

RI Council on Assistive Technology  
June 24, 2010 ~ 2:30 – 4:00 pm  
Warwick Public Library ~ Large Meeting Room  
600 Sandy Lane ~ Warwick, RI

## Minutes

**Attendees:** Carol Dusablon, Margaret Hoyer, Elizabeth Hubbard, James Litvack, Michael Matracia, Teresa O'Brien, Jeanne Panarace, Dan Pieroni, Colleen Poliselli, Bill Robinson and Ying Sun.

**Partners:** Roberta Greene-Whittemore, ATAP Program Director; Kat Grygiel, former ATAP Program Director; Lisa Labitt, EBEC; Lezlee Shaffer, OSCIL; Allen Parent-Wetmore, PARI; Judi Carlson, TechACCESS.

**Welcome:** Meeting was called to order at 2:40 p.m. by Co-Chair Carol Dusablon.

**Approval of Minutes from 4/15/10:** Teresa O'Brien made motion, seconded by Bill Robinson to approve minutes. Motion unanimously passed.

### **New Business (Roundtable):**

- Elisabeth Hubbard from the RI Disability Law Center (RIDLC) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the AT Act from a legal perspective. Handout is attached. Questions followed from members regarding Medicaid issues, Social Security and Unemployment conflicts, and other issues individuals with disabilities might endure. Elisabeth commented if anyone knew of anyone in these situations, they should refer them to RIDLC.

- Jeanne Panarace questioned which funding stream or staff person from RIDLC would be involved with the closed captioning on television stations. Elisabeth responded that it would fall under the Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights Program (PAIR) Grant. Jeanne had questioned this because Channel 12 only had pre-recorded captions, and did not have captions for live interviews and weather. She said she believed it was due to the conversion from analog to digital. Margaret Hoyer added in that since she is legally blind, when on tv they say to look at “the blue spot” where the storm is located, she can’t see where they are talking about. Co-Chair Carol Dusablon responded she would look into this issue.
- Co-Chair Dan Pieroni commented that there is no excuse for the media to not have closed captioning. He added that he is starting on the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities (GCD) in September, 2010, and questioned if that would be something they could help with. It was mentioned they would be hosting the Public Forums in July. Jeanne Panarace commented that there might be some reluctance between GCD and Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. James Litvack added that a lot of people with hearing impairments do not consider Deafness a disability. Roberta Greene Whittemore added that it is more of an access issue.

#### Co-Chair Report:

- Co-Chair Pieroni stated he did not have anything to report at this meeting.
- Co-Chair Dusablon that she had attended the Advisory Council training conducted by Peggy

Hayden. She explained how Peggy had so many creative ideas on how to define topics and get things done. Carol added that she, Dan, Mike Montanaro, and Roberta will get together to formalize an agenda.

#### ATAP Program Director's Report:

- Roberta Greene Whittemore introduced herself again stating she is the new ATAP Program Director. She noted that the theme at ORS is “back to the basics” and feels that is what RICAT should do to. Roberta added to Carol’s report about the Advisory Council training saying that 5 or 6 agencies with advisory board members attended, noting that each has different programmatic issues but still have a lot of the same issues as well. Today, having Elisabeth do the presentation on the AT Act was the beginning of returning to the basics. Next meeting, Kat Grygiel will go over some of the core elements of ATAP/RICAT.

Roberta also noted that at future RICAT meetings, they would like to spotlight one of the ATAP partners at each meeting. The Partner would focus on upcoming activities instead of those that have already happened.

#### ATAP Partners' Reports:

- **TechACCESS** – Judi Carlson repeated that the partners had tended to report out things that have been done, and she also feels that instead should be things coming up so as to get input from the members to assist with different issues.

Judi began her report by talking about the AT conference which will be coming up November 30,

2010 at the Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI. (Information will be sent to everyone when it is available.) She explained how there has been a conference since 1988 for every year except last year and one other year. This conference is about assistive technology for people with disabilities. All types of disciplines are represented – education, daily living, equipment, employment, etc. There will be 15 presentations that day, as well as a vendor exhibit hall. The presentations held are based on “strands” – where there will be an Autism Strand of 3 presentations, a Universal Design for Learning Strand, and one for Health and Safety at Home and At Work. Judi added that they are still looking for ideas for more presentations. She added that Lisa Labitt had presented a couple of times. Carol suggested that maybe Lisa could do something about the Smartboards as that had peaked her interest when she had discussed them at a previous meeting. Lisa stated there are some local distributors and vendors who might be able to do a presentation.

Judi also noted that it would be good to have some RICAT members at the ATAP table.

Judi noted that at the last conference there were 39 vendors. Carol asked how people find out about the conference. Judi responded that they have a 3,500 name list they go to, as well as listservs different agencies have, and the ATAP and partner websites. A ‘Save the Date’ card is usually sent out prior to the conference registration form and program being done.

Lezlee Shaffer, ATAP partner from OSCIL,

commented that in the past they have done an apartment in the vendor exhibit hall that showed various AT to assist in daily living. There is a possibility they might be able to do it again this year.

There is a conference planning meeting scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. at TechACCESS.

### Roundtable

- Roberta Greene-Whittemore noted that September 9<sup>th</sup>, the next RICAT meeting date, was also Rosh Hashanah, and asked if this date was still good. It was determined it would be fine. PARI will be the highlighted partner as well as Kat Grygiel presenting on Core Basics.
- Bill Robinson commented that he had recently be elected Commander of the local American Legion post. He stated he would like to be able to reach out to the other American Legion Posts, VFW Posts and other disabled American veterans, and form a group of interested members to reach out to the Providence VA office and the Soldiers Home in Bristol, and the state Health Director to promote awareness that there are people that want to help. He asked for RICAT's support on ins and outs and things to avoid. Co-Chair Dusablon responded that he should bring in new member names to the Membership Committee.
- Membership Committee – Next step is going to be to get a new chair of the committee. Co-Chair Dusablon asked if there was anyone interested in becoming chair. Roberta Greene-Whittemore added that we are without our required person from the

Workforce Investment Act. Margaret asked for a list of people on the Membership Committee. Everyone is going to think about being on the committee and it will be brought up at the next meeting. Bill Robinson will be on the committee. Co-Chair Pieroni commented that at the last OSCIL meeting, a couple of people had contacted Kat Grygiel about joining. Roberta will check into that.

- Margaret Hoye commented that two of her friends are in electric wheelchairs, and they have had trouble with their lifts on the vans. Alan responded that Custom Adaptive Systems out of Coventry will fix any van. He is going to mail her the name, address and phone.

**Next Meeting:** September 9, 2010 – PARI Independent Living Center, 500 Prospect Street, Pawtucket, RI

Other meeting date:

- November 4, 2010 – TechACCESS of RI, 110 Jefferson Blvd, Warwick, RI

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Motion was made by Margaret Hoye and seconded by Teresa O'Brien to adjourn meeting at 3:50 pm. Motion passed.

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## **East Bay Educational Collaborative**

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Portsmouth - Little Compton - Tiverton - Newport - Middletown - Bristol Warren -  
Barrington - East Providence

317 Market Street Warren, RI 02885 401-245-4998 401-245-9332 (Fax)  
kowalczy@ride.ri.net

### **RICAT Meeting Summary June 24, 2010 East Bay Educational Collaborative ATAP Partner**

The ATAP Children and Youth Resource Center located at East Bay Educational Collaborative provides a Lending Library of Assistive Technology and a Demonstration Computer Lab for School age children through Transitioning college students.

- **Agency Collaboration**
- **Device Demonstration**
- **Device Training**
- **Device Loan**
- **Coordination and Collaboration Activities**

**These 5 elements are the targets that I would like to focus on this quarter. I'd like to introduce you to a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student (fictitiously named Sam). When serving a student in the area of Assistive Technology there are a number of people and agencies that need to participate and collaborate for the success of the student including the IEP team.**

**Sam has Aspergers, it is a type of Autism. Autism is diagnosed on the basis of deficits in areas of social development, communication development, unusual or narrow interests or repetitive or obsessional behaviors.**

**Sam & his family came to me because they were looking for some support during his summer ESY (extended school year) program. They needed some software guidance and staff training to create an inclusionary experience for Sam. Emphasizing social skills, rules and developing language and academic skills. Sam will be attending a summer camp.**

**He will be riding the bus with peers, participating in a variety of activities in a natural environment that will increase the likelihood of**

**his skill improvement while providing some peer support. The technology planning and tools in place have been carefully chosen and prepared to insure his success in this summer program. The staff training and individual aide training will be critical in order to maintain a safe and positive experience for Sam and everyone else. Creating the materials, schedules, software activities, Augmentative Communication device and Social curriculum via on-line technology has made this summer transition for Sam a reality and an experience he is looking forward to. The 5 elements of my ATAP workplan or collaboration, demonstration, training and support, device loan and Coordination of agencies and school district is a certainty. I will let you know what happens to Sam in the Fall and see if all the pieces came together including the technology to make a successful Summer Program.**



***Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL)***

*1944 Warwick Avenue, Warwick, RI 02889*

*401.738.1013 (V) 401.738.1015 (TTY) 401.738.1083 (Fax)*

## Report for June 24, 2010 RICAT Meeting

### **Recent Highlights**

#### **Public Awareness & Information Dissemination**

Participation in AT presentations & informational displays at Goff Towers in Pawtucket & Meshanticut Vista in Cranston; presentation at visual impairment support group meeting at the Veterans Administration in Providence; staffed an informational AT senior health fair at Leon Mathieu Senior Center in Pawtucket attended by 100+ seniors and service providers.

Monthly outreach/informational mailings and visits continue to nursing homes -- Beginning in April, OSCIL began a campaign of monthly mailings and visits to nursing homes and assisted living facilities providing sample case studies of some of our transition successes and an updated Community Living Option fact sheet. This effort has resulted in several new referrals from nursing homes.

Newly hired part-time Community Outreach staff is providing target outreach to nursing homes.

Additional promotion of Talking Books Plus and their expanded digital books collection appeared in OSCIL's June newsletter.

Hosting Public Forum (Governor's Commission on Disabilities) – Wednesday, July 28, 4-6 pm at Warwick Public Library.

Semi-annual updating of AT page on OSCIL website in process. Partners may contact L. Shaffer to update their descriptions or if anyone has have additional sources of AT worth passing on to the general public.

## **Ongoing Activities**

### *Device Demonstration*

Visits to consumer homes continue, providing opportunities to conduct independent living assessments and/or OT assessments to identify AT to address barriers to independence. Visits may include bringing sample AT for demonstration, short-term trial use of AT, providing vendor catalogs and ordering information, and exploring alternative funding sources. Home visits allow us to observe consumers in their home environment performing activities of daily living.

### *Collaboration & Networking*

OSCIL remains a satellite mini-site for the “The Point” (RI’s resource place for seniors and adults with disabilities), and receives referrals (including walk-ins) for information/assistance on AT and other disability related issues.

### *Technical Assistance/Transition Services*

OSCIL receives requests for technical assistance from nursing homes to assist consumers requiring comprehensive support with transitioning back into the community, including providing individual assessments to respond to needs for housing, basic life skills training and recommendations for assistive technology and home modifications, and service coordination to locate community resources, transportation, and supports to be independent in the community.

Lezlee Shaffer  
OSCIL Program Director

# **The AT Act**

Presented by  
Elisabeth Hubbard, Staff Attorney  
Rhode Island Disability Law Center

# *What is AT?*

**Assistive Technology:** any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

# What does AT help people do?

- live independently;
- enjoy self-determination and make choices;
- benefit from an education;
- pursue meaningful careers; and
- enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society in the United States.

# Examples of AT

- Wheelchairs
- Adapted telephones
- eyeglasses
- Screen readers
- Adapted utensils for eating

# What are AT Services?

Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device

# AT Services Include

- Evaluations to determine what device is appropriate for the individual
- Purchasing, leasing or otherwise assisting with the acquisition of a device
- Selecting a device and customizing it to the consumers needs and maintaining the device or donating it

# AT Services cont.

- Coordinating the assistive technology into educational or rehabilitative plans
- Training consumers in the use of the device
- Training professionals employers and others involved with people with disabilities about AT
- Expanding the availability of access to AT to people with disabilities

# **So what does the AT Act do?**

## **Taxing and Spending Power:**

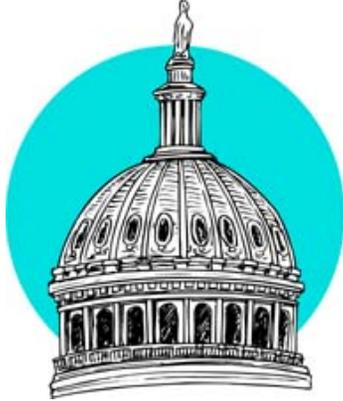
Congress exercises it's power by awarding funding to states

The AT Act is one example in which Congress tries to accomplish it's goals with grants.

# Funding

Over the last 15 years, the Federal Government has invested in the development of comprehensive statewide programs of technology-related assistance, which have proven effective in assisting individuals with disabilities in accessing assistive technology devices and assistive technology services. This partnership between the Federal Government and the States provided an important service to individuals with disabilities by strengthening the capacity of each State to assist individuals with disabilities of all ages meet their assistive technology needs.

# *Flow of AT Grant*



Congress authorizes \$



Grant is awarded to the lead agency, which is designated by the Governor



Lead Agency for RI is ORS

# *Role of Lead Agency*

- Conduct state level activities
- Coordinate the agencies conducting state leadership activities
- Prepare the application every year
- Coordinate consumers in participating in the activities carried out by the grant

# **Two types of Activities in Act**

1. State level activities
2. State leadership activities

# *State level activities*

Activities that the lead agency conducts

- A. State financing activities
- B. Device reutilization programs
- C. Device loan programs
- D. Device demonstrations

## *Exception to the requirement of performing state level activities*

A State shall not be required to use a portion of the funds made available through the grant to carry out the [state level activities if, in that State--

- (i)** financial support is provided from State or other non-Federal resources or entities for that category of activities; and
- (ii)** the amount of the financial support is comparable to, or greater than, the amount of the portion of the funds made available through the grant that the State would have expended for that category of activities, in the absence of this subparagraph.

# *State Leadership Activities*

Activities that the lead agency coordinates with other public or private entities to conduct:

- Training and technical assistance
- Public awareness activities
- Coordination and collaboration

# *State Leadership Activities*

ORS contracts with various agencies to conduct these activities. These are the **ATAP Partners**





The Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) is designed as a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.



ATAP's main initiatives include:

- Device Demonstration
- Device Loan
- Device Re-Use
- Training, Public Awareness, Collaboration, Information & Referral

# The ATAP Partners

- Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)
- ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan) Program
- East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC)
- OSCIL
- PARI Independent Living Center
- TechACCESS of RI

# The State Plan

- Is an application that ORS fills out every year to receive the AT funding from Congress
- Lists the goals of our state in improving access to AT
- Reviews the progress made by ORS and the ATAP partners in accomplishing the goals from last year

# The Advisory Council

There shall be established an **advisory council** to provide **consumer-responsive, consumer-driven** advice to the State for, planning of, implementation of, and evaluation of the activities carried out through the grant, including setting the measurable goals [in the state plan].

**Yup, that's you!**

# **Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology (RICAT)**

**"Promoting and supporting  
availability of assistive technology  
for people with disabilities"**

# RICAT

The Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology (RICAT) is a group of citizens that gives advice to the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP).

# RICAT Function

- The Council on Assistive Technology works to make sure that the services of the partner agencies truly helps the people in their own state.
- The Councils are also actively involved in promoting laws that keep Assistive Technology available and affordable.

# Composition

Two types of members:

1. individuals with disabilities that use assistive technology or the family members or guardians of the individuals
2. Mandatory representatives from state agencies

# **Mandatory representatives**

- a representative of the State Vocational Rehabilitation agency, and the State agency for individuals who are blind, if such agency is separate;
- a representative of a State center for independent living
- a representative of the State workforce investment board
- a representative of the State educational agency

# Majority

- A majority, not less than 51 percent, of the members of the advisory council, shall be individuals with disabilities that use assistive technology or the family members or guardians of the individuals
- State agency mandatory members cannot be counted towards this majority requirement

# Representation

The advisory council shall be geographically representative of the State and reflect the diversity of the State with respect to race, ethnicity, types of disabilities across the age span, and users of types of services that an individual with a disability may receive.

# Expenses

The members of the advisory council shall receive no compensation for their service on the advisory council, but shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of official duties for the advisory council.

# In Summary, *RICAT*

- Provides input into the state plan
- Reviews progress on the goals in the state plan, and
- Advises partners and lead agency as to how to best accomplish the state plan goals

*RIDLC*

**Rhode Island Disability Law Center**

**Protection and Advocacy for AT**

# *What is the P&A?*

- Not a state agency
- Provides free legal assistance to persons with disabilities.
- Services include individual representation to protect rights or to secure benefits and services; self-help information; educational programs; and administrative and legislative advocacy.



# RIDLC

- Individual representation as well as systemic work
- The agency administers eight federally funded advocacy programs, each of which has its own eligibility criteria.
- One grant is Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology

# How do we help people with AT?

- Education and training
- Brochures
- AT funding guide
- Individual representation

# Individual representation

- Legal representation in disputes over obtaining funding for AT
- Special education
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Employer provided AT accommodations
- Medicaid and Medicare appeals

# **Rhode Island Disability Law Center**

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[www.ridlc.org](http://www.ridlc.org)