



IN THIS ISSUE...

The AT Act: Sunrise, No Sunset

"Don't let the sun go down on me..." was the title of a 1970s Elton John ballad bemoaning a lost love, but it could also have been a rallying cry for members of the U.S. disability community lobbying hard in Washington for the Assistive Technology Act reauthorization that would save state assistive technology programs from the 1998 federal legislation's sunset provisions scheduled to take effect in September 2004. Spearheaded by aggressive lobbying from disability organizations, consumer groups and the disability community's new friends in business and industry, the AT Act passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Bush on October 25, 2004. The old Assistive Technology Act's sunset provisions were averted and a new era dawned for a strengthened disability alliance.

In addition to reauthorizing the Assistive Technology Act with no sunset provision, the AT Act provides stability for state AT Act programs with a provision for a minimum fiscal allotment for states and territories, based on appropriations increases. State programs are required to provide, with at least 60% of the federal funding, alternative financing and device loan programs, demonstration centers and device reutilization. The bill contains a special provision allowing states the flexibility to devote 70% or more of its grant to provide any combination of two or more of the above activities. State AT programs are also required to provide technical assistance and training, public awareness, information and referral, and activities related to coordination

and collaboration. Given increased appropriations, the Act allows for the issuance of grants to support national public awareness and AT research. The legislation assigns administrative responsibilities for all state Assistive Technology Act programs to the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration.

This issue examines the new AT Act and the information resources available to help better understand its provisions and ramifications.

Deborah Buck Speaks

Twenty-five years ago, after college graduation and in search of employment, Deborah Buck took her sociology degree to various state service agencies "I landed a counseling job at a local ARC – and I loved it." In the ensuing years, Ms. Buck earned a Masters degree in rehabilitative counseling from the State University of New York, Albany and subsequently directed the NY Assistive Technology Act Program for 10 years. She then focused her efforts on information technology accessibility and section 508 working within the State of NY Office for Technology and other states interested in IT accessibility. She assumed her current position in June 2005 as the first ever Executive Director of the Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP). "Although ATAP has been in existence since 1997, it had never hired staff, and the ATAP Board of Directors and its membership sustained the organization" she recalls. "ATAP decided to take a risk and build staff not knowing for sure whether the AT Act would pass and if the organization and its membership would even be in business – and

I took a risk in taking the job, but it was a risk well worth taking.”

Supporting our interview with Ms. Buck are resources to assist in understanding the AT Act and other pertinent legislation. We also feature members of our Knowledge Network. The members spotlighted this month focus on legislative affairs and advocacy. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.

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It Took Two to Tango: Bipartisanship Wins the Day – and, Hopefully, Tomorrow – for AT

*An Interview with Deborah Buck,
Executive Director,
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
(ATAP)*

With Tech Act program resources withering nationwide as the 1998 legislation’s sunset provisions loomed, an alliance of disability organizations, consumers, business and industry successfully encouraged lawmakers from both parties to take a bipartisan approach to AT Act reauthorization. The result – unusual for much consensus bipartisan legislation – was a bill with teeth and the hope, according to Deborah Buck, that those who formulated it have laid a foundation of cooperation for the future.

Says Ms. Buck, “Clearly, this law would not have been passed unless there had been a bipartisan approach. There was activity in

both the Senate and the House and the House was the first to get its bill out. The Senate followed. There were differences in the bill between the two versions, but there was a commitment to work together to find consensus.”

What was critical in the legislation’s formulation and passage, she notes, was the time frame. “Without the bipartisan approach and the consensus building that occurred in the agreement, this bill would not have passed within this session. That’s my personal opinion but it is one with which many others in the field concur.”

She adds, “Because the legislation was scheduled to sunset in September, there was a lot of pressure on Congress. Contrary to the notion that a bipartisan bill like this would inevitably result in toothless legislation, this bill has more teeth than the original and perhaps more teeth than anyone expected.”

Clear Requirements for Funds Expenditure – and an Emphasis on Outcome Data

There are clear requirements for the expenditure of funds by the state AT programs, Ms. Buck explains. “There’s a requirement for breaking down the percentages and how those funds are allocated according to the required activities – and there are many required activities.” The legislation, she says, has a strong focus on outcome data, “but that’s a trend at the federal level in terms of outcomes and measurable impacts of federally funded programs.” This legislation, she adds, is consistent with that trend.

The focus on outcomes data, she asserts, has no party label attached to it. “I’d hope that a focus on outcomes is an approach that has no party stamp but that is endorsed by both parties, because if federal funding is involved, there is, and should be, a responsibility to produce tangible results for which there is accountability.” She explains that she has watched this approach gain wider acceptability for the past 10 years. “This approach was

quite visible during the Clinton administration and has been continued within the Bush administration. I don't think it's a question of a Republican or Democratic approach. It's more a recognition that entities receiving public funds need to be effective stewards of those funds and be able to measure achievement."

The AT Act's Strongpoint: A Shift in Emphasis

In Ms. Buck's eyes, the legislation's strongpoint is a shift in emphasis from its 1988 and 1998 predecessors. "The legislation has morphed over the years from being a direct service bill to being a systems change bill to being some combination of the two. This most recent incarnation, at least on the surface, appears to be a direct service piece of legislation." However, she adds, "there are components that mandate systems change activity or interagency collaboration and cooperation."

The bottom line, on the surface, is skimpy for state programs: states are getting, on average, \$350,000 for their individual grants. "You can't get a lot of direct services for \$350,000, particularly when you consider the needs of large states like New York, California, Illinois, Michigan, Texas or Florida."

At first glance, she continues, "That amount of money is clearly inadequate and would not sustain AT organizations providing direct services in those states for more than a week or two." As a consequence, she says, "States need to do what they have historically done: Use the resources available under this act as a catalyst to leverage other funding sources, other partnerships, with other federally-funded entities at the state level with Medicaid, early intervention services, education agencies, vocational rehab agencies." The state AT programs, she notes, "have used these partnerships to expand programs and make more direct services available."

These partnerships help state AT programs garner needed information, Ms. Buck explains. "As they work with consumers, family members and service providers and vendors, these programs learn the system's pitfalls, what's effective and what's not." For example, "programs that continue to follow failing strategies – say, if demonstrations are seen to be ineffective in solving the problems associated with AT abandonment – will not have long-term impact; those that cope with these issues in a meaningful way will gain impact over the long haul," she says.

As state AT programs provide equipment loan programs, equipment demonstration programs and financial loan programs, they are able to identify systemic problems, Ms. Buck points out. "The state programs then use the information to collaborate with other agencies at the state and federal level to take a close look at those systemic problems and how the issues associated with those problems need to either be clarified or modified in order to improve access."

All Disability Types Are Covered

When the AT Act is compared to other related legislation, she says, "it requires the state AT programs to look at *all* people with disabilities, all ages, all disability types within all frameworks: education, healthcare, housing, the entire gamut." She adds, "There's a baseline requirement: statewide availability, all disabilities, all ages, all environments." Within that requirement, she explains, programs are required to implement four state-level activities:

Alternative financing systems, a statewide alternative financial loan program enabling consumers – including families – to obtain financing in order to acquire an AT device; *Equipment redistribution programs*, which can consist of a recycling initiative or an initiative enabling consumers to sell or donate used devices, thereby avoiding equipment abandonment or "garage sales" of unwanted AT equipment;

Equipment demonstrations, which are a crucial component of this legislation, enable consumers and families to try out a device before the device is purchased. Such demonstrations are valuable, Ms. Buck says, “because historical data show that most equipment that is abandoned or unused is not the right fit for the user, the user doesn’t like it or it’s inappropriate.” Additionally, equipment demonstrations “give access to those whose purpose it is to track AT trends and enables them to update consumers on the roll-out of new versions of equipment.” It also enables them, she continues, to advise consumers about community resources pertaining to equipment access, repair or training, the availability of alternative or comparable but less expensive devices or devices that may be more expensive but which feature additional useful options; *Equipment loan programs*, which complement the demonstration component, have already been instituted by many state AT programs, she explains. “This aspect of the legislation is an attempt to obtain more consistency among new and existing programs. The loan programs allow consumers to try out devices for a longer period of time in their natural environment.”

Many states, for example, have loan programs available at no cost to families and consumers. In Ms. Buck’s opinion, enabling consumers to borrow equipment “has a positive impact and is a key factor during the assessment period when the consumer is trying to decide what device is most appropriate.”

Seeing the equipment in a demonstration center is one thing, she declares, “but being able to take a device home, use it every day for awhile, use it in the environment in which it will be used if purchased, exposing the device to the individuals who will be providing support services for its maintenance, is very important. It also serves as a safety net for a user whose device breaks.”

Equipment loans, she continues, are especially important for a child in an educational environment. “If the child has a device that

breaks and is not being repaired, and that repair requires an extended time period, do you let the child go without anything? Or can an interim device be accessed via the loan program so that the child’s educational program is not negatively impacted by the absence of an AT device?”

Supplemental AT Act-required activities include training, awareness and advocacy as well as information on referrals.

A Resource for School Districts: A Gnat Buzzing in the Ear

The AT Act is a resource for school districts, Ms Buck observes. Many state programs have provided training for school districts and staff in terms of the role of AT. “One of the challenges is that, because of the sunset legislation, some entities have assumed that the state programs were going to disappear.”

In some cases, she adds, “AT programs have been the gnat buzzing in the ear of some state school districts and educational systems, reminding them of their responsibilities.” She continues, “Many state AT programs and state education departments and school districts have developed a wonderfully collaborative relationship and recognize that they can support each other’s activities.” Now that the state AT programs have been authorized for another six years, she points out, “the programs are viewed as being more permanent.”

However, she cautions, these are discretionary programs for which Congress must appropriate money each year for them to be able to continue. Statutorily, she notes, “these programs do have a life now. That they are perceived to have a life is key, because many of the state programs have had successful collaborations with their early intervention programs.”

Many of the children who received early intervention services when the AT Act was first passed, she notes, “are now school age. Their families know that this service is

available." These services may vary according to the state, she explains, "but families and consumers now know they have options and have somewhere to turn to get what they need and to make their needs known, whether they need a demonstration, a financial loan or training, or other services."

Permanent Change Is an Oxymoron

Six years from now, when it is required, "we hope there's another authorization, just like the Vocational Rehab Act, the Developmental Disabilities Act and IDEA." Fortunately, in the next reauthorization, she points out, sunset provisions will not be a factor.

Sunset provisions were established in the 1988 Tech Act, she notes, "because there was the assumption that the programs could have an impact and then would not be needed anymore." Since 1988, however, "there have been tremendous changes. It's like the stock market: there's progress one year and then, a couple of years later, things change. We've seen that with Medicaid." Many states, she explains, were effective in advocating with Medicaid to increase statewide coverage of AT devices such as augmentative communication. In the past couple of years, however, "states have suffered from enormous fiscal constraints where they've experienced an explosion in expenditures." As a consequence, she points out, "some states are beginning to cut back again on their state plan and coverage of AT devices and services."

Ms. Buck and directors of state AT programs have long declared that "permanent systems change is an oxymoron." She insists that there is never permanent systems change "because, by their nature, systems are always changing." Thanks to the AT Act, she says, "state AT programs now have the ability to continue working with those systems as they evolve and change."

AT Act Pluses – and Minuses

According to Ms. Buck, the AT Act "is blanket legislation that covers all devices." In fact,

she points out, "the definition of AT is so broad it can pretty much include anything that's commercially available, whether off-the-shelf or adapted to assist a person with a disability to function better."

To Ms. Buck, the most significant aspect of the new bill is the emphasis on outcomes measurement. "One of the things programs have struggled with over the years has been the lack of information about the impact of the program." Lack of information, she notes, "has negatively impacted people's views and expectations of the program." The outcomes data and data collection provisions of the AT Act, helps bridge the information gap. "This is critically important," she says, "not only for the AT program but also for other stakeholders as well, including consumers and family members, because they all need to know what's really happening and what the benefits are of these dollars."

There have been data collection requirements over the years, she explains, "but because the law has morphed and the data collection has changed frequently, there is not a good baseline of data." Many stakeholders, she adds, "still do not have a good understanding of what these programs have been achieving during the past 15 years."

While she rejoices that state AT programs will continue to exist, she laments their current pre-legislation resource-poor state. "Too much energy and time has been focused just on survival." The result has been that programs have lost an incredible amount of institutional knowledge as staffers have fled due to ongoing uncertainty regarding the programs' futures. Happily, she declares, "This is a new opportunity for the programs, their employees and their constituents."

The requirement for expenditures is the aspect of the legislation she likes the least. "That requirement is challenging," she declares. "The requirement is that programs spend 60% on the state leadership activities, 40% on the level activities, or they can take advantage of some of the flexibility requirements." The complexity of these

requirements, she predicts, “will pose accounting challenges for states.”

The Long-Term Impact

The long-term impact of the AT Act, she predicts, “will be the ability to infuse AT into other pieces of legislation so that AT becomes part of a more comprehensive approach, as opposed to a separate and distinct program.” The law currently provides for such long-term integration, she says, “but the impact of having it recognized is going to be huge in terms of transportation, housing and social security.” Part of the AT community’s long-term responsibility, she says, “is to make sure that AT continues to be viewed as a critical piece of federal and state-funded programs.”

In the wake of the AT Act’s passage, what’s the next major challenge for her and her organization’s state AT program membership? “I’ll be frank: the biggest challenge has been regrouping because the survival of programs has been questionable for the past five years. They’ve lost staff and resources. Their funding level is one-half of what it was at its peak. The challenge will be in our ability to match the expectations of other stakeholders, including consumers and family members, with what’s actually viable based on the resources that are being made available to the programs.”

The AT Act as a Watershed of Bipartisanship: Lawmakers Got the Message

When asked if she views the bipartisan support for the AT Act as representing a watershed regarding the support that the AT community can garner in Washington and at the state level, she replies, “I think that bipartisanship is a trend. There were questions about whether IDEA was going to pass. There were those who questioned whether or not it should pass. But, like the AT Act, IDEA reauthorization would not have passed without a huge effort on both sides of the aisle in both houses of Congress to get it through.”

The bipartisan support for both pieces of legislation, she points out, was generated by a nationwide grass roots effort to which legislators positively responded. “Enough people mobilized individually and as part of organizations to help Congress see that the AT Act and IDEA reauthorization were important and needed.” On all levels, she says, “these organizations and individuals reached their Congressional representatives and gave them this message: ‘We need you to work together to make this happen.’ Legislators got the message.”

The key players in the grassroots organizing effort, Ms. Buck notes, were ATAP, along with the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities “which has a technology committee comprised of other partner organizations, like Easter Seals,” and the National Association of State Protection and Advocacy Agencies, the University Centers of Excellence and the American Foundation for the Blind, among others.

During the legislative process, she recalls, the Senate convened a number of broad-based stakeholders meetings that included not only disability organizations and AT programs but also the AT Industry Association (ATIA), which represents vendors and manufacturers.

Heavily invested in these meetings, she says, were large organizations, including Microsoft, as well as other information technology groups. These groups, she adds, “have a stakehold in consumers being able to access AT and information technology, because the trend is more towards adopting principles of universal design that can benefit all people.”

The large information technology organizations were present, she says, as a result of a concerted effort to bring industry and business into the fold. “They were invited to join us and we were happy that they recognized the value of the state AT programs. They were willing to participate in the discussions and make recommendations and to see the importance of securing a continuation of the AT Act along with us.”

Section 508 Requirements Drew Corporate Support

"Section 508 brought Microsoft into the fold," she notes, referring to the 1998 amendment to the Rehabilitation Act that required Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Through the years, she explains, Microsoft, on its own, has taken the initiative to address issues associated with access for people with disabilities, as have Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Panasonic and IBM, among others. In addition, she adds, consumers with disabilities, over the years, have forcefully made their needs known to these companies.

Since Section 508 was instituted, she explains, many industries and companies have embraced it not only as a regulatory requirement "but also as something that benefits them in the long run, because meeting 508 standards results in products that are more user-friendly for everyone, which gives these companies competitive advantages in their respective marketplaces."

Bipartisan Support Must Be Nurtured

Ms. Buck anticipates that the foundation of bipartisan support in Congress and an expanding base of grassroots support for AT issues will continue to evolve long after the initial glow from the recent Congressional legislative successes has dimmed. "It's not going to happen without work. Speaking from an organizational perspective, our job is just beginning. We were successful in getting the legislation passed but now, in building coalitions at the state and national levels, we need to make sure that AT continues to be recognized as a critical component. It's a tough job but I truly believe that all our stakeholders are up to it."



ARTICLES

Victory for Millions of People with Disabilities Who Strive for Independence

Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)
press release, October 27, 2004

This press release covers the highlights of the Assistive Technology Act, signed into law October 26, 2004. ATAP is a national, member-based organization comprised of state Assistive Technology Programs funded under the Assistive Technology Act.

<http://www.ataporg.org/>

The Assistive Technology Act of 2004: Putting Technology into the Hands of Individuals with Disabilities.

House Education on Education and the Workforce Committee, October 2004
This legislative summary, produced by a U.S. House of Representatives committee, encapsulates the contents of the AT Act.

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/108th/education/at/billsummary.htm>

Assistive Technology Act of 2004 Passes Congress — Awaits President's Signature!

Washington Watch: Volume 2, Issue 9 -
October 14, 2004

This is a brief, compact and easily understandable summary of the AT Act following the legislation's passage in the U.S. Senate. For more information, contact:

The Arc and UCP Public Policy Collaboration
1660 L Street, NW, Suite 700

Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: (202) 776-0406

Fax: (202) 776-0414

E-Mail: publicpolicy@ucp.org

www.ucp.org

http://www.ucp.org/ucp_generaldoc.cfm/1/8/33/12109-12435/5826

Bill to Help Individuals with Disabilities Gets Final Congressional OK

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, October 9, 2004

This concise yet comprehensive legislative summary was produced by the staff of a U.S.

Senate committee in the wake of that chamber's passage of the AT Act.
http://www.cec.sped.org/committee_101304.html

Assistive Technology Act Fact Sheet
The Arc/UCP Public Policy Collaboration, July 2004
2004 Issue Fact Sheets
This backgrounder is a comprehensive effort to summarize the AT Act's highlights while also including historical context.
http://www.ucp.org/ucp_generaldoc.cfm/1/11904/11904/11904-11904/4525

WEBSITES

Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. (NLS)

NLS provides free legal services to persons with low-income and individuals with disabilities. It also provides technical assistance and support services. While the majority of NLS services are provided within Erie County, New York, the organization also provides disability-related services for western New York and operates both a statewide and national AT advocacy project to assist persons with disabilities and the advocates and agencies that serve them. NLS will not provide legal advice over the Internet.

For more information, contact:
Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.
295 Main Street, Rm. 495
Buffalo, New York 14203 Tel: (716) 847-0650
Fax: (716) 847-0227
TTY: (716) 847-1322
Email: nls@nls.org
<http://www.disabilitylawcenter.org/>

National Organization on Disability (NOD)

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) provides a wide range of resources and information on increasing the participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

National Organization on Disability
910 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006

Phone: (202) 293-5960; (202) 293-5968 (TTY)
Fax: (202) 293-7999
Email: ability@nod.org
<http://www.nod.org/about/>

Oregon Disabilities Commission (ODC)

Created by the Oregon Legislative Assembly in 1985, the commission advocates on behalf of Oregonians with disabilities. Featured on the ODC website are two online Technical Assistance and Information Centers where access can be gained to more than 1,200 documents relating to people with disabilities, including documents on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), specific disabilities, technology and other topics. For more information, contact:

Oregon Disabilities Commission
1257 Ferry St. S.E.
Salem, OR97301-4278
Phone: (800) 358-3117; (503) 378-3142
Fax: (503) 378-3599
Email: odc@state.or.us
<http://www.odc.state.or.us/>



KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS



Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)

ATAP is the national voice of state Assistive Technology Act programs. The organization was established in 1997 to provide support to state AT Program members. ATAP facilitates the coordination of state AT Programs nationally and provides technical assistance and support to its members. ATAP identifies accessible information technology and AT-related issues that affect the provision of and access to information and assistive technologies at the state and local

level. The organization develops partnerships with other national disability, service provider and advocacy groups.

For more information on ATAP, contact:
Deborah Buck, Executive Director
Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs
PO Box 32
Delmar, NY 12054
Phone: (518) 439-1263(Voice/TTY)
Fax: (518) 439.3451
<http://www.ataporg.org/index.asp>

Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities

The Advocacy Center provides protection and advocacy services in Florida. The center supplies services under the following eight federally-funded programs: Protection and Advocacy System for Persons with Developmental Disabilities; Client Assistance; Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness; Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights; Technology Assistance; Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injuries; and Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access.

The organization also publishes Ten Steps to Being an Effective Self-Advocate and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title 1.

For further information on the Advocacy Center, contact:
Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities
2671 Executive Center Circle West, Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32301-5092
Phone: (800) 342-0823; (850) 488-9071;
(800) 346-4127 (TDD)
Fax: (850) 488-8640
Email: info@advocacycenter.org
<http://www.advocacycenter.org>

Disability Law Center (Utah)



The Disability Law Center helps assure that persons with disabilities in Utah have access

to needed AT and related services through the healthcare system, including Medicaid, Medicaid HMOs, Medicare, and private insurance plans. Services are statewide and free of charge to all eligible individuals in Utah.

The work of the Disability Law Center focuses on four long-range goals:

- People with disabilities will be free from abuse and neglect
- People with disabilities will receive appropriate services
- People with disabilities will be free from discrimination
- People with disabilities will have equal employment opportunities.
- The law center's AT team addresses the following issues:
 - Access to adequate evaluations and assessments for AT needs
 - The high cost of AT, which often places it far out of reach for individuals without insurance coverage - and insurance often denies coverage
 - Constant changing nature of the technology and its impact on AT availability
 - Ensuring access to ongoing supports and services for AT training and repairs
 - Five-year outcomes include:
 - Ensuring that individuals denied access to needed AT have information on their due process rights
 - Representing individuals denied AT in the administrative appeals process and through potential class action litigation.
 - Collaborating with Utah Assistive Technology Program, Independent Living Centers, and the Vision 2000 AT work group to ensure that systemic barriers addressed

For additional information about the center, contact:

Fraser Nelson, Executive Director
Disability Law Center
at the Community Legal Center
205 North 400 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
Phone: (800) 662-9080 (Voice); (800) 550-4182 (TTY)
Fax: (801) 363-1437
<http://www.disabilitylawcenter.org/>



American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

AAPD, the largest national nonprofit cross-disability member organization in the U.S. States, works to achieve economic self-sufficiency and political empowerment for individuals with disabilities. The association collaborates with other disability organizations to advocate for full implementation and enforcement of disability nondiscrimination laws, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

AAPD focuses on five core programs: National Disability Mentoring Day; Disability Vote Project; the Paul G. Hearne AAPD Leadership Awards; the Henry B. Betts Award; and the AAPD Congressional Internship Program.

For further information on AAPD, contact: American Association of People with Disabilities

1629 K Street NW, Suite 503

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: (202) 457-0046; (800) 840-8844

Fax: (202) 457-0473

Email: aapd@aol.com

<http://www.aapd-dc.org/>

Arizona Center for Disability Law

The Arizona Center for Disability Law protects the legal rights of individuals with a wide range of physical, mental, psychiatric, sensory and cognitive disabilities.

The law center:

- Provides information on legal rights
- Represents individuals in negotiations or in administrative proceedings and court
- Investigates abuse and neglect
- Provides outreach and training on legal rights and self-advocacy

- Brings impact litigation to remedy systemic problems

As part of the nationwide protection and advocacy (P&A) system, the law center provides free legal services under several major incentives: Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI); Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD); Client Assistance Program (CAP); Assistive Technology Advocacy Program; Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR); Protection and Advocacy for Social Security Beneficiaries (PABSS); Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI); and Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA).

For more information on the law center, contact:

Arizona Center for Disability Law

100 North Stone Ave., Suite 305

Tucson, AZ 85701

Phone: (520) 327-9547; (800) 922-1447

Fax: (520) 884-0992

Email: center@acdl.com

<http://www.acdl.com/>

Assistive Technology Advocacy Center of NJP&A (ATAC)



Incorporated in 1994, NJP&A was subsequently designated by the governor of New Jersey to serve as the state's protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities. As the protection and advocacy system, NJP&A operates nine federally funded programs. The center seeks to overcome systemic barriers and to make AT more accessible to individuals with disabilities throughout New Jersey. ATAC provides educational programs, technical support, information and referral, and supports an AT device recycling program.

For more information on the center, contact: Assistive Technology Advocacy Center of NJP&A

210 South Broad Street, 3rd Floor
Trenton, NJ 08608
Phone: (609) 292-9742; (609) 633-7106
(TDD)
Fax: (609) 777-0187
Email: advocate@njpanda.orh
<http://www.njpanda.org>



Center for Public Representation (CPR)

Founded 30 years ago, CPR is a self-sufficient public interest law firm promoting quality of life improvement for individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts while pursuing systemic enforcement of legal rights on a statewide and national basis. The center's primary purpose is to serve people who have or are considered to have disabilities. CPR also aids, to a limited extent, other individuals whom it perceives are institutionalized, discriminated against, or otherwise denied fundamental human rights.

The center's experienced staff of attorneys and paralegals:

- Promotes positive change in the systems that serve people with disabilities
- Protects the rights of individuals with disabilities
- Provides support, consultation and technical assistance to people with disabilities and their advocates
- Publishes books and articles
- Disseminates information that influences mental health law and disability law

For additional information on the center, contact:

Center for Public Representation
22 Green Street

Northampton, MA 01060

Phone: (413) 586-6024

Fax: (413) 566-5711

Contact: Steven J. Schwartz, Executive Director

Email: info@cpr-ma.org

<http://www.centerforpublicrep.org>

Comprehensive Advocacy, Inc. (CO-AD)



Co-Ad is a private non-profit legal services organization designated by the governor of Idaho as that state's protection and advocacy system. Founded in 1977, Co-Ad is the only legal rights organization in Idaho

exclusively for people with disabilities. The organization operates federally funded grant programs to protect the legal rights of persons with disabilities. The terms of these grants allow Co-Ad to serve only individuals fitting into specific federal eligibility categories.

Most Co-Ad services are provided to clients free of charge. Those services include:

- Information and referral, a referral to another agency and information on client rights
- Short term assistance, discussions with clients to expedite problem resolution; discussions may include self-advocacy coaching, explaining the system, or providing legal advice
- Administrative remedies, appealing a decision within an agency or facility without going to court
- Negotiation/Mediation, participation in problem resolution discussions with appropriate agencies or facilities
- Legal services, representation by an attorney in a court of law

For more information on Co-Ad, contact:
Comprehensive Advocacy, Inc. (Co-Ad)
4477 Emerald Street, Suite B-100
Boise, ID 83706

Phone: (866) 262-3462; (208) 336-5353
(Voice/TDD)

Fax: (208) 336-5396

Email: coadinc@cablone.net

<http://www.users.moscow.com/co-ad/>



Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

DREDF is a prominent national law and policy center in disability civil rights. Founded in 1979 by an alliance of adults with disabilities

and parents of children with disabilities, DREDF chose its name to align the organization with the tradition of other civil rights legal defense funds, including the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. DREDF offers education, training and technical assistance to persons with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, lawyers, service providers and policy makers on disability civil rights laws and policies. Since the passage of the ADA in 1990, DREDF has provided training on this law to over 45,000 people nationwide, annually providing an additional 13,000 people with information about their legal rights.

DREDF is a nationally recognized leader in designing and carrying out the strategies by which Congress is educated about the need for laws and regulations establishing the civil rights of people with disabilities, including the Handicapped Children's Protection Act, the Civil Rights Restoration Act, the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, and the IDEA Amendments Act and the recently passed AT Act.

DREDF carries out advocacy efforts on behalf of adults and children with disabilities. Each year DREDF provides substantial assistance to over 400 people in securing their rights.

The organization represents clients, serves as co-counsel, and files amicus briefs in the appellate courts and the U.S. Supreme Court. DREDF has been involved in almost all of the disability rights cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. At any given time, DREDF is handling an average of 25 cases. For 10 years DREDF has run a disability rights legal clinic in collaboration with local law schools.

For additional information on DREDF, contact: Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

1629 K Street, NW, Suite 802

Washington, DC 20006

Phone: (202) 966-0375

Fax: (202) 775-7465

Contact: Julia Epstein, Director of Communications

Email: dredf@dredf.org

<http://www.dredf.org>



National Council on Disability (NCD)

NCD is an independent federal agency that makes recommendations to the President and Congress on disability issues. All 15 NCD members are presidential appointees confirmed by the U.S. Senate. In its 1986 report, *Toward Independence*, NCD first proposed that Congress should enact a civil rights law for individuals with disabilities.

Four years later, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law.

NCD promotes equality for all those with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of an individual's disability.

The council is currently producing a series of reports, entitled *Investing in Independence*, that interrelate with centerpiece initiatives presented in President Bush's New Freedom Initiative. These reports focus on Universal Design in formation and AT, consumer oriented and directed healthcare, long-term healthcare and effective return-to-work strategies.

For more information on NCD, contact:

National Council on Disabilities

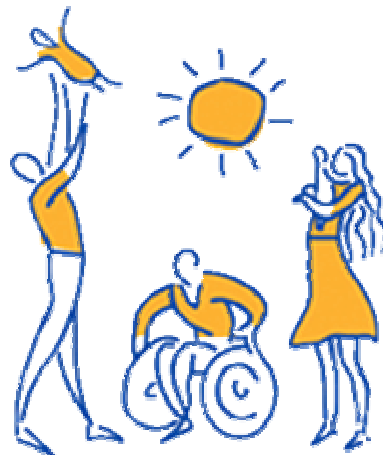
1331 F Street, NW, Suite 850

Washington, DC 20004

Phone: (202) 272-2004; (202) 2074 (TTY)

Fax: (202) 274-2022

<http://www.ncd.gov>



Join the Family Center's January online discussion of

Family and Cultural Issues in the Delivery of AT Services

Led by

Dr. Phil Parette,

Director of the Special Education
Assistive Technology Center at
Illinois State University
and

Tom Nurse,

Project Director of the Transition/Independent Living/Employment/Support (TILES)
at the Family Network on Disabilities of Florida.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about the influence of family values and cultural perspectives on assistive technology decision-making and outcomes.

Supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the month-long discussion is free to participants.

We look forward to seeing you online!

January 3 - January 28, 2005

<http://www.fctd.info>

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