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## **Abandonment of Assistive Technology**

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It is easy to see how the benefits of technology can impact an individual's life. However, one of the greatest difficulties encountered in technology today is its rate of abandonment. According to a study done by a group called Matching Persons to Technology, and reported at the 1999 CSUN Conference, the rate of technology abandonment is as high as 75% to 80%. The reasons found were:

1. Technology was not well matched to the individual need. One of the most important aspects of successful applications of AT is the match the child to the technology not the match the technology to the child. Before technology is considered it is most important for the professionals and family who are working with the child, to set realistic goals for the child, which should be tied to the IEP.
2. Little or no training was provided. After assistive technology equipment has been provided it is very important for someone to be identified who will be responsible to set up, train and support everyone involved or working with the child, especially the family. This should minimize the risk of abandonment and wasteful spending on devices that cannot be used.
3. Families not accepting of the technology. When families are included on the assistive technology decision making team they may be more likely to support assistive technology recommendations. Technical support is vital, and schools must be willing to offer training and technical assistance to the families of students using assistive technology.
4. School or workplace not accepting of the technology. With technical support and training for the user of AT, and those involved with the user of the AT, the chances of the school or workplace accepting the technology is greater. Technical assistance provided should include; how the device is programmed or set up; how to recognize and fix minor problems; how to incorporate the device into the child's daily life; and information on maintenance and who is responsible for repair.



Michigan's Assistive Technology Resource is an IDEA Mandated Activity Project offered through the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

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Ways to minimize or eliminate abandonment are:

- First a long-term goal should be established. This long-term goal is usually reflected in the individual transition plan. The long-term goal does not have to be set in stone; it can always be modified if progress toward it indicates. It is essential however, to have a long-term goal in mind before a path can be planned for anyone (challenged or not). With the long-term goal in mind, prioritizing the steps necessary to move toward it will help to set the short-term goals and objectives
- The assessment team should always have an occupational therapist or a physical therapist if there is physical involvement and a speech-language pathologist if there are communication issues. The team should also include a teacher, an educational specialist and/or an AT consultant. The team should include anyone that has a significant role in the student's life functions or activities. No matter who is on the team there needs to be at least one individual who is knowledgeable about assistive technology .
- One person should always be formally appointed to manage the case. He/she should be responsible for making sure that the assessments have been performed and then coordinate a group meeting to discuss the findings and plan the appropriate action. After the individual goals are established, adaptations needed to reach those goals can then be considered.



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