MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES

TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

2014 Annual Update
Message from the Acting Secretary, MD Department of Disabilities

Assistive Technology continues to make the impossible a new and ever-changing idea. Whether it is a new app, device, or prototype, technology changes the lives of Marylanders with disabilities and their families every day. The Maryland Department of Disabilities Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) is proud to continue its commitment to provide the newest and most trusted assistive technology to our citizens. Through access to demonstrations, short term device loans, financing, or training, MDTAP helps make it possible for Marylanders with disabilities to access the technology they need to lead the lives they choose within their communities.

George P. Failla, Jr.

Message from the Executive Director, MDTAP

Driven by our mission to increase across-the-state access to assistive technology, the Maryland Department of Disabilities Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) launched a number of new initiatives in 2014, including monthly public tours of the MDTAP AT Library, expansion of the Equipment Link website service by appointing an MDTAP staff member to individually facilitate each device exchange, and producing and publishing a series of short videos demonstrating a variety of assistive technology apps. These expansions, and many more, have stemmed out of the awareness that assistive technology makes it possible for all people to live, work and learn more independently.

As we plan for a new year, we are excited to share the progress that we’ve made in 2014. Please take a moment to see how a small program can directly impact change on the lives of Marylanders by providing assistive technology demonstrations, device loans, access to refurbished/recycled assistive technology, financial loans for equipment, and much more. Enjoy!

Jim McCarthy
Our Mission

To enhance the lives of all Marylanders with disabilities, older Marylanders, and their families by helping support access to assistive technology (AT) devices and services.

MDTAP Staff

Keyonna Baker, Assistant Director of Assistive Technology Loan Program
Tanya Goodman, Director of Assistive Technology Loan Program
Lori Markland, Director of Communications, Outreach and Program Development
Jim McCarthy, Executive Director
Denise Schuler, Assistive Technology Specialist
Provi Sharpe, Director of Emergency Management and Reuse Projects
Joel Zimba, Special Projects Coordinator

MDTAP Advisory Council

Laura Ann Corbett, Consumer Representative
Melissa Day, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services Representative
Michael Fitzpatrick, Consumer Representative
Patricia Foley, Center for Independent Living Representative
Marni Greenspoon, Maryland Disability Law Center Representative
Joshua Irzyk, Maryland State Department of Education Representative
Regina Lee, Consumer Representative/Alternative Financing Liaison
Amy Mason, Consumer Representative
Carolynnette Snowden, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation Representative
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SEEING & TRYING AT THROUGH DEMONSTRATIONS & LOANS

During 2014, MDTAP and its regional partners expanded its reach to provide more assistive technology demonstrations and loans than previous years. We also increased access to AT Library information via the MDTAP website by expanding the Virtual AT Library and the Apps, Apps and more Apps online catalog of assistive apps on the market.

Apps, Apps and more Apps online catalog includes pricing, product descriptions and direct links to iTunes and/or Google store.

MDTAP and its regional partners provided equipment demonstrations to 554 consumers during 2014.

MDTAP and its regional partners provided 196 assistive technology equipment loans to 147 Marylanders during 2014.
Land Surveyor, Albert Snyder, wasn’t ready to retire when he received a diagnosis of rod-cone dystrophy in 2009, at the age of 72. A few years later, an additional diagnosis of glaucoma made it increasingly difficult for him to continue running his business. With both his sight and balance deteriorating from vision disabilities, Mr. Snyder decided that he needed to find ways to continue drafting legal documents, surveying land and utilizing industry-wide software programs.

With a referral from his eye doctors at Wilmer Eye Institute, Mr. Snyder learned about video magnifiers. And after making a desktop magnifier purchase on his own, he started looking into other assistive technology options. With a referral from a friend, he contacted Denise Schuler at MDTAP to learn about other types of AT that could help him continue running his business. In October 2013, Mr. Snyder visited the AT Library to take part in a demonstration of AT devices including the Pebble and DaVinci magnifiers. Deciding to borrow a few items to try at his office, he was especially interested in the magnifier that could both read out the text as well as magnify, “I read legal descriptions on the land I survey, and those I am now able to read on the magnifying machine. It makes it a lot easier.”

In addition to magnification items, he was also interested in two software programs - ZoomText for help with the contrast on his land-surveyor program software, and Dragon Naturally Speaking to help with drafting land descriptions and emails. “The Dragon enables me to write legal descriptions and the ZoomText gives me better access to the software I use because of the contrast issues I have.”

Although he hasn’t made a final decision yet on which magnifier he plans to purchase, he’s already investing in both software programs. And now, at 77, Albert Snyder plans to continue working and running his business, with a little assistance from some “very helpful devices.”
BUYING AT THROUGH FINANCIAL LOANS & EQUIPMENT REUSE

Ensuring affordable access to assistive technology is a key component of MDTAP’s mission. To achieve this, MDTAP offers two low-interest financial loan programs, the Assistive Technology Loan Program and the WorkABILITY Loan Program, to Marylanders needing to finance technology for school, home or work. From hearing aids to adapted vehicles, iPads to home modifications, MDTAP offers a low cost option for buying AT.

"Ms. Goodman, I cannot thank you enough for all your help! It was a long process from the first application to now but well worth it!!"

Lisa E.

“I assumed that this process would be much more difficult. I'm so glad that I was wrong."

Moses B.
For more than 15 years, Adam BunduKamara tried to "work around" his hearing loss, afraid of the impact it would have on his life. Isolating himself from family and friends, Adam was keenly aware of how others perceived his hearing impairment, "Often, I would not hear someone who was speaking to me outside of my line of sight, so I would appear to be ignoring them. Many times, after asking a speaker to repeat themselves or speak louder, I would just give up and plain stop listening." And unfortunately, after his diagnosis, the situation became even more difficult as Adam was suddenly more aware of how bad his hearing had become and that it wasn't going to improve.

Working as an IT Specialist, Adam's job lends itself to a solitary environment, but the inability to hear clearly during work events or meetings created a great deal of concern, "My hearing loss has caused a lot of stress when it comes to thinking about having to work with others. Knowing that I cannot clearly hear all that they say has always been a source of fear, embarrassment and anger." And when it came time to explore options to help with improving his hearing, Adam was hesitant, "I never quite felt comfortable with financing such high priced and delicate equipment, so I just lived without." However, a few months ago, after more than 15 years of hearing loss, Adam decided it was time to pursue the purchase of hearing aids. With that decision, he approached the WorkABILITY Loan Program to finance his first-ever unit of hearing aids and other assistive listening equipment.

Financing a set of Phonak Audeo Q90 units, Adam has noticed a significant change in how he hears both at work and outside of work, "my hearing aids help me...allowing me to hear more when I attend meetings. As well, there are many people whom I had previously avoided interacting with mainly because they spoke too softly or at a frequency which was difficult for me to hear. This has all helped me to hear the important information." And now that Adam has adjusted to life with hearing aids, he is looking back on his experience acquiring AT and utilizing the WorkABILITY Loan Program, "I waited too long to take advantage of this option...from application to approval to disbursement, I felt well taken care of. I never felt as if I was actually applying to receive a loan. "


As another component to improving affordable access to assistive technology, MDTAP maintains and supports reuse activities, such as device refurbishing, recycling, exchanging, and long term loans. By maintaining the online equipment exchange website, www.EquipmentLink.org, and supporting other exchange activities, MDTAP is ensuring that Marylanders have access to low cost or free gently used assistive technology and medical equipment.

“I recommend MDTAP whenever I talk to someone who has equipment they are no longer using. I would rather keep something in my basement until I find a new good home than throw anything away. Not everyone has this luxury and time can be a big problem for people who need to get rid of equipment no longer in use.”

_Amanda Cheong, Director of AT Discount Sales & Services LLC_

Utilized MDTAP’s Equipment Reuse program to identify an organization to take, refurbish and donate back out a Rifton Activity Chair.
ACCESSING AT THROUGH TRAININGS, PUBLIC AWARENESS, I&R

Trainings
MDTAP and its regional partners provided trainings to 830 Marylanders during 2014.

Public Awareness
More than 129,000 Marylanders received information about assistive technology from MDTAP and its regional partners during 2014.

Information & Assistance
Over 1000 individuals contacted MDTAP and its regional partners during 2014. Each of these requests was handled individually by staff.

Key Outreach Events from 2014

- 24th Annual ADA Anniversary Celebration
- Annual Baby Boomers and Seniors Expo
- BISM Seniors Possibilities Fair
- Maryland Youth Leadership Forum
- Maryland Transitioning Youth Conference
- Web Accessibility Training Day
- World of Possibilities Expo
ACCESSING AT THROUGH Social Media & Outreach

The Maryland Technology Assistance Program utilizes key social media platforms to share information on local, national, and global assistive technology initiatives.

The Maryland Technology Assistance Program Facebook page has over 260 followers, with fans ranging from Marylanders to residents of Nepal, Lebanon, Nigeria, Australia and other countries across the world. We use Facebook to share information on upcoming events, local assistive technology news, and relevant AT services.

@MDTAP Key followers include television celebrity Montel Williams, MPT News, Congressman Steny Hoyer, technology news giants Reddit & Digg, and nearly 400 other followers. We utilize Twitter to share assistive technology news and articles as they publish in real time.

MDTAPVideo is the YouTube channel for MDTAP. We use this platform to share short videos reviewing some of the newest and/or popular apps and assistive technology devices on the market. Check out our fully captioned and described videos to see AT in action. We’ve had over 200 views in 2014 alone!

“Where It’s AT” is MDTAP’s highly successful blog with over 6,000 views to date. From Mystery Mondays to Weekly Wrap Up Fridays, we cover vital topics and current AT news. Learn about free webinars, new prototypes, tips for website accessibility and lots more, every day of the week.
THE YEAR IN HIGHLIGHTS 2014

AT:LAST closes; AT Discount Sales & Services Opens

Although MDTAP was sorry to see AT:LAST (MDTAP’s Western regional contractor) close its doors on June 30th of 2014, we were happy to help support the creation of AT Discount Sales & Services, LLC, a newly established company that provides assistive technology discounts to schools, individuals and organizations purchasing assistive technology across the state of Maryland.

Holly Center, Inc. (HCI) becomes Bay Area Center for Independent Living (BACIL)

Holly Center, Inc., MDTAP’s Eastern Shore regional contractor, was awarded a grant in 2014 to serve as the independent living center serving all nine counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Changing their name from HCI to BACIL, the new organization will continue to provide assistive technology services to the region, while expanding its independent living role.

MDTAP Partners with NFB to host the Bi-Annual Web Accessibility Training Day

2014 brought another Bi-Annual Web Accessibility Training Day hosted by the National Federation of the Blind and the Maryland Technology Assistance Program. This year included technical and policy tracks, 6 breakout sessions, and over 180 attendees from state agencies, organizations, universities and private industry.

MDTAP Interagency Partnerships

MDTAP provided support to NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center by participating in site visits and consultation to help NASA establish an assistive technology lending library for employees. This library will be used to educate staff on a variety of devices for a wide range of disabilities and make equipment available for trying before purchase.
MDTAP CONTACTS AND PARTNERS 2014

MDTAP is located in Central Baltimore and serves all of Central, Western and Southern Maryland. The Eastern Shore is served with the help of the Bay Area Center for Independent Living (BACIL).

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