



Device Demonstrations

Definition

The AT Act describes device demonstrations as activities to “directly, or in collaboration with public and private entities, such as one-stop partners, as defined in section 101 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 2801), demonstrate a variety of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services (including assisting individuals in making informed choices regarding, and providing experiences with, the devices and services), using personnel who are familiar with such devices and services and their applications.” Section 4(e)(2)(D) Device demonstrations compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices for an individual or small group of individuals. The purpose of a device demonstration is to enable an individual to make an informed choice.

The AT Act specifies the provision of information and referral to device demonstration participants as a key component of device demonstrations: “(ii) COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION.—The State shall directly, or through referrals, provide to individuals, to the extent practicable, comprehensive information about State and local assistive technology vendors, providers, and repair services.”

Characteristics of Device Demonstrations

In a device demonstration for an individual with a disability, his/her family, service providers and other stakeholders (e.g. “team members”), a guided experience with the device(s) is provided to the participant with the assistance of someone who has technical expertise related to the device(s). This expert may be in the same location as the participant or may assist the participant through Internet or distance learning mechanisms that provide real-time, effective communication to deliver the necessary device exploration. Whenever possible, the participant should have a “hands on” experience and should be shown a variety of similar devices in order to sufficiently understand, compare and contrast the features of the devices and subsequently make an informed decision.

Device demonstrations may be individual or group (e.g. several people with disabilities who are interested in the same device or category of devices) as long as the purpose is to help the participants *make a decision* about whether or which AT can help them (or a person with a disability who they represent). Device demonstrations may be conducted at mutually agreeable locations (state AT program location, public library, independent living center, etc.) by arrangement, or in a designated “demonstration center”. They may be conducted by appointment, or on a pre-determined schedule.

Demonstrations Include Information and Referrals

During or after a demonstration, participants should be provided with information regarding vendors or manufacturers from which the demonstrated device(s) can be purchased, e.g. product brochures, vendor listings including websites. Information about funding sources (including but not limited to any state financing activity provided by the state AT program) is frequently useful. Participants may also benefit from referrals to service providers, for example, when a full assessment is required before funding can be requested (e.g. from Medicaid or Medicare).

Key characteristics of information and referral provided as a component of device demonstrations include: the information is about specific source(s) where the consumer may obtain additional information about the device(s) demonstrated or services (including assessment, repair, training, funding); specific contact information is provided (e.g. email, web, telephone); information and referral may include but goes beyond the services and programs offered by the State AT program.

Performance Measures and Required Data Collection Elements

Device demonstration activities are covered by the Access Performance Measure. State AT programs must collect information from consumers who received the device demonstration and others who may have accompanied him/her. Because the overarching purpose of device demonstrations is to help a person with a disability (or those providing services and supports to the person) *make a decision* about whether an AT device will work for him/her, the outcome of the demonstration is a key element. For each demonstration, the report of one (1) participant/decision-maker (consumer or his/her representative) must be obtained regarding the outcome of the demonstration. For ALL attendees at each demonstration, customer satisfaction data should be obtained and reported. In addition, Programs must provide one anecdote about an individual who benefited from the activity.

When reporting on device demonstration information and referrals, referrals to other components of the state AT program are NOT counted.

Detailed information on performance measures and the required data collection elements can be found in the Instructions for the Annual Progress Report (APR) and the APR reporting instrument.

Frequently Asked Questions about Device Demonstrations

Must the state AT program conduct device demonstrations?

No. Section 4(e)(6) of the AT Act allows a state to carry out any two or more of the four required state-level activities. This means the state can choose not to conduct up to two activities. If it chooses not to conduct device demonstrations the state must claim either "comparability" or "flexibility" in its state plan.

Do all of the kinds of demonstration activities need to be conducted (scheduled "demonstration days", a permanent demonstration center, etc.)?

No. A program can select any type or types of demonstration activities in response to the needs in its state, as long as the demonstration activities are clearly

described in the State Plan for Assistive Technology. In the interest of reaching as many consumers as possible and assuring “statewide-ness”, the State AT program (and its subcontractors and other partners) may choose to offer demonstrations at a variety of community-based locations.

Does each demonstration location need to offer comprehensive demonstrations (e.g. for most/all of the device categories)?

It is permissible to have demonstration locations that target specific groups by type of AT, disability, functional need, or other parameters, as long as the “big picture” provides statewide, cross-disability opportunities for demonstrations of a range of technologies. For example, a program may have leveraged funds to conduct device demonstrations for specific disability groups, e.g. seniors or people who need AT for telephone access. It should be noted, however, that this kind of framework may mean a consumer needs several trips (possibly to different locations) to receive demonstrations because of the extent of his/her needs. Having a way to provide comprehensive demonstrations (whether “static” or “on demand”) may be more user-friendly.

Does a person with a disability need to be present at a device demonstration?

It is ideal for the person with a disability for whom a device decision is being sought to be involved in the demonstration and decision-making process. Where this is not possible, it may be appropriate for family members and/or service providers to participate in the demonstration, and for a family member or other authorized person to make and report on the decision.

We will be conducting demonstrations in remote areas via videoconference. Must the demonstration recipients have access to the device(s) that are demonstrated?

In order to make an informed decision, it is preferable to have the device(s) available to the consumer for “hands-on” exploration of features and functions. The state AT program could make the AT available to the consumer at his/her location through its device lending program, or the vendor(s) may be willing and able to provide the AT. In any case, it is critical that the demonstration be real-time, interactive, provide one-on-one assistance to answer the consumer’s questions and increase his/her knowledge and understanding of the devices.

Must the decision (performance measure outcome) be related to the appropriateness of the specific brand/model of device(s) that are demonstrated, or can the decision be more general (e.g. that some AT device would probably be useful)?

The options for the performance measures are (1) a decision was made that AT would help; (2) a decision was made that AT would not help; or (3) no decision was made. The performance outcome measure may be related to either a specific or general consideration of whether an assistive technology device might help. Even if none of the demonstrated devices was selected, the consumer still might be able to decide that AT would help. For example, the consumer may not have been aware that there are communication apps for a tablet in addition to specialized speech generating devices (SGD). When examples were demonstrated, the consumer’s decision might not be related to one of the specific items demonstrated (and in fact,

in the case of AT for communication, an evaluation may be indicated in order to select the appropriate AT) but rather a decision was made that AT could help and the consumer would pursue an assessment to find the “right” device.

Our staff does not have expertise in the devices for which a demonstration has been requested. Can we have a vendor come in and conduct the demonstration?

An effective demonstration requires someone with operational skills with the devices being demonstrated. It is critical to provide an opportunity to compare and contrast at least two devices – including options that may come from more than one manufacturer or vendor. In addition, state AT Program staff (or its subcontractors) should always be present at and mediate vendor-provided demonstrations in order to prevent a vendor demonstration from becoming a sales pitch.

Do we need to have an inventory for device demonstrations that is separate from the inventory for device loans?

You may use the same pool of devices for lending and demonstration. In this case, you will need to develop a system to make sure your devices are available when you need them for a demonstration (or vice versa).

How is demonstration different from public awareness?

The purpose of a device demonstration is to compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device or category of devices, so an informed decision can be made by (or on behalf of) an individual with a disability. Public awareness activities are conducted in order to increase general understanding of the nature, scope and benefits of assistive technology and the resources of the state AT program; no decision is expected or reported.

Resources

Community of Practice in Demonstration and Device Lending

Because both of these activities depend on access to and maintenance of an inventory of assistive technology devices, there is one combined Community of Practice to address these two “access” activities. To join, email amy.goldman@ataporg.org.

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