

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Millions of people with disabilities rely on assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs, communication devices and adapted computers, to pursue their education, obtain and maintain a job and participate in their community and leisure activities. On October 8, 2004, the US House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 (AT Act of 2004) (HR 4278). This positive action by the House of Representatives closely followed the Senate's unanimous support and passage of the AT Act on September 30, 2004. President Bush signed the Bill into law on October 25, 2004.

Every state and US territory has an Assistive Technology Act Program (AT Program) funded under the provisions of the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988. Legislation supporting the State AT Programs was scheduled to sunset on September 30, 2004. The AT Act of 2004 supports the continuance of State AT Programs.

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IDEA 2004 Signed into Law

From the Executive Director

On Friday December 3, 2004, the Reauthorization of IDEA (Individual's with Disabilities Education Act) finally became a reality. After a long and complicated process, Congress voted to pass a compromise bill during a lame duck session held immediately after the general election earlier this fall. The President immediately signed it into law.

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Massachusetts Proposes New Special Education Regulations

At its meeting on December 21, 2004, the state Board of Education proposed changes to the Massachusetts Special Education Regulations and authorized the Massachusetts Department of Education to release the proposed regulations for public comment. The full text of the proposed

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Worth Mentioning

News from the Federation

CONGRATULATIONS!

Please join us in congratulating Mary Loughlin, PTI Project Staff in the Worcester Office, and Betsy Anderson, Project Director for the Family Voices Partnership for Information and Communication (PIC) Project. They have each been recognized for their extraordinary efforts on behalf of children and families.

On October 29, 2004, the Autism Research Foundation and Friends of LADDERS (the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Rehabilitation Services at Mass General Hospital) awarded Mary Loughlin the 2004 Margaret L. Bauman, M.D. Outstanding Parent Professional Award for Excellence in serving the Autism Community. True to the Federation's parent-helping-parent philosophy, a parent to whom she provided assistance nominated Mary for this award. Mary is a frequent contributor to NewsLine, and Tom Maloney from LADDERS specifically mentioned how helpful her articles have been to parents.

The Maternal Child Health Bureau (MCHB) awarded Betsy Anderson one of the MCHB Director's Awards for her long-standing dedication and commitment to children and youth with special health care needs. Betsy truly exemplifies partnership building for better services for children and youth.

MOVING IN

The Federation is pleased to welcome Delores Qualls, the new coordinator of Family Support Initiatives for the MassCARE Program. Delores has been involved in the HIV/AIDS field for the last 4 years. Prior to that, she worked for the Substance Abuse program in Southeastern Massachusetts. In keeping with the Federation's commitment of listening to and learning from families, Delores has many ideas for supporting family involvement in the MassCARE Family Advisory



Delores Qualls

Network. To learn more about the MassCARE program and the FAN, read the article in the Health News section of this issue.

When you call for information about Early Intervention Trainings, you will be speaking with Heather Tirrell, the new program associate for the Early Intervention Training Center. In September, Heather moved to Boston from Connecticut, where she helped develop a consumer advocacy training program for the Connecticut Primary Care Association. She was excited to find another opportunity to help develop trainings, this time for early intervention providers, and families whose children receive early intervention services. Heather coordinates registrations and materials and helps develop new trainings for the EI Training Center. If you have questions about EI Training Center trainings, and the training schedule, please connect with Heather at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 159 or e-mail htirrell@fcsn.org.

PTI Update (Parent Training and Information Center)

by Robin Foley, Director, Special Education Projects

On October 1, 2004, the Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP) named the Federation for Children with Special Needs as the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for Massachusetts for the next five years. The Federation has performed this vital role for 30 years and is honored to be able to continue to serve families in Massachusetts. The PTI is a federally funded project that empowers parents to become active participants in improving the quality of special education services for their children. We offer workshops, parent consultant trainings and individual

technical assistance. Our workshops are free, and offered at various locations throughout the state. A calendar is posted at www.fcsn.org/pti/.

This new grant award brought about some staff changes. Please join me in congratulating Holly Neal in her new role as Coordinator of Workshops and Training. Holly joined the PTI staff in October 2002 as Project Assistant. In that position she worked to systematize the data and reporting components for all of our special education projects. In her new position she will oversee the workshop/train-

ing piece of our work in both face-to-face and virtual formats.

Also, please join me in welcoming Sara Diaz to her new role on the Federation's special education projects. In addition to her work as a workshop trainer, Sara will coordinate a newly established support group for Spanish speaking families who happen to have a child with a disability. Sara will partner with Marilyn Gutierrez to practice outreach to Spanish speaking families in underserved areas of Massachusetts.

From the Executive Director

IDEA 2004 Signed into Law

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Most people view this bill as a compromise bill. While it preserves many of the parent and student rights that were threatened in an earlier House version, it gives schools more authority to determine placements and provide discipline to students with disabilities. As many of you who have followed this debate are aware, the heart of the controversy centers on the civil rights of students with disabilities as well as their parents' rights. In particular, the new bill grants authority to the schools to discipline a child with a disability in the same fashion as any other child, unless the specific actions of the child are directly related to their disability. Fortunately, the final bill maintains the process for a "manifestation determination" in order to ensure this determination is conducted in an appropriate manner. What has changed is that schools will be able to remove a student from school (though not from services) if the student presents a danger of "serious bodily injury" in addition to the conditions (drugs and weapons) previously identified under the old version of the law. In such a case, the schools will have authority to act and the parent has the right to appeal. (Previously the schools needed to obtain specific authority from

the parent or the state to remove a student from her/his school placement). More than ever, parents will need to know their rights and how to exercise them.

Whenever a law of this magnitude is changed, there is always a period of confusion followed by parent concern. The Federation will follow the implementation activities carefully and provide updates on our web site as they occur.

There are some other important changes. The new law eliminates the requirement to include measurable short-term objectives in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) except for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The law does call for measurable annual goals along with quarterly reporting on student progress towards those goals. Not all change is bad. Special Education teachers will now be required to be qualified in both academic content and special education.



Richard Robison

Overall, we are pleased that many provisions of the final bill are more closely aligned with the bi-partisan Senate version of the bill than the original House version. As Massachusetts's citizens, we can be particularly proud of the leadership of our own Senator Edward Kennedy in ensuring this success. Senator Kennedy was particularly concerned about the principle of law that states: students with disabilities should not be punished for actions caused by their disability. That principle has been upheld and students' rights have been preserved. He also fought to ensure that even students who are removed from their placement maintain their rights to educational services. We are pleased to acknowledge Senator Kennedy's work on behalf of our kids.

Whenever a law of this magnitude is changed, there is always a period of confusion followed by parent concern. The Federation will follow the implementation activities carefully and provide updates on our web site as they occur. We will also be speaking to parent groups across the state to ensure they understand these changes and to ensure that parent and students rights are maintained. It is important to be a "well educated" consumer when it comes to school services, to ask questions when you are confused and to find accurate answers. The Federation is committed to assisting each of you in understanding your rights and continues to fight for a high quality education for all our children.

Best wishes to you all.

Richard J. Robison

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Affordable Fees

Assistive Technology Offers Reading Alternatives

by Marilyn Poindexter, Youth Services Librarian, Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library

Is it difficult for your child to read standard print? Many children read and learn in different ways, and providing them with the most appropriate reading materials can turn reading into a joy rather than an unwelcome task. *Hearing* a book or magazine may be best for some students, while reading Braille is better for others. Still other people are able to read print if the letters are large. Whatever your child's learning style, the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library can offer the most accessible format/technology to help foster a love of reading.

For almost 75 years, the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library has assisted Massachusetts's residents to read the books they want. The Perkins Library has a large collection of books and magazines on 4-track cassette tape in addition to the special equipment to play the tapes. Hardcopy Braille books are available to borrow or download to a refreshable Braille display. A collection of large print books is also available. All library materials are delivered and returned through the U.S. Postal system, free of charge.

As part of the Library of Congress Talking Book program, patrons have access to thousands of book titles they need for school or for pleasure reading. Think of Perkins as your local public library—only with books on tape, in Braille or large print. The library's collection contains titles for infants and children as well as adults.

Your child is eligible for this library service if he or she is legally blind or visually impaired. If your child has a physical disability that makes it difficult to hold a book, or a reading disability, like dyslexia, they are also eligible for these library services. Schools, public libraries and other organizations that serve people with these disabilities are eligible for the service as well.

Using the online catalog allows a borrower (or parent) to search the entire library catalog and even request titles online. This method of ordering is convenient for already busy parents who may not have the opportunity to call the Perkins Library during business hours. Your child will still

have the books he or she needs, in the required format.

Recently, the Perkins Library added another service: NEWSLINE, a telephone-based service using computerized speech for listening to newspapers. Your child now has access to over 125 daily national and local newspapers, simply by using a touch-tone telephone. NEWSLINE is an important source for current information, particularly for school reports.

The Library's growing collection of audio described videos is another valuable educational and entertainment source. These videos, primarily for visually impaired viewers, provide narration of the program's key visual elements. The collection contains many documentaries and informative tapes and many popular films.

Reading does not have to be difficult. It can be fun and enjoyable if you have the right equipment and technology for your child. Some parents have noticed an improvement in their child's reading and their attitudes toward books after using the Perkins Library. For an application and more information, please visit the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library website at www.perkinslibrary.org, e-mail library@perkins.org or phone 1-800-852-3133.

**Lawrence Kotin, Esq., Robert K. Crabtree, Esq.
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Assistive Technology

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- The laws that mandate assistive technology are not fully funded or enforced.
- There is often a lack of support from school administration to fund the technology and the training of staff in how to use the technology with the student.
- Often times school personnel do not have enough technology expertise to adapt it for a child with a disability.
- School personnel do not know how to integrate assistive technology into a child's IEP.
- School staff cannot keep up with the rapid pace of changing technology.
- The school district sent your child for an outside assistive technology assessment but never consulted with school staff about the child's functional performance and technology needs.
- There is a lack of follow-up by others in integrating technology into the child's life, for example, the child cannot take the technology home and has limited exposure to it during the school day.

Despite the barriers, technology is here to stay, and is an important way to support a student's academic progress in school and as he or she transitions to adult life. Parents, caregivers, and school personnel must work together to provide the assistive technology students need to access the general curriculum. Below are some suggestions for making the process smoother.

- Learn as much as you can about how your child can use assistive technology to live, learn and have fun with other kids with greater ease, satisfaction and independence. The ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) at www.eric.ed.gov has a searchable database where you can find many publications about what parents need to know about AT for their students with disabilities.
- Talk with school personnel about assistive technology, and ask for an AT assessment. The assessment may be

completed within your school system by the occupational therapist or by a school-based specialized assistive technology team, or by outside consultants or outside assistive technology team members (especially for seating, mobility, computer access, alternative and augmentative communication).

- Look for staff people who demonstrate specialized experience with assistive technology and who have credentials as a Rehabilitation Technology Supplier (RTS) through RESNA. RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, offers credentialing for assistive technology service providers who evaluate and deliver assistive technology.
- Consider learning, problem-solving, physical access and mobility, communication and socialization needs in the regular classroom.
- Include your child's AT needs on his/her IEP.
- Assistive technology should focus on the student as learner, using the teacher and peers as collaborators in the learning process. There should also be focus on the quality of work, on problem solving, on analysis of information, on communication of information, and on individual expression.
- If you do not agree with the TEAM decision about what technology your child needs, you may request an independent evaluation.

TYPES OF TECHNOLOGY

There are many types of technologies that can be integrated into the school setting to support a student. A student with a disability may use a combination of these technologies throughout the day.

General information technologies include computers, printers, scanners (to import text and images into computer format), CD-ROM players, VCRs and cameras (many of which can be linked to computers to work together), modems,

Internet, telecommunication, voice mail, pagers, cell phones, and fax machines.

Educational technologies

include those used within curriculum, learning activities, or instruction. Overheads, slide projectors, tape recorders, and VCRs are being replaced by multimedia and telecommunications technologies. A student with a disability can access encyclopedias via a CD-ROM thereby accessing information easier and faster than trying to handle bulky books. With e-mail, online discussion groups and instant messaging, a student with a disability has access to new systems of communicating and socializing. A student with a disability can work with fellow classmates and teachers to design educational materials, including a web site.

Assistive technologies include: daily living equipment, augmentative and alternative communication, cognitive training technologies, computer access, adapted driving and transportation, environmental control and robotics, ergonomic technologies, instructional technologies, orthotics, prosthetics, neuromuscular retraining technologies, physical modalities, seating and positioning, sensory aids for vision and hearing, and wheelchairs. Assistive technology can be low tech, for example, reachers, adapted eating and writing utensils, and typing aids or fabricated access devices. It can also be high tech, for example, electronic devices such as computer-based systems and power wheelchairs.

Medical technologies include ventilators, respirators, oxygen tubes, and feeding systems.



Mary Loughlin, with her daughter Cara, receiving the 2004 Margaret L. Bauman Outstanding Parent Professional Award for Excellence.

The Transition Process

A New Three-Part Series to help families understand services beyond Early Intervention

by Margaret O'Hare, Project Director, Early Intervention Training Center at the Federation

Have you ever wondered about what will happen when your child leaves early intervention? What is the transition process like? What are the options available to you and your child in the community? Who will help you? What can you do to help yourself?

Throughout its 30-year history as a parent advocacy organization, the Federation for Children with Special Needs has helped support families of young children as they transition out of early intervention into other community settings and public school programs. We have conducted parent education workshops across the state, counseled thousands of parents over the phone, and networked with community partners to help families and their children move from one service delivery system to another.

Now, through the collaboration of three of its programs: the Early Intervention Training Center, the Parent Training and Information Center, and Family TIES of Massachusetts, the Federation is pleased to offer a series of three parent education workshops for families whose children are leaving early intervention services and moving on to other programs.

These three workshops, *Continuing the Journey*, *Turning Three*, and *Let's Get Organized*, help families learn about possible community options, what to expect during transition and methods to facilitate this process. Experienced parent trainers, who have been through the transition process with their own children, conduct the workshops. All three workshops distribute helpful written materials and resources to parents to help support

them throughout the transition process. The workshops are free of charge and some are available in Spanish.

If you are a parent whose child is enrolled in early intervention and you are interested in having these workshops conducted in your community, talk with your Early Intervention Program Director and ask if the program would be willing to host this series. Ask the director to contact Heather Tirrell at 617-236-7210 x159 or htirrell@fcsn.org to learn more about scheduling these workshops.

We hope that through these workshops parents will learn more about the transition process and how they can find support as they experience this important step in their children's and family's lives.

Assistive Technology

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LAWS RELATED TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

The *Tech Act*, established Technical Assistance Projects (TAPs) across the country and defined assistive technology as "any item, any piece of equipment or product systems, whether modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities". The Tech Act, however, does not mandate the provision of assistive technology. The TAPs are excellent information sources for parents.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) does mandate the provision of assistive technology and assistive technology services for children with disabilities if necessary for their education. The 1997

Amendments to IDEA uses the same definitions of technology and services as the Tech Act. It requires that assistive technology be considered for all students receiving services under IDEA.

The 1992 Amendments of the *Rehab Act* and the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) offered assistive technology as a reasonable accommodation at work and in the community. Section 504 of the Rehab Act mandates assistive technology and assistive technology services at school to allow equal access to technologies.

Although IDEA and the *Rehab Act* mandate assistive technology, the technology must be *necessary and reasonable* given the setting and activities required. Thus, in a school setting, the assistive technology must be viewed as educationally relevant, needed to receive a free appropriate public education, utilized to facilitate a child's education in the least

restrictive environment and as a related service. Under IDEA, the school team must document consideration of assistive technology at least one time per year. Assistive technology bought by the school may be considered school property which must remain at school unless a parent requests in writing that the TEAM consider that the child needs access to the assistive technology at home or in other settings in order to receive a free and appropriate public education.

RESOURCES

Resources on the *Use of Technology for Individuals with Disabilities* can be obtained by calling ERIC at 800-LET-ERIC (800-538-3742) from Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. ET. You can also contact ERIC through their website at www.eric.ed.gov. Another excellent resource is to contact the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Project (see bottom of page 18).

“But I’m Not Wealthy!”

How to Make a Planned Gift and Still Provide for Your Family

by Kathy Reville, Development Consultant to the Federation

Estate planning is not just for the wealthy. Everyone should take the time to think through his or her assets and plan for the future. Without this type of planning, 50 percent of your estate could go directly to taxes, rather than to your heirs or to the organizations that have meant so much to you - organizations like the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

During the next year, *NewsLine* will be publishing articles aimed at introducing the concept of planned giving. These articles will offer guidance and suggestions on how to utilize these gifts while getting the maximum benefit for you and your heirs.

Gifts to the Federation for Children with Special Needs are used to fund the programs that assist children and their families: parent support and involvement, health care initiatives, advocacy and education reform. Gifts can be made several ways and can take several forms. The following descriptions illustrate how you can contribute to the Federation for Children with Special Needs while providing for your family and avoiding large tax implications. To discuss any of these options, please contact the Development Office at the Federation for Children with Special Needs at 617-236-7210.

CASH AND PLEDGES

Gifts of cash can be used immediately to meet the needs of the Federation and enables us to respond quickly to opportunities as they arise. Cash gifts also offer you important tax benefits if you itemize your returns. The Federation also welcomes pledges, which enables you to spread your payments over a period of time.

WILLS AND BEQUESTS

The Federation for Children with Special Needs can be included in your will, either by naming a specific bequest or by naming the Federation as a remainder beneficiary after specific amounts have been allocated to other beneficiaries. By adding the Federation to your will through a codicil, you eliminate the need to redraft the will in its entirety. Bequests are an essential method of building the Federation's endowment in perpetuity.

GIFTS OF SECURITIES

Gifts of securities make an attractive contribution, particularly for those securities that have increased in value. Gifts can be deducted at full market value on the date of the transfer, and in most cases, are not subject to tax on the appreciated value.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR ESTATE PLANNING PURPOSES

“I give, devise and bequeath to the Federation for Children with Special Needs, Boston, Massachusetts, the sum of \$_____ (or _____ percent of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate). This bequest shall be used to benefit the programs and further the work of the Federation for Children with Special Needs.”

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NewsLine's mailing list is occasionally made available to organizations in which we believe our readers may have interest. If you wish your name to be withheld, please call or write the Federation's Boston office to inform us.

The Federation for Children with Special Needs, Inc.

Our Mission:

To provide information, support, and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities. We are committed to listening to and learning from families, and encouraging full participation in community life by all people, especially those with disabilities.

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Tecnologia Assistiva

Adaptado por Mary Loughlin, da: AOTA. Integrating General and Assistive Technology into School-Based Practice. Terapia Ocupacional: Fazendo uma Diferença na Prática do Sistema Escolar.

A tecnologia tem o poder de abrir novos mundos de competência para os alunos. A tecnologia assistiva pode ser usada pelos alunos, na escola e em casa, para:

- Aumentar a independência nas atividades do dia-a-dia
- Possibilitar movimentos mais rápidos e mais eficientes
- Aumentar a resistência e reduzir a fadiga durante uma atividade
- Prover motivação para engajar-se em uma atividade
- Prover acesso físico, visual e auditivo aos computadores e outras fontes de informações
- Realçar o desenvolvimento motor, perceptivo e cognitivo
- Aprimorar a qualidade da expressão escrita
- Capacitar e elevar a linguagem, a comunicação e a socialização
- Optimizar a inclusão de alunos portadores de deficiência
- Tornar os professores, grupos de apoio, outros alunos e os pais mais conscientes do potencial dos alunos portadores de deficiências.

Infelizmente, há muitas barreiras que os pais encaram na tentativa de acessar a tecnologia assistiva para a sua criança. Entre algumas destas barreiras se incluem:

- Os distritos escolares não podem pagar a tecnologia para cada criança que poderia se beneficiar dela.
- As leis que regulam a tecnologia assistiva não são inteiramente fundadas financeiramente nem cumpridas.
- Há sempre uma falta de suporte da administração escolar para alocar fundos para a tecnologia e treinar o pessoal em como usar esta tecnologia com o aluno.

- Quase sempre, o quadro de pessoal da escola não dispõe de uma habilidade tecnológica suficiente para adaptá-la a uma criança portadora de deficiência.
- O quadro de pessoal da escola não sabe como integrar a tecnologia assistiva ao IEP da criança.
- O quadro de pessoal da escola não consegue manter-se no passo rápido das mudanças na tecnologia.
- O distrito escolar enviou sua criança para uma avaliação de tecnologia assistiva fora da escola, mas nunca consultou o quadro de pessoal desta escola sobre as necessidades funcionais de performance de tecnologia da criança.
- Há uma falta de acompanhamento dos outros na integração da tecnologia na vida da criança, por exemplo, ela não pode levar esta tecnologia para casa, e tem uma exposição limitada à mesma durante o dia escolar.

A pesar das barreiras, a tecnologia está aqui para ficar, e é um meio importante para dar-se apoio ao rendimento acadêmico do aluno na escola, de acordo com a sua transição para a vida adulta. Os pais, os provedores e o quadro de pessoal da escola devem trabalhar juntos para que se forneça uma tecnologia assistiva para os alunos que precisam ter acesso ao currículo geral. Abaixo, há algumas sugestões para tornar o processo mais suave.

- Aprenda o mais que puder sobre como sua criança pode usar a tecnologia assistiva para viver, aprender e se divertir com outras crianças com mais facilidade, satisfação e independência. O centro ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), no site www.eric.ed.gov, tem um database onde você pode pesquisar muitas publicações sobre o que os pais precisam saber sobre a TA para alunos portadores de deficiência.

- Fale com o pessoal da escola sobre a tecnologia assistiva e solicite uma avaliação TA. A avaliação poderá ser realizada dentro de seu sistema escolar pela terapeuta ocupacional ou por membros de um grupo especializado em tecnologia assistiva da escola, ou ainda por consultores de fora, ou membros de uma equipe de fora (especialmente para sentar, mobilidade, acesso ao computador, comunicação alternativa e aumentativa).
- Procure um pessoal que demonstre experiência especializada em tecnologia assistiva e que tenha credenciais como Rehabilitation Technology Supplier (RTS) através da RESNA. A RESNA, Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, concede credenciais aos provedores de serviços em tecnologia assistiva que avaliam e entregam esta mesma tecnologia.
- Considere a aprendizagem, a solução de problemas, o acesso físico e a mobilidade, as necessidades de comunicação e de socialização na sala de aula regular.
- Inclua as necessidades de TA no IEP de sua criança.
- A tecnologia assistiva deve focalizar o aluno como aprendiz, utilizando-se do professor e dos colegas de classe como colaboradores no processo de aprendizagem. Deve-se prestar atenção também na qualidade do trabalho, na solução de problemas, na análise de informações, na comunicação da informação, e expressão individual.
- Se não concordar com a decisão da Junta sobre que tipo de tecnologia sua criança precisa, você pode solicitar uma avaliação independente.

TIPOS DE TECNOLOGIA

Há muitos tipos de tecnologias que podem ser integradas na escola para dar apoio ao aluno. Um aluno portador de deficiência pode usar uma combinação destas tecnologias por todo o dia.

Tecnologia de informação geral incluem computadores, impressoras, scanners (para importar texto e imagens para o computador), CD-ROM players, videocassette e câmeras (muitos dos quais podem ser conectados ao computador), modems, Internet, telecomunicações, voice mail, pagers, celulares e máquinas de fax.

Tecnologias educacionais incluem aquelas usadas dentro do currículo, atividades de aprendizagem, ou instrução. Os “overheads”, os projetores de slides, os gravadores e os videocassetes estão sendo repostos por tecnologias de multimídia e de telecomunicações. Um aluno portador de deficiência pode acessar encyclopedias via um CD-ROM, e daí acessar informações mais fáceis e rápidas do que com livros pesados. Com o e-mail, a discussão de grupos online e mensagem instantânea, o aluno portador de deficiência pode trabalhar com amigos da sala de aula e professores para planejar materiais educacionais, incluindo-se aí um website.

Tecnologias assistivas incluem: equipamentos da vida diária, comunicação aumentativa e alternativa, tecnologias de treinamento cognitivo, acesso ao computador, carro e transporte adaptados, controle ambiental e robotização, tecnologias ergonômicas, tecnologia de instrução, ortóptica, próstética, tecnologias de retreinamento neuromuscular, modalidades físicas, sentar e posicionar-se, dispositivos sensoriais para a visão, a audição, cadeiras de roda. A tecnologia assistiva pode ser “low tech”, por exemplo, utensílios de adaptação para comer ou escrever, ou datilografar. Ela também pode ser “high tech”, por exemplo, aparelhos eletrônicos como o computador, ou as cadeiras de rodas elétricas.

Tecnologias médicas incluem os ventiladores, respiradores, tubos de oxigênio, e sistemas de alimentação.



LEIS RELACIONADAS À TECNOLOGIA ASSISTIVA NAS ESCOLAS

A lei *Tech Act*, estabeleceu os Projetos de Assistência Técnica—TAPs (Technical Assistance Projects) em todo o país e definiu a tecnologia assistiva como “qualquer item, qualquer sistema de peça de equipamento ou produto, seja modificado ou adaptado, que seja usado para aumentar, manter, ou melhorar as capacidades funcionais de indivíduos portadores de deficiência”. A lei Tech Act, porém, não regula a provisão da tecnologia assistiva. As TAPs são excelentes fontes de informações para os pais.

A lei IDEA, para Indivíduos Portadores de Deficiência, ordena a provisão de tecnologia assistiva e os serviços relacionados à mesma

para crianças portadoras de deficiência, se for necessário para a sua educação. As Emendas da lei IDEA, de 1997, usa as mesmas definições de tecnologia e serviços da lei Tech Act. Ela exige que a tecnologia assistiva seja considerada para todos os alunos que recebem serviços sob a lei IDEA.

As Emendas da lei Rehab Act, de 1992, e a lei *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) ofereceram a tecnologia assistiva como uma adaptação razoável no trabalho e na comunidade. A seção 504 da lei Rehab Act ordena a tecnologia assistiva e seus serviços na escola para permitir o acesso igualitário às tecnologias.

Ainda que a lei IDEA e a lei Rehab Act ordenem a tecnologia assistiva, a tecnologia precisa ser necessária e razoável, dado o ambiente e as atividades requeridas. Assim, no ambiente escolar, a tecnologia assistiva deve ser vista como educacionalmente relevante, necessária para receber uma educação pública adequada gratuita, utilizada para facilitar o ensino da criança no ambiente o menos restritivo possível. Sob a lei IDEA, a equipe escolar deve documentar que considera (ou pondera) a tecnologia assistiva pelo menos uma vez por ano. A tecnologia assistiva comprada pela escola deve ser considerada propriedade da escola que deve permanecer na escola a menos que os pais requeiram por escrito que a equipe considere que a criança necessita acesso a tecnologia assistiva em casa e em outros locais para garantir que ela receba uma educação pública adequada e gratuita.

RECURSOS

Recursos no uso de Tecnologia para Indivíduos com Deficiências podem ser obtidas ligando para ERIC at 800-LET-ERIC (800-538-3742) de Segunda-feira à Sexta-feira, das 8:00 a.m. às 8:00 p.m. ET. Você também pode entrar em contato com ERIC pelo website [atwww.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov).

Outro recurso notável seria entrar em contato com Massachusetts Assistive Technology Project (veja o outro artigo).

Asistencia de Tecnología

Adaptado por Mary Loughlin de: AOTA. Integración general y asistencia tecnológica dentro de las prácticas basadas en las escuelas. Terapia ocupacional: Haciendo una diferencia en la práctica del sistema escolar.

La tecnología tiene el poder de abrir nuevos mundos de capacidades para los estudiantes. La asistencia de tecnología puede ser usada por los estudiantes en la escuela y en la casa para:

- Incrementar la independencia en las actividades diarias
- Proporcionar un movimiento más rápido y eficiente
- Aumentar la resistencia y reducir la fatiga durante una actividad
- Proporcionar motivación para participar en una actividad
- Proporcionar un acceso físico, visual y auditivo a las computadoras y a otras fuentes de información
- Mejorar el desarrollo motor, de percepción y cognoscitivo
- Mejorar la calidad de la escritura
- Mejorar e incrementar el lenguaje, la comunicación y la socialización
- Optimizar la inclusión de los estudiantes con discapacidades
- Hacer a los maestros, al personal de apoyo, a otros estudiantes y a los padres de familia más conscientes del potencial de los estudiantes con discapacidades

Desafortunadamente, hay muchos obstáculos que los padres de familia enfrentan al tratar de tener acceso a la asistencia de tecnología para su niño o niña. Algunas de estos obstáculos incluyen:

- Los distritos escolares no pueden pagar la tecnología para cada niño que se beneficiaría de ella.
- Las leyes que exigen la asistencia de tecnología no tienen todo el presupuesto ni pueden ser totalmente aplicadas.
- Frecuentemente hay falta de apoyo de parte de la administración escolar para

otorgar un presupuesto para la tecnología y el entrenamiento del personal sobre cómo usarla con el estudiante.

- A veces el personal de la escuela no tienen la suficiente experiencia con la tecnología para adaptarla a un niño con una discapacidad.
- El personal de la escuela no sabe cómo integrar la asistencia de tecnología en el IEP del niño.
- El personal de la escuela no puede mantenerse al día con todos los cambios de la tecnología.
- El distrito escolar envió a su niño a una evaluación independiente de asistencia de tecnología pero nunca habló con el personal de la escuela acerca del rendimiento de su niño y de sus necesidades tecnológicas.
- Hay un bajo seguimiento de parte de las personas para integrar la tecnología en la vida diaria del niño, por ejemplo, el niño no puede llevar la tecnología a casa y tiene un acceso limitado a ella durante el día escolar.

A pesar de los obstáculos la tecnología está aquí para quedarse y es una manera importante de apoyar el progreso académico del estudiante en la escuela y a medida que el o ella haga la transición a la vida adulta. Los padres de familia, el personal que cuida a los niños, el personal escolar tienen que trabajar juntos para proporcionar la asistencia de tecnología que los estudiantes necesitan para tener acceso al currículo general. A continuación verán unas sugerencias para lograr que este proceso sea más sencillo.

- Aprenda lo más que pueda sobre cómo su niño puede usar asistencia de tecnología para vivir, aprender y para divertirse con otros niños fácilmente, con satisfacción e independencia. El ERIC (por sus siglas en inglés) Centro de Información sobre Recursos Educativos tiene una base de datos www.eric.ed.gov allí podrá encontrar muchas publicaciones acerca de lo que

los padres de familia necesitan saber sobre la asistencia de tecnología para sus niños con discapacidades.

- Hable con el personal de la escuela sobre la asistencia de tecnología y pida una evaluación de asistencia de tecnología (AT). La evaluación puede ser hecha dentro del sistema escolar por el terapeuta ocupacional o por un equipo especialista en asistencia de tecnología, o por un especialista fuera de la escuela, o por los miembros de un equipo de asistencia de tecnología de fuera de la escuela (especialmente para sentarse, moverse, tener acceso a computadora y comunicación alternativa).
- Busque personal que demuestre experiencia y especialización en asistencia de tecnología y que tenga credenciales como Rehabilitation Technology Supplier (RTS) a través de RESNA. RESNA es Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America, esta ofrece credenciales a proveedores de servicio en asistencia de tecnología los cuales evalúan y proveen asistencia de tecnología.
- En el salón regular de clases considere cómo su niño puede aprender, resolver problemas, tener acceso físico y movilidad, necesidades de comunicación y socialización.
- Incluya las necesidades de asistencia de tecnología de su niño o niña en el IEP.
- La asistencia de tecnología debe enfocarse en el estudiante como un aprendiz, usando al maestro y a sus compañeros como colaboradores en el proceso de aprendizaje. También debe enfocarse en la calidad del trabajo, en resolver problemas, en análisis de la información, en comunicar la información y en la expresión individual.

- Si usted no está de acuerdo en la decisión del Equipo acerca de la tecnología que necesita su niño, usted puede pedir una evaluación independiente.

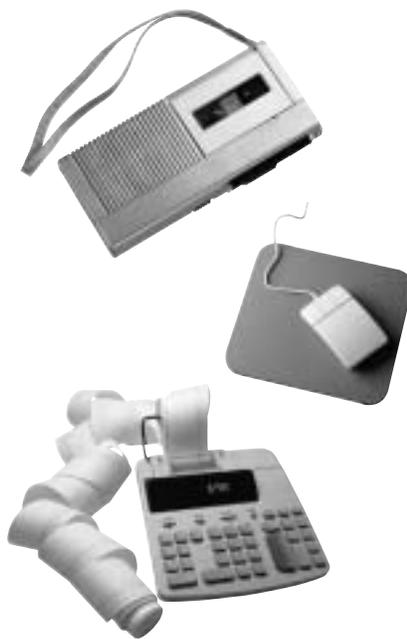
CLASES DE TECNOLOGÍA

Hay muchas clases de tecnología que se pueden integrar en el salón de clases para apoyar al estudiante. Un estudiante con discapacidades puede usar una combinación de estas tecnologías durante el día.

Tecnologías de información general incluyen el uso de computadoras, impresoras, fotocopiadoras digitales (para recibir textos e imágenes en formato que se pueda ver en computadora), aparatos de CD, VCR's y cámaras (muchos de los cuales se pueden conectar a las computadoras para que trabajen juntos), módems, Internet, telecomunicación, mensajes telefónicos, buscadores, teléfono celulares y faxes.

Tecnología educativa incluye las usadas en el currículo y en las actividades de aprendizaje e instrucción. Proyectoras, grabadoras y VCR's están siendo reemplazados por la tecnología en comunicaciones. Un estudiante con discapacidades puede usar enciclopedias por medio del CD-ROM y por lo tanto obtener información más rápida y fácil que tratando de cargar libros pesados. Con el uso del correo electrónico, grupos de discusión en el Internet y mensajes instantáneos, un estudiante tiene acceso a nuevos sistemas de comunicación y socialización. Un estudiante con una discapacidad puede trabajar con sus compañeros de clase y maestros para diseñar materiales de educación incluyendo una página en el Internet.

Asistencia de tecnologías incluyen: Equipo para la vida diaria, comunicación alternativa, tecnologías para entrenamiento cognoscitivo, acceso a computadora, adaptación para manejar y transporte, robótica y control ambiental, tecnología ergonómica, tecnologías de instrucción, tecnologías para el restablecimiento neuromuscular, modalidades físicas, sentarse y tomar una posición adecuada, sensores de ayuda para ver y escuchar, sillas de ruedas.



La asistencia de tecnología puede ser de baja tecnología como por ejemplo: aparatos para tomar objetos, adaptadores para comer, utensilios para escribir y ayudas para escribir en computadora o la fabricación de aparatos de acceso. También puede ser de alta tecnología, por ejemplo: aparatos electrónicos como sistemas basados en computadoras y sillas de ruedas eléctricas.

Tecnologías medicas que incluye ventiladores, respiradores, tubos de oxígeno y sistemas de alimentación.

LEYES RELACIONADAS CON LA ASISTENCIA TECNOLÓGICA EN LAS ESCUELAS

La ley sobre la tecnología, establece proyectos de ayuda técnica (TAPs por sus siglas en inglés) a través del país y define la asistencia de tecnología como "cualquier artículo, cualquier pieza de equipo o producto de un sistema, ya sea modificado o construido, que es usado para incrementar, mantener o mejorar las capacidades funcionales de individuos con discapacidades." Sin embargo, la ley sobre la tecnología no exige que la asistencia de tecnología sea otorgada. Los TAPs son una excelente fuente de información para los padres de familia.

La Ley de Educación para Individuos con Discapacidades (IDEA por sus siglas en inglés) exige que la asistencia de tecnología y que los servicios de asistencia de

tecnología sean ofrecidos para niños con discapacidades si estos son necesarios para su educación. Las enmiendas a IDEA en el año 1997 usa la misma definición de tecnología y servicios que usa la Ley sobre la tecnología. Esta enmienda requiere que la asistencia de tecnología sea considerada para todos los estudiantes que están recibiendo servicios bajo IDEA.

Las enmiendas de 1992 a la Ley de Rehabilitación y a la Ley Americanos con Discapacidades (ADA por sus siglas en inglés) ofrecen asistencia de tecnología como una modificación razonable en el trabajo y en la comunidad. La sección 504 de la Ley de Rehabilitación ordena asistencia de tecnología y servicios de asistencia de tecnología en la escuela para permitir un igual acceso a las tecnologías.

Aunque IDEA y la Ley de Rehabilitación ordenan asistencia de tecnología, esta tiene que ser *necesaria y razonable* dependiendo del lugar y las actividades requeridas. En el ambiente escolar, la asistencia de tecnología tiene que ser vista como relevante a la educación, necesaria para recibirla una educación pública gratuita y apropiada, utilizada para facilitar la educación de un niño en un ambiente menos restrictivo y como un servicio relacionado. Bajo IDEA, el equipo de la escuela tiene que documentar que se considera la asistencia de tecnología al menos una vez al año. La asistencia de tecnología comprada por la escuela puede ser considerada como propiedad de la escuela, la cual tiene que mantenerse en la escuela a menos que un padre de familia la pida por escrito y el Equipo considere que el niño necesita acceso a la asistencia de tecnología en la casa o en otro ambiente para poder recibir una educación pública gratuita y apropiada.

RECURSOS

Recursos sobre el uso de tecnología para individuos con discapacidades pueden obtenerse llamando a ERIC al 800-LET-ERIC (800-538-3742) de lunes a viernes, de 8:00 a.m. a 8:00 p.m. tiempo del este. Usted también puede comunicarse con ERIC a través de su página en Internet www.eric.ed.gov



Health News

at the Federation for Children
with Special Needs

News from Family TIES of Massachusetts

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide information and support network for families of children with special needs. It is a project at the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division for Special Health Needs. Families of children with special needs can receive information, referrals, direct parent-to-parent support, and training.

WEBSITE UPDATE

The Family TIES website at www.mass-familyties.org has a new, fresh design. One special feature is the inclusion of children's photographs on the home page. If you'd like to see your child's picture on our website, please contact Program Director Mary Castro Aten at mcasten@fcsn.org. You will receive a photo

release form to complete and return with your picture. When our collection reaches 25 photos, we will expand the website to include a Family Album section, which will include every photo that we receive.

At this time, Family TIES is updating and revising our "Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs." In fact, the Question of the Month, which you are encouraged to respond to, is a very brief survey about the Directory. If you have information about a program you'd like to see included in the 2005 edition, or have input about how the directory is organized, this is an opportunity to help with that process. If you don't have the 2004 version, you can view it on-line or download a copy from the website.

You are further encouraged to provide feedback about the website. Your input will be used to help improve the site and make it even more useful, informative and friendly.

TRAINING

Family TIES of Massachusetts recently revised the ever-popular, free **Let's Get Organized**. This skill-building workshop helps families develop organizational skills

and create supports in their local community. Please contact your Regional Coordinator for more information, or for assistance in scheduling this workshop in your community. Staff list and contact information appear below, or leave a message at **1-800-905-TIES (8437)**.

FAMILY TIES STAFF

Mary Castro Aten, Director
781-774-6736

Joanne Spencer, Parent-to-Parent and Outreach Coordinator
781-774-6740

Regional Coordinators:

Boston: Roxanne Hoke-Chandler
617-541-2875

Southeast: Karen Douglass
781-774-6749

Metrowest: Lisa Mayer
781-774-6602

Central: Barbara Donati
508-792-7880 Ext. 2337

Northeast: Kathy Morin
978-851-7261 Ext. 4018

Western: Michele Wolf
413-586-7525, Ext. 1133 or
1-800-445-1255 (western region only)

MassCARE: Family Advisory Network Opportunities for Consumers

by Delores Qualls, Project Coordinator, MassCARE at the Federation

MassCARE, the Massachusetts Community Aids Resource Enhancement program, is a statewide program run by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). There are seven MassCARE sites throughout the state, which provide medical and support services to women, children and families affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS.

MassCARE has a family advisory component, called the Family Advisory Network or FAN. This family support initiative is a project of the Federation. Every consumer of MassCARE services can participate on

the FAN; it's for each individual to decide just how active they want to be in providing input about FAN events and contributing ideas for new activities. Everyone's input is welcome, and you are encouraged to contact me directly (information at end of article). Teens are especially encouraged to participate in the FAN. The teen population is often overlooked, they don't come out as much as they should, but they have a lot to say. The FAN will work hard to help give teens a voice in implementing new activities and supports. Teen participation will help bring family involvement in the MassCARE program to a different level.

There are many ways to be involved in the FAN. There are monthly FAN meetings in each region, and several statewide meetings that consumers are invited to attend. If you can't attend meetings, I am interested in working with you individually and getting your input, especially for workshop topics you'd like to see offered. You are also encouraged to be on the mailing list so you can receive the FAN newsletter. It contains information about what's going on at each site, a calendar of FAN events and information about HIV/AIDS as well as a section about opportunities for consumer input.

For more information about the FAN, and to share your ideas about activities and supports, please call Delores at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 111 or e-mail dqualls@fcsn.org.

Mass Family Voices

New Family-to-Family Health Care Information & Education Center

by Beth Dworetzky, Project Coordinator, Mass Family Voices at the Federation

Massachusetts Family Voices at the Federation for Children with Special Needs has been awarded a Real Choice Systems Change Grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This three-year grant will be used to create a statewide, parent-run Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center. The Family-to-Family Center grant was one of nine categories of Real Choice System Change Grants. The purpose of all the Systems Change Grants is to help states build infrastructures that support the President's "New Freedom Initiative." This initiative, begun in 2001, promotes opportunities for individuals with disabilities and long-term illnesses to live at home, have meaningful work, and participate as fully as possible in community life.

The Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center will offer health care information and support to families of children and youth with special health needs, and others, as they navigate various health care systems and supports to ensure their children can live at home, can be active participants in their communities, and have an active "voice" in the decision making process.

The goal of the Center will be to expand the capacity of the Federation to be able to offer the same types of advocacy train-

ing that is available through their Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center for education, and extend that to the health care arena.

- Center staff will collaborate with state agencies and other projects and organizations to develop family-friendly training materials and then meet with parents throughout the state to provide detailed training about public benefits, eligibility, the application process, how to support other families through the application process, and what to do if they are denied.
- Using a parent-helping-parent model, the Center will mentor parents to work in different regions of the state to become resources for other parents who are just beginning the process of navigating these complex health benefit systems.
- The Center will help families advocate for the quality health care services their children need.

On December 1, 2004, the Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, hosted its first training event. Despite the stormy weather, 47 parents/caregivers of children and youth with special health care needs, attended a confer-

ence in Marlborough, where they heard a keynote address by Josie Thomas, the Executive Director of the Parents' Place of Maryland. Josie spoke about family leadership. She gave examples of how, throughout the country, families are developing partnerships, and sharing their expertise to influence health care policies and programs.

In the afternoon, attendees had a chance to attend breakout sessions and learn concrete advocacy skills they can use to effect change in their communities. These included information about: navigating the childcare system, legislative advocacy, and how to challenge decisions by health care insurers. In order to support families' abilities to tell their stories to health providers, legislators and others, there was a session about giving effective oral presentations. There were also two roundtable discussions: one about parent-professional collaboration with health care professionals and another about strategies for keeping energized, getting support and expanding the circle of parent leaders.

For more information about specific grant activities, and to learn about ways your family can participate in the training opportunities that will be offered by the Center, visit www.massfamilyvoices.org, e-mail massfv@fcsn.org or leave a message at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210. Your call will be returned.



MATCHING GIFTS Make Your Contributions Go Further!

1. Check with your company's personnel department to see if they have a matching gifts program.
2. Ask for matching gifts forms for all the members of your team.
3. Review the requirements of your matching gifts program carefully—each program has its own policies.

Open Wide: Oral Health Initiatives

by Barbara Popper, Co-Project Director, Family Voices at the Federation

Oral disease is a major public health problem in Massachusetts. Two statewide initiatives have been launched to raise awareness of oral health and identify and address problems with access to oral health providers and services. This is of particular concern to people with disabilities and MassHealth (the Massachusetts Medicaid program) recipients, as only 33% of children eligible for MassHealth receive dental services; 41% of 3rd graders on MassHealth have untreated cavities and 19% have urgent dental needs.

The Office of Oral Health, within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (www.mass.gov/dph/fch/ooh.htm), is responsible for the prevention and control of dental diseases and the enhancement of oral health throughout the

Commonwealth. This office is creating a task force to look at the needs and problems faced by Massachusetts's citizens in obtaining needed oral health services. They have asked the Federation to help identify individuals to participate in this effort. If you are interested, contact Barbara Popper (contact information provided below).

Health Care for All, an organization dedicated to making quality and affordable health care accessible to everyone (www.hcfama.org) is conducting an Oral Health Campaign. With support from Dental Service of Massachusetts, the Health Foundation of Central Mass, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, they have created an Oral Health Advocacy Taskforce. Meeting times and directions are posted on their website. If you cannot

attend the meetings, the minutes are posted as well.

The steering committee of the Oral Health Advocacy Taskforce has created work groups to guide upcoming advocacy efforts, including public education and awareness of the importance of, and the need for increased access to, dental health services. Barbara Popper has joined this Taskforce to help represent the needs of families of children with special needs that have difficulty finding appropriate oral health services near their homes.

For more information about both of these initiatives, contact Barbara at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 122 or e-mail bpopper@fcsn.org.

Emergency Service Program Network: Mental Health Emergency Information

by Kathy Betts, Director of Adolescent and Residential Services, Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership

The Emergency Service Program (ESP) network serves as the behavioral health safety net for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As such, ESPs play a vital role in the continuum of behavioral health care available to residents of the Commonwealth. The clinical goal of the ESPs is to assess and reduce the acute symptoms and behaviors associated with a psychiatric and/or substance abuse emergency, using the least restrictive level of care.

The current Emergency Service Program network consists of 26 ESPs, located throughout the Commonwealth. Individuals in need of psychiatric crisis services may contact ESPs directly or be referred by community providers, schools, police, hospital emergency departments,

etc. All individuals, regardless of health insurance or ability to pay, are eligible for ESP services. ESPs provide crisis intervention and stabilization services. As part of this process they will evaluate a consumer's need for service and match this need with appropriate referrals.

Services provided by ESPs may include:

- 24/7 access to qualified mental health clinicians
- Mobile assessment capacity
- Access to clinical consultation services
- Access to on-call psychiatry services
- Assessments resulting in screening and triage to emergent, urgent, or routine care
- Appropriate and timely clinical referrals
- Immediate medical evaluation, as needed

- Referral to social and peer supports
- Psychiatric assessment that results in a diagnosis, case (clinical) formulation, an initial treatment plan, and the development of a crisis plan
- Short-term hospital diversion services including:
 - Crisis stabilization beds
 - FST (Family Stabilization Team)
 - Other community-based programs such as partial hospital programs or day treatment.
- Direct access to clinicians with cultural and linguistic competency and/or translator services

To locate the ESP covering their geographic area, consumers may call the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership at 1-800-495-0086.



Book Review

by Mary Loughlin Director of Central Mass. Parent Training and Information at the Federation

The New Language of Toys: Teaching Communication Skills to Children with Special Needs
A Guide for Parents and Teachers
Third Edition by Sue Schwartz, Ph.D.
Published by Woodbine House

On a special day, when my children were young, I would discover a toy that opened the passageway between my world and theirs. For my first son, it was puzzles, Duplo blocks, or trains. For my second son, it was Play Doh, balls, or cars. Dolls or drawing with crayons were the conduits with my daughter. *The New Language of Toys*, published by Woodbine House, reveals the magic of how to stimulate language development through play with toys to parents of young children with special needs. Professionals, such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, and early childhood educators will also benefit from the information in this book. In addition to new toys, this edition also includes language-stimulating video and computer activities, and websites.

The book begins with clear explanations of receptive language, expressive language, and speech so parents will be attuned to the difficulties and progress made in these three areas and be better prepared to work with their child's speech and language pathologist. This is followed by a guided-tour through language and physical development in children from birth to 6 years of age. Causes of language delay related to cognitive delay, physical disabilities, sensory deficits, and environment are discussed along with how to recognize speech and language problems early and how to understand the various components of a speech and language assessment: receptive language, expressive language, oral mechanism, and speech sounds.

The concept that a child's work is play and that play is important for emotional, physical, social, cognitive, and language develop-

ment is an important one. Toy dialogues - what you say as you play with the toys with your child—are included throughout the book. This was one of the hardest tasks for me as a parent, knowing which carefully chosen words would be important for my children with special needs. I always admired the speech and language pathologists who could do so much with a few precious words. Some of the therapy techniques highlighted in the book include:

1. Start with simple words and phrases
2. Use actual names of things
3. Use varied repetition of key words and single concepts
4. Speak in short sentences
5. Pause between phrases
6. Focus on one toy or activity at a time
7. Play at your child's eye level
8. Play for a few short periods of time
9. Know when is the best time to play
10. Offer praise and encouragement
11. Keep the fun in learning!
Be enthusiastic!

For each age level, different toys (some of them homemade and some of them electronic) and corresponding dialogues are presented along with pictures, concepts, vocabulary, and books. There is a chart to help parents summarize developmental progress. There is also great information on using language throughout the child's day through daily activities at home, while driving in the car, and while on outings. In the resource appendices, Dr. Schwartz suggests materials to make toys, sources for books and toys, national organizations, and alternate sources for toys to defray the cost to the parent. There are beautiful color photographs showing the fun interactions between parents and their children while playing with various toys.

The author writes, "Computer technology has enabled mute children to 'talk,' children with physical disabilities to 'move,' blind children to 'read,' and deaf children to 'hear.'" She advises that computer software should be open-ended and exploratory, easy for a young child to use independently, focused on a broad range of skills and concepts, technically sophisticated, age appropriate, and fun to play with while promoting the child's success and self-esteem.

One of the resources is the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) www.cast.org. CAST is located here in Massachusetts and is dedicated to using technology to expand opportunities for children with disabilities. Many types of assistive technology, such as using a computer with children as young as two, and the Sensational Beginnings keyboard and small mouse available for them, are mentioned.

I highly recommend this book for parents and professionals. It is wonderful when you find a resource such as this, which truly helps parents identify the abilities and the interests of their child through what occupational therapists call the "just right challenge." The more your child enjoys playing with that special toy with you, the more you can build your relationship with your child while facilitating his or her development in all areas. My children are no longer young children, but those early toys helped shape the young teenagers that they are becoming. To this day, my first child still loves the challenge of a 200-piece puzzle, building things, playing with model trains, and riding on real trains. My second son loves basketball and cars. My daughter is an accomplished young artist who collects dolls. They all have been helped by assistive and computer technology in overcoming their academic challenges.

Woodbine House is a publisher specializing in books about children with special needs. They provide parent-friendly, useful books about disabilities for parents, children, teachers and other professionals. For more information, and/or to receive a catalog, call 1-800-843-7323 or visit www.woodbinehouse.com.

Children's Holiday Gift Fund tops \$20k

by Andrea Watson, Project Coordinator,
Parents for Residential Reform at the Federation

Boston Globe columnist Adrian Walker wrote about the project in his column on December 6, 2004. As a result additional contributions poured in bringing the total over the \$20,000 mark, the most ever contributed for this cause. PFRR and the Federation wish to thank all who contributed.

Since 1999, the Children's Holiday Gift Fund has provided age appropriate holiday gifts for young people in the custody and care of the Department of Social Services (DSS) due to abuse, abandonment or neglect and who have little or no involvement with their families. When Parents For Residential Reform (PFRR) became a project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs in 2001, the fund became a collaborative effort.

Cassandra Watson, a former residential student, was the inspiration for this effort. After of one of her 15-year-old peers was left behind with school staff on Christmas Day with only a \$10 credit at a toy store, Cassandra vowed to never let that happen again. The next day, many of her peers returned from their holiday with stories of fun, family, friends, good food, and bags of gifts. "I can only imagine how she felt," states Cassandra. "I still tear up thinking about her being alone on Christmas. I don't know what it is like not to have someone watching out for me, who thinks of me during the good and bad times in my life." She continues, "I call these young people the forgotten population, those without a voice. This is why we ask people like Chris and Marianne to get involved [and hope] that others will respond to their call for help."

Chris Cooper, along with his wife Marianne, were asked to help out and states, "when Marianne and I were made aware that there were children that may be without a holiday gift this season we knew we had to do something to help. By letting others know of the need, we hope this will

make a huge difference." Marianne Cooper went on to say, "If ever there is a time of year for folks to open their hearts and do something it is now! There is no better gift than giving."

Brandon Residential Treatment School has a lot of students who are in state custody. They try to do the best they can to make the holiday season a lot brighter for these young people who may not have any family involvement. Executive Director Tim Callahan says, "The Children's Holiday Gift Fund provides a wonderful opportunity for children placed away from home to feel welcomed and appreciated. For many youth the festivities and gifts are a high point in what can often be a difficult time of their year."

"I still tear up thinking about her being alone on Christmas. I don't know what it is like not to have someone watching out for me, who thinks of me during the good and bad times in my life. I call these young people the forgotten population, those without a voice."

—Cassandra Watson

"Although this donation will indeed make a difference in so many of these vulnerable, lonely young peoples' lives, it is not nearly not enough. The need is much greater than what we historically have been able to cover," states Andrea Watson, founder and project coordinator of PFRR. Rich Robison, Executive Director of the Federation adds, "This is one of the many things the Federation can do to make a difference in children's lives. It is our pleasure to be a part of helping these young people to feel less lonely in this holiday season."



From left to right: Andrea Watson, PFRR; Commissioner Harry Spence, Department of Social Services; Jessica Vohs, Artist; Chris Cooper, Academy Award Winning Actor; Marianne Leone-Cooper, Actor/Writer; Michael Athanas, Anthony's Pier 4

Harry Spence, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, states, "Through your generosity, we are able to lift the spirits of these young people by showing them they are remembered and cared about at the holidays. The gifts they open bring smiles to their faces, joy to their hearts, and importantly, build their confidence and feelings of self worth."

When folks like the Coopers, Tim Robbins, Johnny Rivers, Ellen Pompeo, David Chokachi, Josh Meyers, Patrice Vinci, Robin Dawson, Steve Burton, and others in the entertainment field are asked why they get involved their response always is that, "It's about the kids!"

FACTS

- Presently in Massachusetts, there are approximately 8000 children in Foster Care
- 2500 children/adolescents with disabilities in Residential/Group Home Care
- 600 children/adolescents with disabilities and illness in hospital settings
- 20-30 thousand children and families receive DSS services in their homes

There is one fundraising event a year for the Children's Holiday Gift Fund, but donations are important and accepted all year long. To donate to the Children's Holiday Gift Fund make your check payable to CHGF - FCSN and send it to FCSN, 1135 Tremont Street, Suite 420, Boston, MA 02120.

Congress Passes Assistive Technology Act of 2004

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“Passage of the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 affirms the benefits of assistive technology for people with disabilities and the importance of access to AT devices and services for increased independence and productivity. The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) is pleased that the AT Programs operating in every state and US territory will be able to continue to be a resource for people with disabilities, educators, employers and other service providers to find and access the assistive technology they need. The impressive bi-partisan effort of the Congress to ensure the continuation of these vital programs is heartening for people with disabilities and the programs that serve them.”

—Deborah Buck, Executive Director, Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

AT Programs established under the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988, have been responsible for implementing strategies to raise awareness of assistive technology and resources and work with systems such as education, rehabilitation, health services, to increase access to assistive technology devices and services for people with disabilities. The AT Act of 2004 focuses on the continuation or development of specific programs that will ensure direct access to technology including, assistive technology loan programs, device demonstration programs, device reutilization programs, and alternative financing such as low-cost financial loan programs. In addition, AT Programs are responsible for implementing training and technical assistance, with a special emphasis on assistance for individuals with disabilities transitioning from school to work or continued education, conducting public awareness activities, information and referral services, and coordination and collaboration with public and private entities that are responsible for programs, services, policies or funding of assistive technology services. The AT Act of 2004 also

clarifies states' responsibilities to ensure access to electronic and information technology as defined under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Activities carried out under, and supported with Federal funds received under the AT Act of 2004, are required to comply with the Section 508 standards.

“Millions of people with disabilities rely on assistive technology to help them gain and maintain independence. Passage of the bipartisan Assistive Technology Act of 2004 will help individuals throughout the US and its territories get the technology they need to help them be independent in school, at home, the workplace and in the community. This is a great step forward in recognizing the contribu-

tions of all Americans.”

—Marty Blair, Chair, Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

The AT Act of 2004 also supports state grants for protection and advocacy programs related to assistive technology and national activities such as a national public-awareness tool kit, research and development, technical assistance and training, data collection and a national public internet site.

The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP), is a national, member-based organization, comprised of state Assistive Technology Programs funded under the Assistive Technology Act.

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Freedom Flight I: A Poster and Poem by Jessica Vohs

Available for \$12, includes shipping/handling. Discount on orders of 20 or more. The poster is a reproduction of a beautiful watercolor, and can be seen in color on www.jessicavohs.com. 18 x 24 inches, reprinted on a heavy poster stock paper with glossy coating.



Freedom Flight I by Jessica E. Vohs

*Butterflies flying free together,
each beautiful in its own way.*

*This is the spirit of human beings.
These spirits are not disabled.*

We can do and achieve things beyond our wildest dreams.

*All we need to be flying free is understanding
and a supportive environment that helps our dreams come true.*

*Let's open our minds and hearts and fly free
together in a most beautiful dance of true life.*

Jessie Arts

www.jessicavohs.com

Massachusetts Proposes New Special Education Regulations

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regulations and a schedule of public hearings is available on the Department's web site at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/>. The Board will accept comments until March 1, 2005 with final action by the Board due on April 26, 2005. It is anticipated that the new rules will go into effect July 1, 2005.

Highlights of the proposed changes:

IDEA 2004 was signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 3, 2004. (See related article on page 1.) Most of the provisions of this law will go into effect on July 1, 2005. In response to this significant development the proposed state regulations incorporate new aspects of federal law as well incorporate existing or continuing requirements by reference. The proposed regulations will address changes such as changes to student discipline provisions, implementing a streamlined transition process for students 16 years or older, new requirements related to students moving to Massachusetts from other states, the removal of the term "objectives" from the required content of the IEP, and the inclusion of foster parents as individuals who may be considered "parents" under special education law.

The Department emphasizes that because "IDEA is incorporated by reference in our state regulations, very few of the proposed changes are related to the recent reauthorization of IDEA."

Secondly, the revisions seek to address ways to improve the regulations requiring technical or in some cases substantive change based upon comments and issues related to the implementation of the current regulations since they were last revised in 2000.

Significant revisions seek to address current "gaps" in school district responsibility for certain students, such as homeless students, students not residing with their parents, or those in shared custody arrangements where it is unclear which school district has financial and/or programmatic responsibility. It clarifies that Districts must remain responsible for a student's program until a new district is identified and assumes responsibility.

Another area being addressed clarifies the requirements for approval of Public and Private Day and Residential Special Education Schools and strengthens the oversight of the state over both approved



Congratulations to Betsy Anderson of the Federation, the recipient of a Maternal Child Health Bureau Director's Award.

schools and clarifies when unapproved schools must seek approval.

The Board is particularly interested in changes proposed for the student placement process and changes to the "stay put" protections under the law. The Federation is reviewing these changes and will comment on them to the Department. Parents are urged to read the proposal carefully and provide their comments directly to the Department of Education.

Visit fcsn.org for the latest details on the proposed Massachusetts Special Education Regulations.

Congress Passes Assistive Technology Act of 2004

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The mission of ATAP is to promote the collaboration of AT Programs with persons with disabilities, providers, industry, advocates and others at the state and national level and to increase the availability and utilization of accessible information technology (IT) and assistive technology devices and services (AT) for all individuals with disabilities in the United States and territories. Their web site is www.ataporg.org.

MASSACHUSETTS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP

In the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Partnership (MATP) works to ensure that people of all ages and all disabilities have increased access to assistive technology. They provide information, referral (including referral to potential funding sources), training, technical assistance, and advocacy support to people who need assistive technology devices (AT), parents/caregivers of people who need AT, professionals who need AT information, employees and employers, students and educators. The Partnership also works to improve laws and policies that provide access to assistive technology, and can provide referrals to legal advocacy on

assistive technology-related issues. This statewide project is funded through the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, US Department of Education. The MATP Center is based in Boston, and has two Peer Assistive Technology Programs. One Peer Program is based out of the Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled in Hyannis; the other is run by the Stavros Center for Independent Living in Springfield.

The MATP website, at www.matp.org, has a description of services they provide, programs and organizations that provide AT devices, training and funding, and a list of related sites and resources. For more information, contact the MATP Center directly at 1-800-848-8867 (Voice/TTY).

Parents for Residential Reform

by Andrea Watson, Project Coordinator, Parents for Residential Reform at the Federation

A New Initiative: Partnership with DYS and Parents for Residential Reform

Although the Department of Youth Services (DYS) tries to be responsive to families' needs, it recognizes that parents are sometimes afraid and reticent to contact a juvenile justice agency. They may have questions or concerns about the child's safety, medical treatment, education, etc. that they do not feel comfortable voicing directly. For this reason, DYS is partnering with Parents for Residential Reform (PFRR), a project of the Federation for Children with Special Health Care Needs, to pilot a family information line. This support line, for families of youth committed to the Department, will work with DYS to help families navigate through the agency, understand the unique aspects of juvenile justice programming, and help them feel confident that their children are safe and receiving adequate services. This is especially important at times of transition when children are entering an assessment or treatment program and when they are leaving a residential setting and returning to their home community, school system, etc. DYS staff people are currently working with Andrea Watson and Rebecca Cohen, both of PFRR, to design the information line notification and operational processes. This project is expected to begin in January 2005.

PROJECT UPDATES

PFRR Welcomes New Intern

PFRR is pleased to welcome Rebecca Cohen, our intern, who will be helping us through June 2005. Rebecca is a senior at Northeastern University, a member of the Honor Society, and is majoring in Criminal Justice, with a focus on Juvenile Justice. Formerly, Rebecca was a childcare worker at a residential school in MA. Rebecca has been a huge asset to PFRR, the other Federation projects and all the families we serve.

Mini Conference in November a Huge Success

Several parents braved the first winter snow to attend a Mini Conference at the Walker Home and School. This was a huge success and we look forward to doing more mini-conferences in other parts of the state. Thanks to Attorney Tim Sindelar, Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership, NAPPI (Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention, Inc.) and Walker Home and School for helping to make this happen.

PFRR Listservs

Listservs are a great way to share pertinent information with other parents who are experiencing similar situations. PFRR has lists that serve all US States and

Territories. Visit www.pfrr.org for more information and to join a list.

Is your child's residential school licensed or 766-Approved?

All special needs residential schools and group homes must be licensed through the Office for Child Care Services. For licensing information, visit the Office of Child Care Services website at www.qualitychildcare.org/residential.shtml or link to it from the PFRR home page (click on Mass State Agencies).

For 766-Special Education Approval information, visit the Department of Education Program Quality Assurance Services link at www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/ or link to it from the PFRR site to see if a particular school is listed. All 766-Approved Residential and Day Schools must have Parent Advisory Councils (PACS). If you have any questions or concerns, call PFRR at 1-800-672-7084.

Parents For Residential Reform (PFRR) is a project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs that provides support, information, referral, and other information to parents and professionals regarding residential educational settings and group home care. PFRR has developed a network of families in similar situations throughout MA and now nationwide.

Save the Date!

The Federation for Children with Special Needs presents:

Annual Gala Celebration

May 20, 2005 at the Seaport Hotel.

This year's Gala will honor the work of Attorneys Robert Crabtree and Larry Kotin

Please join us!



