

It is important to include assistive technology (AT) in the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP). AT has historically been under utilized and under documented for young children with disabilities. PACER's TIKES (Technology to Improve Kids' Educational Success) Project values administrators and their important role in leading staff. Leadership makes a difference in supporting AT for young children. When there is documentation and implementation of AT, there will be positive outcomes for children, families, and educators.



TIKES has conducted random samplings of 10 percent of all IFSP and IEP documents for children ages birth to 5 in its three partner school districts. TIKES' staff analyzed the evidence of the consideration of assistive technology, including the quality, quantity, and consistency of the documentation. One common element was a statement that "AT is not currently needed," but AT use was documented throughout the IEP. Data was collected and compared across each implementation year. The following recommendations were developed based on this IFSP and IEP analysis and the work with three partner districts in Minnesota.

1. Have written policies about inclusion of assistive technology (AT)

Districts that have written policies and procedures about assistive technology have better quality, quantity, and consistency of documentation. The more comprehensive the written policy and procedures are, the better the documentation appears to be.

Additionally, districts that regularly train staff about the AT policy, or review the AT policy with staff, have higher quality, quantity, and consistency of documentation.

2. Points to include in your AT policy

- As required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), consideration of AT should be a part of every IFSP and IEP. Consideration is a team conversation during which decisions are made about a child's or student's AP needs. Define what this consideration process looks like, and include information specific to the tool used in your district for special education.
- Include the possible outcomes, and state clearly in which specific sections of the IFSP or IEP to document these outcomes.
- Clarify district expectations for staff in documenting AT.
- Provide staff with information on how and where they can access AT to try with students, such as a district AT library, other AT libraries, such as PACER Center's Simon Technology Center, or available AT reuse programs, where staff and families can access used technology.

3. Use the TIKES AT Consideration Flowchart

The TIKES' AT Consideration Flowcharts for the **IFSP** and **IEP** help professionals to be intentional about the process of considering AT. These one-page flowcharts provide an easy-to-use process for the **four possible outcomes of consideration**.^{*} It is a helpful tool for educators who are new to AT, and a reminder for those who are experienced.

The four possible outcomes of consideration are as follows:

1. AT was considered and is not needed at this time.
2. The child/student is successfully using assistive technology. AT is necessary to meet specific IFSP outcomes or IEP goals.
3. The team has determined that the child/student needs AT and has enough information to make decisions about specific assistive technology.
4. The child/student needs assistive technology but the team needs information to determine the type of AT that would meet the needs of the child/student.

4. Develop or adopt a guide for AT consideration

Having a clear, structured process about including AT in the IFSP and IEP allows providers to be consistent and thorough as they consider AT for each student. Your district can create its own process or adopt a process that is already being used successfully. The TIKES' Consideration Flowcharts, Child-Centered AT Plans, and Expanded Child-Centered AT Plans can be found at [PACER.org/stc/tikes](https://www.pacer.org/stc/tikes) and are available for districts to use. They have been designed in alignment with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and current best practices.

^{*}For more information about the four possible outcomes of consideration, see PACER's TIKES handout: [STC-34b, Child-Centered Assistive Technology \(AT\) Plan \(IFSP\)](#)