



ILLINOIS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



A statewide nonprofit agency that has been responsible for implementing the Assistive Technology Act in Illinois since 1989.

Three overlapping geometric shapes: a purple rectangle, a yellow parallelogram, and a red rectangle.

Community Living. Education. Employment.

Note of Thanks

I send this note to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation regarding the much-needed Smart Home program services provided within my home. The coordinators were absolutely amazing and very customer focused, friendly and professional.

I have many challenges with my Multiple Sclerosis condition and with the services provided made through this program, I feel less stressed and my challenges are more manageable.

Once again, I have greatly appreciated the services, the customer care and the outcome of the provided services. In light of all that's going on in the world today, it is quite comforting to know that such programs are assisting those of us with daily disability challenges during this time. To have programs and all that the IATP offers is absolutely appreciated. Above and beyond results were delivered with Excellence.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you.

Maria

I appreciate the opportunity to be a recipient of the iPad. It does help one feel a bit more connected to the world around them. It offers plenty of opportunity to stay in contact with distant family members, has an unlimited amount of reading articles and pertinent information on a multitude of subjects and plenty of games and puzzles to entertain one should one need to break up some of the quiet times. So, thank you.

Marita



I want to thank you for everything
I cried I did not think there was
anyone who cared. But I was wrong.
Thank you again and God bless you.

Russell

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► In Memoriam



Suzanne "Susy" Woods

June 11, 1948 – December 8, 2023

Champion and Advocate for Children with Disabilities

Beloved Family Member, Friend, and Colleague

Susy Woods was an unstoppable force. Her life's passion was advocating for individuals with disabilities. She served as an Educational Advocate for 42 years, working with Early Intervention, serving as the Director of Disability Services at the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS), and the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) as a Public Policy and Education Liaison.

Susy assisted countless families with Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. It was important to Susy that parents were an equal partner in their child's educational experience and imparted her knowledge and inspiration to families, educators, and colleagues.

Susy was a registered lobbyist, working to represent individuals with disabilities. She served on many boards, committees, and councils representing disability groups. Her loss will be felt deeply.



"What an amazing advocate. She taught me so much and I carry her lessons with me as I continue to advocate for my child. Bless her family and friends as they move through such a difficult time."

– Buffy Lael-Wolf

"Illinois has lost one of its most incredible disability advocates, Susy Woods. Our thoughts go out to her family, friends, and colleagues at this time. The impact Susy had on the experiences of families and students in the educational system is immeasurable. Thank you, Susy."

– Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center

"This lady was an absolute Godsend to our family! She helped to navigate the world of IEP and rights for our autistic son. She will be missed by so many. God sure did get an angel with this one!"

– Karen Schreiber-Miller

"Susy Kauling Woods changed the course of our lives with her guidance and advocacy. I will be forever grateful for her kindness and expertise."

– Cathie Morgan

"Charlotte Cronin called me in the early 2000s to ask a favor. Charlotte was directing the Arc of Illinois' Family Support Network then. She wanted me to allow a friend to intern with me for the upcoming Spring session of the General Assembly. Her friend was a graduate student at the University of Illinois-Springfield who completed the Partners in Policy program with Charlotte. She would be doing the internship for credit hours only. I agreed, and once I met the intern, I knew I had made a great decision. The intern was Susy Woods.

Susy was clearly not a typical intern! For one thing, our relationship lasted years rather than just one semester. For another, her education and life experiences gave her unique insights into the policy issues and legislative process. Unlike most interns, she was not just running errands and learning on the fly; Susy and I became a great team.

Our friendship continued to grow stronger over the years. In addition, Susy and I worked closely on many of her special education cases. She was always supportive of my work and encouraged me to become a due process hearing officer for ISBE. We talked, texted, and emailed almost every day, including weekends, about many different subjects, both personal and professional.

Like everyone else, I miss Susy and think of her often. She was a uniquely amazing person."

– Phil Milsch, J.D.

IATP Public Policy and Education Liaison

"Susy has been a tremendous inspiration both personally and professionally to so many people with disabilities. Susy has an enormous amount of knowledge but more importantly she has an equal amount of empathy and caring for those for she advocates."

– Excerpt From Susy's nomination for the
"Mabley Volunteer of the Year Award, 2006"



ILLINOIS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

► What We Do

Our mission is to provide Illinoisans of all ages with disabilities and health conditions with greater access to assistive technology (AT) devices and services so that they may enhance their independence and participation in all aspects of life.

Who We Serve

- Illinois residents of all ages with disabilities and/or health conditions including family members, friends, caregivers, and service providers
- Community, social, and youth organizations
- Large and small businesses
- State agencies and local governments

Our AT Act Activities

- AT Demonstration
- Device Loan
- AT Reuse
- State Financing Activities – Illinois Care Connections (ICC), Makers, Smart Home, Tech Kitchen and Open Ended Loans (OEL)
- Training
- Technical Assistance
- Information and Assistance
- Public Awareness/Outreach

Other Services Provided Through Leveraged Funding

- Servicing Illinois State Board Education (ISBE) with device loan, assistive technology (AT), and alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) Evaluation Services
- AT & Home Modification Evaluations for Vocational Rehabilitation and Home Services (Illinois Department of Human Services)
- Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)
- Center for Assistive Technology Act Data Assistance (CATADA) (Administration for Community Living)

► Board of Directors



Rita Howells
M.S. ED
Board President



Barbara Doyle
Vice President



Dave Perez
Treasurer



Brian Dowd
Secretary



Mo Buti



Horacio Esparza



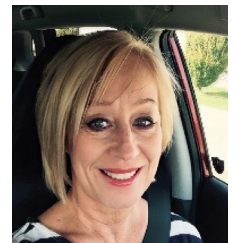
Michael Knepler



Sharon Ruda



Colten Skinner



Sue Walter

► Advisory Council

IATP has an advisory council specifically for the State Assistive Technology Act Program funding it receives. It is a 58% consumer-majority advisory council that reflects the diversity of the state in terms of disability, age, ethnicity, and geographic location. The 26-member Advisory Council consists of 11 individuals representing state agencies or other disability related organizations, and 15 council members who are individuals with disabilities that use AT and/or are family members or guardians of those who do. The advisory council reviews performance measures and provides programmatic input.

► Demonstrations

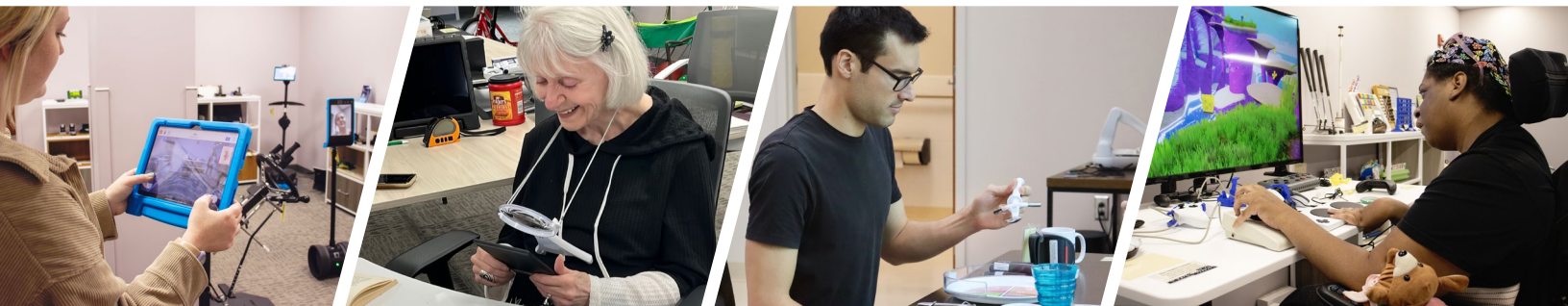
Device demonstrations are personal appointments with an assistive technology specialist that provide an opportunity to discuss your needs, learn about possible AT solutions, and compare and contrast different AT devices, their features, and possible benefits for the user. The AT Demonstration Center provides the potential user with the information they need to make informed choices regarding what will best meet their needs. In addition to device demonstrations, the AT Demonstration Center offers tours for individuals, families, service providers, students, businesses, civic groups, and anyone interested in learning more about the uses and benefits of assistive technology.

Demonstration Highlights

1,242 Demonstrations

2,439 Participants

1,382 AT Devices in IATP Demo Center



Device Loan Highlights

2,939 Devices
Loaned

2,024 Borrowers

1,350 of the Loans
Were to Schools

► Device Loan

IATP's Device Loan Program provides FREE, 6-week loans of assistive technology devices to consumers, family members, and professionals for use at home, school, work, and in the community. Loans are used to assist in decision making, evaluations, as backups when equipment is being repaired, and other short-term needs. Device inventory is updated regularly to ensure that consumers have access to the most current technology.

Targeted Device Loan for Education

IATP has a targeted device loan program funded through a grant with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Grant funding for devices allow students ages 3-22 to borrow devices for 6 weeks after evaluations to determine if they meet the student's educational needs.

A Journey with Friends through IATP

Jesse's journey with IATP began when his friend Deb referred him here to explore alternative augmentative communication (AAC) solutions. Currently nonspeaking due to throat cancer treatments, Jesse was using pen and paper for communication, which was very limiting. At IATP, he was able to utilize multiple programs and was guided by a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) in the Demonstration (Demo) Center during his first visit. Together, they found an AAC app that fit his needs. Before obtaining the app, Jesse borrowed an AAC device from the Device Loan program. He then worked with the Illinois Care Connections program to get an iPad with the AAC app he found with the SLP.

Now, Jesse uses AAC technology to communicate in various environments, including preaching to his church congregation, talking over the phone and on Zoom to family, and giving his dog commands. IATP is proud to be a part of Jesse's communication journey!

On Jesse's first visit to the Demo Center, Deb was also present. Deb is a retired educator who first found out about IATP through an online search, knowing previously that AAC-type devices are available and would be helpful to Jesse. When at the Demo Center, Deb realized there were devices there she would also benefit from. She has tremors and learned about many devices that would help her daily life. At first, she looked at writing aids and got a weighted pen from the Reuse Program. Then, Deb visited a second time to look at kitchen aids and obtained an adaptive cutting board from the Reuse Program.

Jesse and Deb are so thankful to IATP for helping them. Deb wrote, "Your [patience and] time given to us both is thoroughly appreciated and will make a difference for Jesse's and my life."



Smart Spoon Helps with Confidence to Eat Out



Laurie received a tremor stabilizing smart spoon from the Reuse Program at IATP. She has an essential tremor in her dominant hand. Before receiving this, Laurie would choose finger foods when eating out and rarely ate foods like pasta or soup. Using this spoon has allowed her to “enjoy these simple pleasures again.” The biggest issue for Laurie is remembering to bring the spoon with her when she goes out to eat. Laurie said, “Thank you IATP for allowing me this opportunity to enjoy meals I generally avoid!”

In the future, Laurie hopes to work with IATP Maker’s Program. When she goes out to eat, the utensil is hard to place on the side of a plate or bowl when eating. Similar to using a regular spoon or fork, she wants to rest

her spoon near her dishware without making a mess. The Maker’s Program will help Laurie with a custom utensil holder for eating out.

► Reuse

IATP’s Reuse Program provides new and gently used assistive technology (AT) and durable medical equipment (DME) to people in Illinois of all ages with disabilities who can’t afford to purchase new or are waiting for AT/DME to be covered by insurance. The recipient may keep the equipment for as long as needed.

Types of Equipment Available:

- Mobility, seating, and positioning (i.e. wheelchairs, walkers, knee scooters, etc.)
- Daily living devices including personal care
- Vision
- Hearing
- Communication devices
- Computer access devices
- Home adaptations (i.e. portable ramp)

Reuse Highlights

2,049 Illinois Consumers

3,120 Reuse Devices on Long-Term Loan

\$1,045,544 Saved

► Trainings

IATP offers a wide range of training opportunities for individuals with disabilities, community members, organizations, and professionals. The goal of our trainings is to increase participants' knowledge, skills, and competencies related to assistive technology. Training can be provided in-person or through video conferencing and can be customized based on the needs of the requesting group.

Training Highlights

321 Trainings

926 Participants

► ICT Training

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a term applied to a diverse set of technological tools and resources including electronic documents, websites, mobile apps, and equipment such as computers, tablets, smart phones, and information kiosks. Even office machines like photocopiers, fax machines, and hard-wired phone systems are considered ICT.

IATP offers training on various aspects of accessible ICT such as the laws and guidelines that govern it, accessible color contrast and font choices, web design guidelines, and how to create accessible electronic documents. Throughout the past year IATP has worked extensively with our partners at the Illinois Department on Aging to train their staff on the basics of accessible ICT.

On **June 24, 2024**, new guidelines for web content, mobile apps, and information technology took effect for Illinois state agencies, departments, local governments, and their contractors. This change calls for more accessible online platforms where many state and local government entities deliver services and programs. IATP follows these new guidelines to ensure our content and programs are accessible to everyone.



► State Financing

State Financing activities such as IATP's Tech Kitchen, Smart Home, Makers, Illinois Care Connections (ICC), and Open-Ended Loan (Fast Track) programs which, through targeted grants and contracts, directly provide consumers with assistive technology devices at no cost or reduced cost. Read on to learn more about each program.

2,678

**Total Individuals
Served by State
Financing Programs**

► Tech Kitchen

Tech Kitchen Highlights

74 Accepted Referrals

42 Trainings

124 Demonstrations

691 Devices Loaned

This year the Tech Kitchen served 42 customers in their homes as well as at the IATP on-site accessible kitchen and placed 691 cooking-related assistive technology devices on long-term loan. The intake process and initial assessment guide the training process, which is specific to the participant's unique needs. As a result, recipes may be adapted to support selection of assistive technology, cooking techniques, and dietary preferences.

The Tech Kitchen and the Makers' staff collaborated on the design and creation of several adapted cooking tools for Tech Kitchen customers. These included a one-handed peeler, a chef's knife with an adapted grip, extended utensil handles, and a pot handle with wrist support. The Tech Kitchen also worked with the Smart Home

program to train on voice-controlled kitchen devices as many customers, especially those with vision issues, can benefit from smart devices in the kitchen.

Our chef continued to work with a registered dietitian to create accessible nutrition videos and these will be available on the Tech Kitchen's website by late fall.



One-Handed Success in the Kitchen

A brachial plexus injury caused Grace's left arm to be paralyzed. She has been developing strategies to compensate but wanted to see what adaptive tools were available to assist, specifically in the kitchen. Grace first visited IATP's Demonstration Center to get ideas for college and for when she moves away from home. After that visit, she completed the intake process for the Tech Kitchen program and then had two training sessions with an Occupational Therapist and Chef Instructor.

The sessions focused on learning safety strategies and finding tools to make one-handed cooking less overwhelming. Grace learned about several tools that worked for her, including a one-handed cutting board that held ingredients in place, rocker knives that allow weight shifting with one hand, heat-resistant gloves, a pasta strainer safely accessed with one hand, and measuring tools like a self-portioning oil dispenser.

Grace prepared a microwave chili recipe, cheesy air fryer biscuits, and penne alfredo. These recipes allowed her to try out tools and learn what worked well. They also allowed her to see what could be done with the microwave and air fryer when the stove or oven might not be accessible. Grace also learned how to use the surfaces in her environment to safely transfer hot items with one hand, how to utilize the microwave for adapted cooking, and organize a workspace for energy conservation.

Grace also went through a remote menu planning session with IATP's Chef Instructor to learn how to balance her new busy schedule with nutritious food preparation. They discussed scheduling grocery shopping, sticking to a budget, comparing prices, planning meal preparation time, nutritional needs, and ingredient types.

Grace worked with IATP after being referred by her DRS counselor for the Fast Track program. This helped identify her AT needs as she pursues her degree in Psychology, double minoring in Global Studies and Biblical Studies.





Smart Home Highlights

111 Evaluations

622 Items Disseminated

99% Satisfaction Rating

76% Respondents Reported Increased Safety

► Smart Home Technology

The IATP Smart Home Program offers personalized, interactive, in-home evaluations and demonstrations of devices that promote safety and independence in the home. Smart technology for home automation allows a user to monitor and control numerous items throughout the home, including security, climate, lighting, small appliances, entertainment systems, and self-care devices. The Smart Home Demonstration Center features home automation options in fully functioning rooms including a kitchen, living space, bedroom, bathroom, and laundry room.

A Smart Home is a Safe Home

Dave has suffered from worsening eyesight for several years. As a result, he has difficulty using a key to unlock his front door and identifying who is at the door when he has a visitor. Both of these issues are safety concerns in any life situation, especially for Dave, who lives in an area with higher crime statistics.

After talking with Smart Home staff, it was decided that Dave could benefit from several devices on a long-term loan basis.

A smart display was set up inside the house to act as a smart hub controlling all of the devices. A smart lock was installed at the front door, allowing him to unlock it using his fingerprint or his phone. When inside the house, he can unlock it with voice commands without physically going to the door.

A smart doorbell was also installed so he could communicate with potential visitors before deciding to open the door. He can do this through an app on the phone or on the smart display. The doorbell also has motion detection, alerting Dave to someone's presence near his door. He can activate the doorbell's camera on the large screen of the smart display to see as much as he can to assist him in staying safe.



► Makers

IATP created the Makers Program to expand available fabrication options for individuals to acquire the assistive technology they need when an AT solution is not commercially available. Assistive technology devices are designed, prototyped, and fabricated using 3D printing, pressure forming, laser cutting, and a variety of other readily available materials and hardware. Customized solutions are designed by the Makers team for specific AT needs. The program continually works to expand an AT Maker network that serves Illinois residents, and volunteers help create devices that can be provided to users in need at no cost.

Makers Highlights

146 Individuals Served

240 Devices Valued at \$3,969

Jake's Fabricated iPhone Stand for Reading Documents

Jake is a new IATP customer who was recently visited by one of the assistive technology specialists (ATS) for vision-related needs. The ATS noticed a need for a fabricated device to assist Jake when reading documents through the Seeing AI app on his iPhone. Without the device Jake would have to manually hold his phone to scan and read documents. The ATS educated Jake on the Makers program during a demonstration of the iPhone stand which made scanning and reading documents easier and faster to access. The ATS submitted a request on behalf of Jake for the Makers program to print and loan him one to keep until he no longer requires it.



Various 3D items printed in the IATP Makers lab. From left to right: young boy's fabricated upper limb to help him grasp items at school, a hand grip writing device, gas cap turner for the car, and an adjustable hairbrush extender.

► Illinois Care Connections

ICC Highlights

1,728 Approved Referrals

42% of Recipients are Age 60-69

38% of Recipients are Age 70-79

16% of Recipients are Age 80-89

86% of Persons who Responded to the Survey Reported Using Their AT/DME Five Times or More a Week

Devices Distributed

1,875 Technology AT Devices

917 DME/ADL

362 Smart Home

IATP continues the Illinois Care Connections (ICC) Program with funding from the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA). The program expanded in FY24 to include Assistive Technology (AT) and limited Durable Medical Equipment (DME) in addition to tablet bundles.

This program supports social connectedness, independence, and community living, as well as maintaining health, safety, and well-being for Illinois older adults and persons with disabilities age 60+ who live in the community. In prior years only Community Care Program (CCP) Medicaid recipients were eligible for ICC, but the program was expanded in FY's 24 and 25 to include all persons 60+ living in the community with a functional, cognitive, social, or psychological need that causes difficulties functioning in the home/community or causes social isolation. At this time, persons living in nursing homes, assisted living, and independent living facilities are not eligible under ICC.

- **Technology** – tablet with case, keyboard, headphones, and routers as needed for internet, as well as personal computers if a tablet is not appropriate for the participant's need
- **Limited Durable Medical Equipment (DME)** – walkers, shower chairs, toilet risers, and other DME
- **Activities of Daily Living (ADL) Devices** – to aid in bathing, grooming, cooking, medicine management, hearing, vision, and other daily living tasks
- **Smart Home Devices** – smart doorbells, lightbulbs, door locks, thermostats, and other smart devices

Referrals are processed through the IATP-developed online accessible referral system. Each referral results in the procurement of various devices based on the participant's needs as outlined by their referring agency and during the ICC Coordinator's intake process. The ICC Coordinators then ship or deliver devices in-person based on the participant's needs in consultation with an Occupational Therapist. Participants are surveyed 30 days after receiving services through ICC for satisfaction, device usage, and other information.

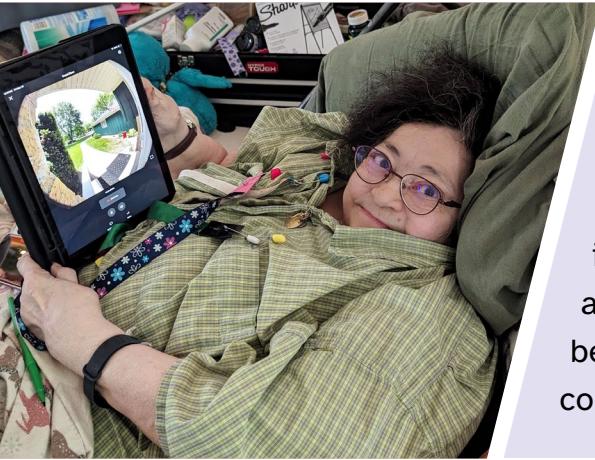


Security and Safety in the Home

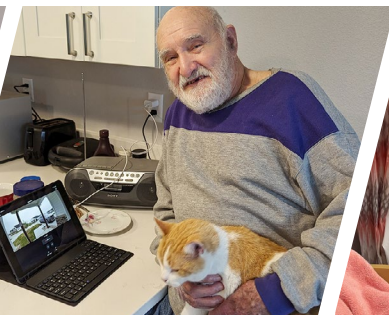
Cynthia, a 74-year-old Central IL resident, was referred to IATP's ICC program to assist her home security with smart home devices.

Over recent months, Cynthia had experienced several break-ins at her home. Living alone raised many concerns for her safety and well-being. The program provided Cynthia with a video doorbell and a smart home assistant. Installed by ICC staff, this video doorbell allowed a full view of the door where the break-ins occurred. An Alexa smart home assistant was also installed in Cynthia's kitchen, allowing her to easily view the doorbell's video footage and communicate with anyone at her front door.

These devices provided Cynthia with an ease of mind to live independently and the added features of an Alexa home assistant to keep her updated on breaking news and severe weather outbreaks.



Rita, a 75-year-old West Central IL resident, is unable to leave the hospital bed in her living room, so having an Alexa, Smart Bulbs, Ring Doorbell, and an iPad to control these devices has been critical for her to control her environment better and provide independence in her home. She is now able to turn on and off any of the lights in her room and answer the door right from her bed. She has a vibrant personality; these devices will help keep her connected and share her positivity and enthusiasm with the world.



► Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Evaluations

Assistive Technology Specialists (ATS) provide assistive technology (AT) evaluations, training and technical support in the home, school, or workplace. After a vocational counselor makes a customer referral, ATS staff identify assistive technology needs and provide recommendations for home modifications or training on adaptive technology and software.

DRS Highlights

229 VR Evaluations

92 HSP Evaluations

288 Technical Assistance

► Fast Track (Open-Ended Loans)

Fast Track is a bulk purchase, open-ended loan program for IDHS/DRS customers. The ATS will trial assistive technology, software, and other devices with the customer during an evaluation. If the technology is appropriate, the customer may keep it for as long as they need it, eliminating delays waiting for equipment.

Fast Track (OEL) Highlights

589 Customers

\$224,898 Bulk Purchase Cost Savings



The Sky is the Limit with Assistive Technology

Sholony has a lot on her plate. She is a graduate student, single mom, and full-time employee, all while dealing with significant vision loss, due to a tumor that damaged her optic nerve. With a referral from the Department of Rehabilitation Services, Sholony worked with an Assistive Technology Specialist at IATP. It was decided she would benefit from a computer with reverse contrast, ZoomText application, a desktop CCTV, and a portable video magnifier. Sholony also received an adjustable desk lamp with better controls to reduce prolonged exposure to poor lighting which causes her migraines. All were provided through IATP's Open Ended Loan program. Her gratitude was immense, saying she would like to one day help people in similar situations. With the right tools to do the job, the sky is the limit for Sholony as she continues to amaze all those lucky enough to know her!

► Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)

IATP is one of three agencies that administer the WIPA program grant in Illinois. The grant is funded through the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). The program helps individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) make informed choices about employment.

WIPA Services Territory

IATP provides WIPA Services to the following counties in Illinois:

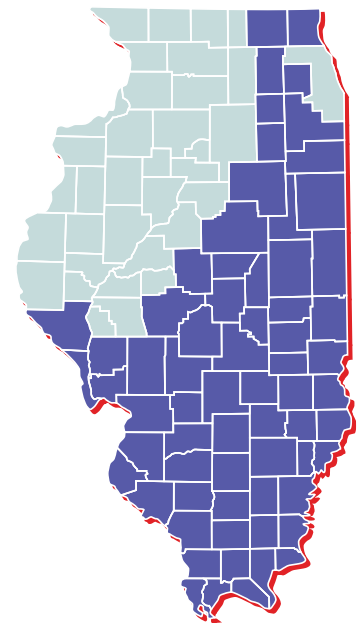
- | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| • Alexander | • Edgar | • Jefferson | • Massac | • Sangamon |
| • Bond | • Edwards | • Jersey | • McHenry | • Shelby |
| • Calhoun | • Effingham | • Johnson | • McLean | • St. Clair |
| • Champaign | • Fayette | • Kane | • Monroe | • Union |
| • Christian | • Ford | • Kankakee | • Montgomery | • Vermilion |
| • Clark | • Franklin | • Kendall | • Moultrie | • Wabash |
| • Clay | • Gallatin | • Lake | • Perry | • Washington |
| • Clinton | • Greene | • Lawrence | • Piatt | • Wayne |
| • Coles | • Grundy | • Livingston | • Pike | • White |
| • Crawford | • Hamilton | • Logan | • Pope | • Will |
| • Cumberland | • Hardin | • Macon | • Pulaski | • Williamson |
| • De Witt | • Iroquois | • Macoupin | • Randolph | |
| • Douglas | • Jackson | • Madison | • Richland | |
| • DuPage | • Jasper | • Marion | • Saline | |

WIPA Highlights

463 Referrals

146 Benefit Analyses
Written

129 Information
Packages Distributed



WIPA Counseling Leads to Reinstatement of Benefits

The local Social Security Administration (SSA) referred a Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiary to the WIPA program. The local SSA office provided IATP's Community Work Incentive Coordinator with a Benefits Planning Query to confirm the beneficiary's benefits. Upon review, the Coordinator discovered that the SSDI benefit was marked as suspended. The Coordinator contacted the beneficiary, conducted an intake, and discussed the query details, revealing an incorrect SSA decision. The Coordinator then consulted the local SSA Work Incentive Liaison, leading to the reopening of a work review. The Liaison reversed the prior decision, amended the query, and the Coordinator informed the beneficiary of a full reinstatement of the SSDI benefit. Additionally, the Coordinator discussed how the beneficiary's gross monthly income from work would impact future benefits, empowering them to make informed choices, and prevent potential overpayments. The Coordinator's proactive approach in reopening the work review demonstrates the importance of benefits counseling for SSA benefits.

► ISBE Evaluations

As part of its Assistive Technology Services, IATP provides comprehensive Assistive Technology (AT) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) evaluations to children and young adults (ages 3 to 22). Since 2011, IATP has provided evaluations for academic access and communication needs through its grant with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The purpose of IATP's AT/AAC Evaluation Program is to coordinate, plan, and perform evaluations for school districts throughout the state of Illinois, free of charge. Along with evaluations, we provide free AT/AAC training to students, school personnel, and families.

ISBE Highlights

351 Evaluations Completed

235 Schools Served

65 Counties Received Services

Talking with Her Eyes

Ella is a spunky 3-year-old who recently started preschool. She loves interacting with her peers but has difficulty with communication due to a degenerative condition. Ella relies on vocalizations, facial expressions, and low-tech eye gaze to communicate her wants and needs to others. Her school Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) referred her to IATP for an AAC evaluation to help determine the most appropriate AAC device for her.

An IATP SLP traveled to Ella's school for the evaluation. She was presented various communication devices that could be controlled both by eye gaze or by switches. During the evaluation, Ella controlled a favorite toy using a single switch and played games and explored vocabulary on an AAC device using only her eyes. She was able to participate in games on the devices using the eye gaze software, including drawing designs and telling others when to turn an activity on and off. By the end of the trial, Ella was looking around the room smiling from ear to ear, making sure that everyone saw what she was able to do!

Learning any AAC system, especially an eye gaze system, can be a lot of work for both the child and their family. As part of IATP's grant with ISBE, Ella's family was able to participate in virtual trainings with an IATP SLP to learn the ins and outs of the different eye gaze systems the school borrowed from IATP's Device Loan Program, including how to incorporate the device into Ella's home routine.

Ella and her family, as well as her educational team, are enjoying trialing different eye gaze systems and IATP wishes Ella continued success on her communication and educational journey!





► Education Advocacy

IATP's Education Liaison works with families, students, and schools to provide information, advocacy, and support for all students entitled to special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This free service is available to families who have a student with a disability in early intervention through college within the state of Illinois.

Successfully Navigating Neurodivergent Siblings' Public School Access

Sara is a mother of two neurodivergent children who were interested in attending public school for the first time. She did not know where to start. IATP helped her and her family with educational support and advocacy during this time. IATP's Public Policy and Education Liaison ensured the children were treated well and received the assistance they needed. This included walking the family through every step of the process, assistance in contacting the school district, and even attending a school tour. IATP's advocacy helped Sara's children, who felt comfortable and supported, enroll full-time.

After starting school, one of Sara's children had a problem in class, and IATP's Liaison assisted in making sure the school made accommodations for it. Sara says, "I'm happy to report that my children are thriving in public school. I can 100% say this would not have been the case" without IATP and their Public Policy and Education Liaison.





► Public Policy

IATP had two great legislative victories during the 2024 Spring session that resulted in significant improvements for individuals with disabilities in Illinois:

- 1. House Bill 5354** now Public Act 103-0709, extends the Customized Employment Program for five years and remodels it to reflect federal standards. We added language that requires Assistive Technology (AT) to be part of the plan for an individual who requires AT devices or services. The new Act goes into effect on January 1, 2025. The Bill sponsors were Representative Suzanne Ness and Senator Laura Fine.
- 2. House Bill 5276**, which amends the School Code to require transition planning to include a determination of the student's postsecondary AT needs and how the student will be able to access the required device or services in their postsecondary activities. This is now Public Act 103-0854, effective August 9, 2024. The Bill sponsors were Representative Suzanne Ness and Senator David Koehler.

Note of Thanks

I wanted to thank you so much for letting us use the sit & stand machine. It is more than we could afford to buy so it is much appreciated to get him out of bed. Also thank you for the use of the side table. He can now feed himself and get a drink of water by himself. Before we were concerned he might not get enough water and become dehydrated.

Again thank you very much. Betty & Eldred

On behalf of my entire family I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for your help and for in providing a "magnified vision" machine for our mother.

Mom is 95 and has macular degeneration in one eye and difficulty seeing out of the other. She had to give up her passion for reading books and the newspaper, sending cards to friends, and reading her mail. When we found out about IATP we thought it was too good to be true.

What a wonderful agency! You are really making a difference in this world! You are all so appreciated.

- Cindy, Daughter of Velma

I can't say enough about how happy we are with the lightweight wheelchair. It has made taking to and from her appointments much easier. Once again thank you so much. My mom is in love with the hearing device. It works really well for her, so much so that she doesn't want to use her hearing aids. Yesterday while at a senior center, someone inquired about what she was listening too with the headphones. She smiled and said "everything."

Have a blessed day. Daughter of Lula



IATP

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