Assistive Technology and Transition: Parent's Questions and Answers

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So, what is Assistive Technology (AT)?

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability…. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(1))

In Other Words – Assistive Technology

Includes tools*, devices*, and software that help a student do tasks they could not otherwise do or do them more independently.

During transition planning, AT supports skills needed for education/training after high school, employment, independent living, and community participation.

*Not Surgically Implanted

Quick Notes about AT

What is the purpose of AT during transition?

- AT helps bypass barriers caused by a disability or by the environment so your child can access learning, practice real-world skills, and participate in transition activities.
- AT may be short-term (for a trial or temporary support) or long-term (a consistent support used across settings).

Why is AT important for life after high school?

- AT can increase independence, reduce adult prompting, and improve participation in work and community settings.
- When AT is paired with the right services (training, practice, troubleshooting, and progress monitoring), students are more likely to develop skills and be ready for adult life.



So, what are AT Services?

AT Services

AT services are the supports that help a student get the most out of AT. Devices alone are not enough—teams plan for training, practice, and follow-through across settings.

- **AT consideration** in the IEP process and in transition planning
- **Evaluation of AT needs** (including trials) to match tasks, environments, and student strengths
- **Acquisition/procurement and setup** (accounts, accessibility settings, mounting)
- **Training and coaching** for the student, family, and staff; practice in real settings
- **Assessment and progress monitoring** (use, independence, outcomes) and adjustments over time
- **Maintenance/repair, troubleshooting, and plans** for use across home, school, work, and community



What are examples of AT for Transition?

Examples of AT in Transition Planning



Preparing for College

- Text-to-speech or audiobooks for reading
- Note-taking supports
- Study and test supports (timers, noise reduction)



Preparing for Specific Jobs

- Task checklists on a phone/tablet
- Adapted tools (grips, jigs, positioning) for labs/shops
- Visual supports for procedures and safety
- Hearing/vision access (FM/DM systems, magnification)
- Switch/keyboard/mouse alternatives for equipment controls



Engaging in Employment

- Scheduling and reminder apps
- Wearable prompts or vibration timers
- Barcode/QR supports for job steps
- AAC supports for communication on the job
- Ergonomic or adapted access for computers and devices

Examples of AT in Transition Planning, continued





Preparing for Independent Living

- Smart-home supports (lights, door locks, voice control)
- Medication reminders and daily routines
- Meal prep supports (talking scale, visual recipes)
- Money management supports (budgeting apps, calculators)
- Adaptive equipment for dressing, bathing, mobility

Preparing for Community Engagement

- GPS/navigation with accessibility features
- Ride scheduling supports and travel training apps
- Hearing/vision access in public spaces
- Safety supports (ID/medical info cards, alerts)
- Social stories or video models for community routines



What does AT for Transition Look Like?

Two Examples





Jonas



- 14-year old student with learning disability.
  - Difficulties with reading decoding and math computation
- Postsecondary Goal
  - After graduation, work in the construction industry progressing to **construction supervisor**, and within a few years **own/operate a small construction company**.

Jonas – Transition – Phase 1



- Phase 1 – Establish and Explore
  - Identify **reading demands** (safety content, tools manuals, blueprints) and **math demands** (measurement, fractions, calculations) related to construction and business ownership
  - **Determine is current AT tools will work** to meet post-school needs or **if additional tools need to be identified**.
  - Begin learning any new tools.

Jonas – Transition – Phase 2



- Phase 2 – Try and Apply
  - **Use AT tools** in career and technical education classes (e.g., construction, shop)
    - Accessible formats for reading materials (e.g. manuals, safety information)
    - Text to speech tools to support reading (e.g., computer based, phone based)
    - Talking tape measures for measuring.
    - Talking calculator that supports fractions for math computations
  - **Build self-advocacy skills for AT use** in courses

Jonas – Transition – Phase 3



- Phase 3 – Work-based learning and preparing for college
  - **Use AT tools** in work-based learning
  - **Build self-advocacy skills for AT use** in job environments
  - Connect with colleges to **learn about AT provided and needed within college courses**
  - **Connect with adult service agencies** to begin on-boarding process and learn about AT tools that they can provide
  - **Develop a plan to obtain AT tools** needed for work and college

Jonas – Transition – Phase 4



- Phase 4 – Making transition to post-school
  - **Obtain AT tools** for use in college and work
  - **Work with adult agencies** for support of AT tools
  - Coordinate with college to ensure there are **accommodations plans that include needed AT tools**.
  - Advocate for use of **AT in work environments**.

Amelia

- 14-year old student with intellectual disability.
  - Difficulties with remembering and completing multi-step tasks
  - Difficulty with expressive communication (uses AAC inconsistently)
- Postsecondary Goals
  - **Live as independently as possible** (daily routines, safety, self-advocacy).
  - Work at the library: **cleaning** and **indoor plant care** with supports fading over time.
  - **Volunteer in the community** on a predictable schedule.
  - Travel using **public transportation** for work/volunteer/community access.



Amelia – Transition – Phase 1

- Phase 1 – Foundations and Routines
  - Establish a consistent **visual schedule system** used across the whole school day.
  - Build **photo-based checklists for 2–3 routines** (e.g., wipe tables, sweep, water a plant).
  - **AAC**: build reliable access; build core vocabulary + school/community basics; teach “ask for help” and “I’m finished.”



Amelia – Transition – Phase 2

- Phase 2 – School-based job routines and communication expansion
  - **Expand checklists to more complex cleaning sequences and plant care routines** for volunteer tasks at school.
  - **Add timers/reminders** and "check schedule → start task → mark done" routine.
  - **AAC**: add **work pages** (supplies, locations, people, "problem + solution" phrases).
  - Start building **advocacy skills** regarding AT usage.



Amelia – Transition – Phase 3

- Phase 3 – Community-based work experiences and travel training
  - **Start using AT tools in community-based work experiences** (ideally library or similar) with job coach support.
  - Customize checklists using **real-site photos** (supply closet, sinks, plant locations).
  - **Embed a problem-solving routine**: *If stuck → check picture → ask for help via AAC → wait.*
  - **Begin travel training** in steps:
    - Build visual aids to help identify route, locate stop, board, pay/scan, watch landmarks, exit at correct stop
    - Use stop alerts + AAC scripts ("Is this the right stop?" "I need help.")



Amelia – Transition – Phase 4

- Phase 4 – Increase independence & fade adult support
  - Shift from step-by-step lists to **chunked checklists** (e.g., “Bathroom routine,” “Plant routine”).
  - Add **quality check** supports (photo examples: clean/not clean; watered/overwatered).
  - **AAC –**
    - increase workplace social communication (greeting, explaining, asking clarifying questions, reporting issues).
    - Increase advocacy for AT use with different individuals and in different context
  - **Transportation**: practice full route with fading supports; add “backup plan” prompts (missed bus, wrong stop).
  - Coordinate with **adult service agencies** to plan for continued use of AT tools



Amelia – Transition – Phase 5

- Phase 5 – Expansion and Amelia assumes full responsibilities
  - Add second community site (volunteering) to practice generalization:
    - volunteer checklist + **AAC scripts** for greeting, asking where to go, confirming tasks, thanking
  - Independent living routines strengthened using the same **visual system**:
    - laundry, simple meal prep, cleaning, personal care sequences, safety routines
  - Transportation: increase independence to include:
    - handling minor route changes, asking for help appropriately, using emergency contacts
  - Fully on-board with adult service agencies and acquire needed AT tools.



Both Examples

- Phased approach to identifying, learning, and applying AT tools.
- AT tools are used in the contexts needed to achieve postsecondary goals.
- Adjustments are made on the way to help student succeed.
- Ensure acquisition of and continued use of AT tools.

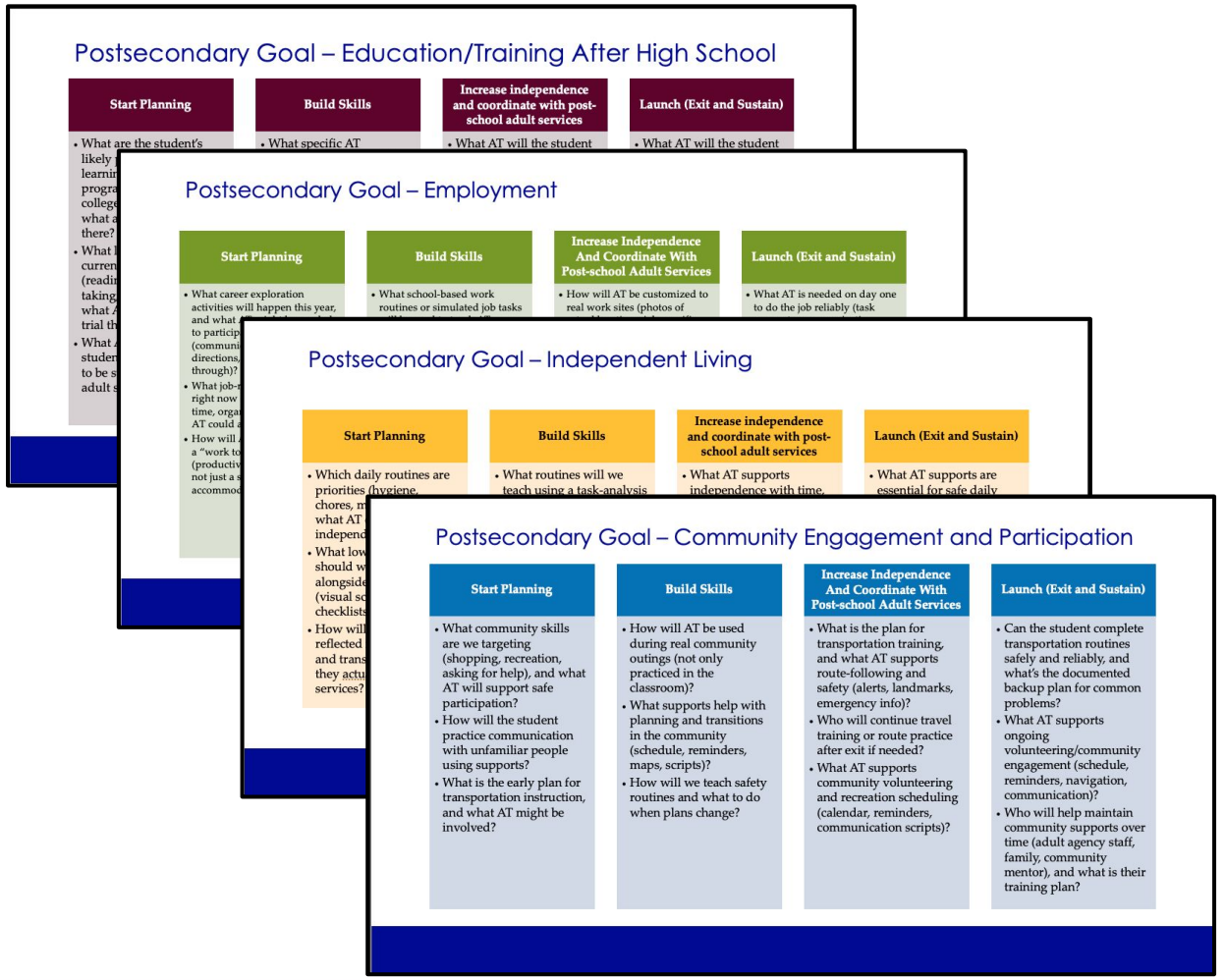




What are Example Key Questions Parents or Guardians Can Ask?

Get example questions

- Download from this link
- Access from
  - https://bit.ly/49PNQ6X
- Use QR Code



Postsecondary Goal – Education/Training After High School

Start Planning	Build Skills	Increase independence and coordinate with post-school adult services	Launch (Exit and Sustain)
• What are the student's likely post-high-school learning settings (training program, adult education, college supports), and what access barriers exist there? • What learning tasks are currently inaccessible (reading, writing, note-taking, studying), and what AT options will we trial this year? • What AT skills does the student need to learn now to be successful with less adult support later?	• What specific AT features/strategies will be taught (not just provided), and who will teach them? • In which classes/settings will the student practice AT consistently so it becomes a habit? • What data will we collect to show AT is improving access (comprehension, accuracy, independence, completion)?	• What AT will the student need in adult learning settings where supports are different (self-advocacy, reduced prompting)? • What documentation will we prepare for adult providers (AT summary, what works, training needs, troubleshooting tips)? • Who will provide AT training/support after high school (VR, disability services, adult agencies), and when do we start the handoff?	• What AT will the student have access to immediately after exit, and who is responsible for providing/maintaining it? • Do we have a simple "AT user guide" that explains what the student uses, why, and how to support it? • What is the plan for updates, repairs, replacements, and ongoing training?

Postsecondary Goal – Employment

Start Planning	Build Skills	Increase Independence And Coordinate With Post-school Adult Services	Launch (Exit and Sustain)
• What career exploration activities will happen this year, and what AT might be needed to participate meaningfully (communication, reading directions, task follow-through)? • What job-related tasks are hard right now (following steps, time, organization), and what AT could address those? • How will AT be introduced as a "work tool" (productivity/independence), not just a school accommodation?	• What school-based work routines or simulated job tasks will be used to teach AT-supported performance? • What AT supports will be embedded into tasks (photo checklists, timers, scripts, scanning/reading supports), and how will we teach the student to use them? • What is the prompting plan—how will adults support without creating dependence?	• How will AT be customized to real work sites (photos of actual locations, job-specific vocabulary/scripts, task sequences)? • Who will train the employer/job coach on supporting AT and communication appropriately? • What measures show growing independence (fewer prompts, better accuracy, on-time completion), and how often are we reviewing them? • What's the plan if job duties change—how will AT supports be updated quickly?	• What AT is needed on day one to do the job reliably (task supports, communication supports, reading supports, scheduling)? • What workplace accommodations will be requested, and has the student practiced explaining/asking for them? • What follow-along supports exist after graduation (VR coaching, job coaching, refresher training, troubleshooting)? • What is the backup plan if a device fails at work (low-tech backup, printed supports, alternate communication method)?

Postsecondary Goal – Independent Living

Start Planning	Build Skills	Increase independence and coordinate with post-school adult services	Launch (Exit and Sustain)
· Which daily routines are priorities (hygiene, chores, meals, safety), and what AT could increase independence? · What low-tech supports should we consider alongside high-tech (visual schedules, labels, checklists)? · How will AT needs be reflected in present levels and transition goals so they actually drive services?	· What routines will we teach using a task-analysis & AT approach (step supports, reminders, self-check)? · How will we practice the same routine across places (school/home/community) so it generalizes? · How will we teach the student to notice "I need support" and use AT to problem-solve?	· What AT supports independence with time, routines, appointments, and safety? · What adult services will support independent living goals, and how will AT be part of that plan (device maintenance, practice, coaching)? · What is the "fade plan" for adult prompting while keeping AT supports stable?	· What AT supports are essential for safe daily living, and how will we ensure continuity at home? · What routines still require support, and what AT adjustments could increase independence further? · What emergency plan is in place (contacts, scripts, location sharing, backup communication)?

Postsecondary Goal – Community Engagement and Participation

Start Planning	Build Skills	Increase Independence And Coordinate With Post-school Adult Services	Launch (Exit and Sustain)
· What community skills are we targeting (shopping, recreation, asking for help), and what AT will support safe participation? · How will the student practice communication with unfamiliar people using supports? · What is the early plan for transportation instruction, and what AT might be involved?	· How will AT be used during real community outings (not only practiced in the classroom)? · What supports help with planning and transitions in the community (schedule, reminders, maps, scripts)? · How will we teach safety routines and what to do when plans change?	· What is the plan for transportation training, and what AT supports route-following and safety (alerts, landmarks, emergency info)? · Who will continue travel training or route practice after exit if needed? · What AT supports community volunteering and recreation scheduling (calendar, reminders, communication scripts)?	· Can the student complete transportation routines safely and reliably, and what's the documented backup plan for common problems? · What AT supports ongoing volunteering/community engagement (schedule, reminders, navigation, communication)? · Who will help maintain community supports over time (adult agency staff, family, community mentor), and what is their training plan?



Session Feedback:

Please ensure that you complete this short survey at the conclusion of the event.

Your feedback is valuable to our future planning!!

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