

2012 Annual Report



Washington Assistive Technology Act Program

Mission: To promote assistive technology to enhance independence for every Washington resident with varying abilities.

The **Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP)** is funded by grants #H224120046 and #H224A130046 through the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). It is a program of the Center for Technology and Disabilities Studies located within the Center on Human Development and Disability (CHDD), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the University of Washington.

WATAP provides assistive technology (AT) resources and expertise to all Washingtonians with disabilities, their families, and their support network to aid in making decisions and obtaining the technology and related services needed for employment, education and independent living. Specifically, WATAP offers low cost and free services including Device Demonstrations, Device Lending, Alternative Financing, Device Reuse, Public Awareness Activities, AT Training, and Technical Assistance. WATAP strives to facilitate communication and knowledge among organizations as well as develop collaborations and partnerships that expand the capacity of organizations to meet the AT needs of Washingtonians by supporting services that uphold the missions of both WATAP and our partners.

This FY 2012 Annual Report is a summary of the WATAP's activities and programs to highlight some exciting new relationships and to tell the stories of just a few of the people we have served.

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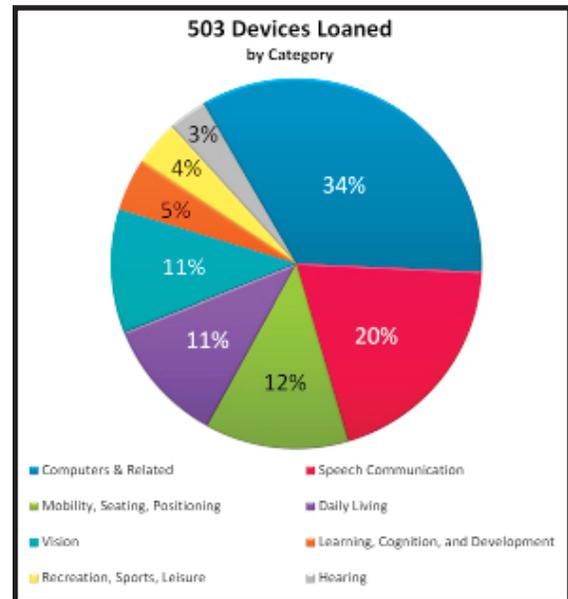
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Device Lending

The Statewide lending program gives individuals the ability to make independent choices before making a financial commitment. With guidance from knowledgeable AT Specialists, the three week loan period gives individuals, family members, and professionals time to try the equipment in the environment where it will be used.

In FY 2012, a total of 503 devices were loaned to 283 consumers statewide. Through partnership with Timberland Regional Library System, 122 of those devices were borrowed from local library branches across 5 counties.

- 272 for the purpose of decision making;
- 1 for short term loan;
- 2 for short term accommodation;
- 8 for training and education.



After buying countless products, “Abe” and his parents had a closet full of devices that still didn’t give Abe the freedom to access his communication device. The process of buying the expensive devices they hoped would work was not only financially costly for the family it also led to a very frustrated little boy who would yell every time his parents set up his computer. After learning about WATAP and talking with one of the AT Specialists about Abe’s needs and physical barriers, his parents borrowed a Head Mouse Extreme to try at home with

Abe’s Dynavox communication device. By the end of the three week loan period, Abe was able to share his needs and thoughts as well as joke with his friends and family. The opportunity to talk with an AT Specialist about their son’s specific needs and then borrow a device to use at home gave his parents confidence that ordering this product would lead to success and a newly opened world of communication rather than further frustration. At the end of the loan period Abe’s parents called WATAP to say the Head Mouse Extreme they ordered wouldn’t be delivered for several more weeks. WATAP lent them the device as a short term accommodation through the holidays until the permanent device arrived and for the first time Abe had a voice for Christmas.

Device Demonstration

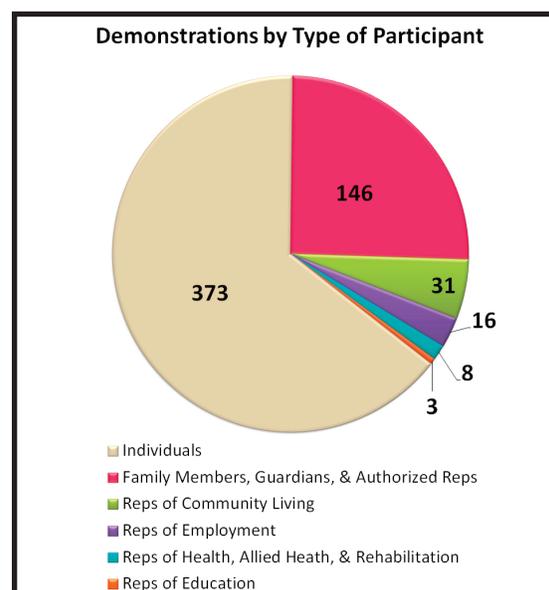
Reluctant to use technology to help him see printed text, “Arthur” showed up to a device demonstration having been told by his family that he was going to lunch. Arthur ran his own business for decades and in recent years had advised his daughter on her new business; but when it came



to reading paperwork professionally or for pleasure, Arthur had to rely on someone else due to his failing vision. His daughter and wife were hoping there was something that could help him be independent with his reading. However, they were not sure what was available and how to present options to him. The demonstration of a desktop CCTV, handheld CCTV, lighted magnifier, and magnification on the computer gave the entire family the opportunity to experience the technology together. Arthur’s daughter reports that the demonstration proved invaluable in understanding the options out there and features of specific devices. The hands-on time to ask questions and ability to compare multiple devices has made it possible to have a conversation with her father about using technology. His daughter reports that they are looking forward to implementing one of the solutions.

Consumers receive impartial demonstrations of product features that will help accomplish tasks at school, work, home and in the community through hands-on guidance with knowledgeable and experience AT Specialists.

In FY 2012, WATAP began coordinating demonstration efforts with DVR Assistive Technology Services. Through the creation of “go-kits,” a more timely system was implemented for identifying AT solutions to support employment outcomes. Ongoing partnerships with Easter Seals and UW Medical Center, as well as in person appointments at WATAP’s Seattle location and around the State resulted in 413 demonstrations were conducted for 577 participants.



Reuse

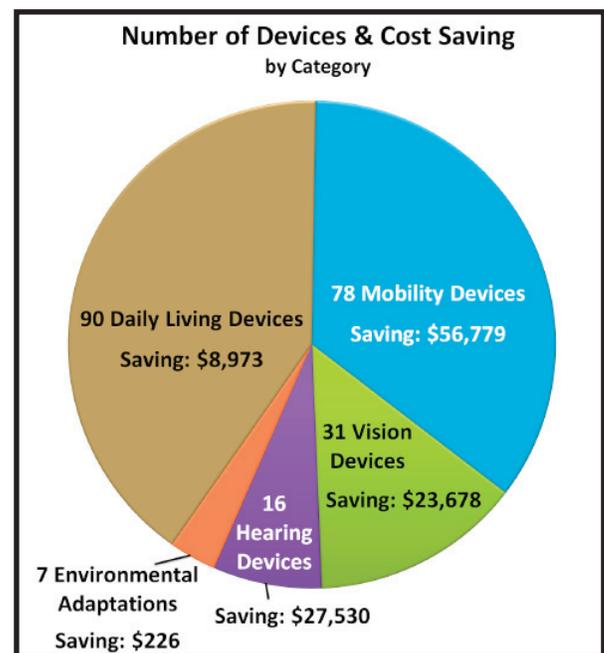
In the first year of the Evergreen Reuse Coalition a vision was developed, a website created, new members were brought to the table, and organizations came together to form a Funding Committee and a Supply Chain Committee. The Evergreen Reuse Coalition is made up by organizations providing insight, leadership, and action that drives innovation. Through effective reuse of assistive devices, a positive impact is made in three key areas:

- To the environment by reducing the amount of useable products that ends up in landfills;
- To quality of life by making a comprehensive range of assistive devices available to improve mobility, communication, and full participation in all aspects of daily living;
- To cost savings for individuals by offering quality, affordable alternatives to new devices.



In the first six months of FY 2012, WATAP partnered with three organizations in the Evergreen Reuse Coalition to help sustain assistive technology reuse activities in the state. The partnerships resulted in 205 refurbished and redistributed devices, 1 exchange activity, and 16 open-ended loans. An estimated cost savings of \$117,186 was passed on to 202 consumers who obtained previously owned equipment to help them live, work, and play independently.

- The Washington Access Fund's CCTV leasing program served 15 people. The program delivers an affordable option for people with a temporary need for a device or for those who cannot afford to purchase a device out of pocket.
- The Hearing, Speech, and Deafness Center's (HSDC) hearing aid reuse program served 16 people who also receive proper device fitting from an audiologist. In recent years, hearing aid benefits were cut for adults in Washington State, leaving underserved populations without access to basic communication.
- With support from WATAP, Bridge Disability Ministries was able to purchase an industrial sanitizer to increase the program's long term capacity. The partnership resulted in 174 people receiving environmental adaptations, daily living and mobility equipment.



For over 20 years, “Tanya” has tried to get her GED but she stopped taking classes out of a sense of helplessness since she could not understand the instructors. She even tried working with a one-on-one tutor but the sessions would become tense as she had to continually ask the tutor to repeat herself. After obtaining reused hearing aids, Tanya met with her tutor again and the sessions were more relaxed as the two of them were able to communicate and joke easily. Tanya is now in her second quarter of classes and recently passed a practice GED test. Without medical insurance to cover expensive new equipment, HSDC provided professionally refurbished hearing aids, giving Tanya confidence and the ability to understand teachers in class. However, it is the ability to hear wind chimes, the cat meowing, and dirt bikes in the field nearby that gave her a sense of rejuvenation. Her new independence has been a wonderful and, at times, scary transition as she gets used to doing more on her own.



“James” who has a 3 year old daughter awaiting open heart surgery came to Bridge Disability Ministries’ Meyer Mobility Center looking for any piece of equipment to transport his daughter to

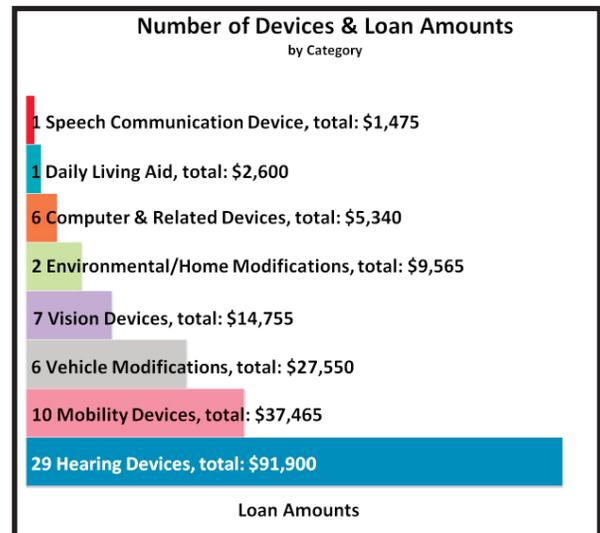
doctor’s appointments and on family outings. Without insurance and facing impossibly high medical bills, James was desperate for any help he could find. Fortunately, five lightly used and high-end pediatric strollers had recently been donated to the Mobility Center by a manufacturer’s representative who was reducing warehouse space. James left with a stroller worth \$2,500 retail, at no cost to his family. The stroller has multiple adjustments to grow with his daughter so she can use it for several years to come. While facing financial hardship and anxiety of the upcoming surgery, having access to high quality reused equipment provided much needed peace of mind.



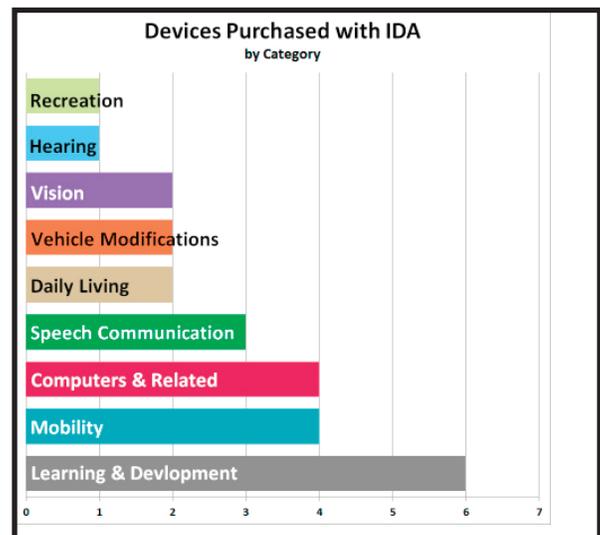
Staff in front of industrial sanitizer with mobility equipment inside

Alternative Financing

WATAP collaborates with the Washington Access Fund to provide flexible financing options to individuals who would not otherwise be able to purchase assistive technology. In FY 2012, 56 new loans were made at an average low interest rate of 5%. The majority of loans were made to finance the purchase of hearing devices which are inadequately funded through other sources. A total of 63 devices were purchased across 8 categories of assistive technology for total of \$190,650 in loans. Washington State continues to have a low default rate on loans due to flexibility of the program and diligence of staff.



Individual Development Accounts (IDA), through the Washington Access Fund, are matched savings accounts established to help low-income households purchase assistive technology. Every dollar a person saves is matched by one dollar. The program makes it possible to purchase any type of assistive technology at a reduced cost to consumers. In FY 2012, savings goals were reached and 25 devices were purchased across 9 different categories of assistive technology totaling \$8,357 in matched savings.



When “Malcolm” and his wife decided to spend some of their retirement doing missionary work abroad, he knew he would have to find a portable CCTV that could travel with them but would still be large enough for him to read comfortably. Malcolm has been a client with the Washington Access Fund for years and has utilized several of their financing programs in the past. Now, as a retiree living on a fixed income, purchasing a new vision aid out-of-pocket is not practical. The low-interest loan with affordable repayment plan gave Malcolm a realistic option for financing the right device to meet his specific needs. Securing a portable CCTV has allowed Malcolm the ability to be independent even while traveling so he can now focus on spending his retirement helping others.



State Leadership Activities

Through statewide leadership activities, WATAP promotes the use of assistive technology to increase access to public services and personal independence. Trainings delivered by WATAP increase knowledge, skills, and competencies in assistive technology devices, service delivery, funding strategies, and legal issues. In FY 2012, 436 people were served through integrated training and educational opportunities and 148,935 people were reached through public awareness.



Assistive Technology and Disability: Process and Selection for the Workplace

WATAP conducted 5 trainings across the state for 87 participants including DVR counselors, rehab technicians, tribal VR counselors, community rehab providers, and other DVR partners. The training explored methods of inquiry to identify clients' functional limitations in meeting employment goals and identifying a spectrum of solutions to alleviate those limitations.

Technical Assistance

Using Technologies on the Road to Community Living

WATAP provided technical assistance (TA) for Washington State Division of Developmental Disabilities, specifically Roads to Community Living (RCL), a demonstration project designed to help people with complex, long-term care needs move back into the community. The purpose of the TA is to demonstrate a model process for assessing and evaluating the use of a variety of appropriate assistive technologies for individuals transitioning from residential habilitation centers. As a result of this activity, tools and protocols were created so the process could be replicated. Training was also provided to residential staff with follow-up to be conducted in the coming year.

National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program

WATAP provided technical assistance to the Washington State Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) to successfully apply for and obtain the new FCC grant. WATAP has also been acting in an advisory capacity to develop and implement policies and procedures including development of a consumer application, creation of a functional assessment and evaluation tool, vetting and training contractors, and evaluation and triaging of the first 23 applicants for determination of appropriate services. Together, WATAP and ODHH have created the framework and foundation for program implementation across Washington State.

Advisory Council and Staff

WATAP would like to thank its partners, since without these valuable collaborators our reach and influence would not be as great. University of Washington Center for Technology Disability Studies; Center on Human Development and Disability (CHDD) – the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD); University of Washington Medical Center Department of Rehabilitation Medicine; Washington Access Fund; Easter Seals Washington; Timberland Regional Library System; Bridge Disability Ministries; Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center (HSDC); Special Education Technology Center (SETC)- at Central Washington University; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI); Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR); Department of Services for the Blind (DSB); State Independent Living Council (SILC); and Washington Education Association; Pass It On Center (PIOC); Microsoft Accessibility Resource Center (MARC) Network.

FY 2012 Advisory Council

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Kathy Troyer, *Consumer*

Julie Peddy, *Consumer*

Aditya Ganapathiraju, *Consumer*

Lucille Walls, *State Independent Living Council*

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