

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides for an early intervention program that offers services to eligible children and their families designed to enhance the child's developmental needs. Assistive technology is one of 16 early intervention services recognized under IDEA to be considered as a service listed in a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

The following guidance addresses the selection and use of assistive technology devices for children and families in Missouri First Steps.

1. ACTIONS AT THE IFSP MEETING

A. An IFSP team member may suggest a discussion about assistive technology. At that time, the IFSP team should consider the following:

- **Child's age**

Questions to consider:

- Is the child near transition age?
- Will the child have the opportunity to use the item and make progress with it while in First Steps?

- **Child's current skills and abilities**

Questions to consider:

- Is the child making progress currently, without a device?
- Why is child unable to participate in the family's routines and activities?
- Can this device be easily integrated into the routines?
- Will the child have time to make progress while in First Steps?

- **What are the family's concerns and priorities?**

Questions to consider:

- What are the current IFSP outcomes?
- Has the IFSP team tried other strategies or activities to assist the child's progress?
- What strategies worked to assist the child's development?
- What strategies did not work in assisting the child's development?

B. The IFSP team determines whether **assistive technology is necessary to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an infant or toddler** in one or more of the following areas of development: physical, communication, cognitive, social-emotional, and/or adaptive.

- The IFSP team determines assistive technology is not necessary (see Notice of Action and Consent on page 2). The discussion is recorded in the IFSP strategies and activities, **or**
- The IFSP team determines assistive technology is necessary. The discussion is recorded in the IFSP strategies and activities; and the IFSP team looks at the full-range of options available.

Questions the IFSP team considers:

- How specialized must the device be to meet the need? Low-tech or high-tech?
- How long may it take to obtain the assistive technology device?
- Is the item available in the natural environment?
- Can the item be made?
- Can the item be borrowed or obtained through a loan program?

C. Once the IFSP team decides assistive technology is needed for the child and family, the Service Coordinator fully informs the family about assistive technology specifics, including the following points:

Items to discuss with the family – Ownership of the device:

- Assistive technology devices identified as necessary to reach an IFSP outcome and purchased by First Steps are authorized in the electronic child record (i.e., WebSPOE).
- If First Steps pays entirely for a device authorized by the IFSP, the device is considered property of First Steps.
- Private Insurance: If the parent has private insurance and gives signed parental consent to access private insurance, then the insurance company reimburses a portion of the cost of the device authorized by the IFSP; thus the device is considered property of the family. However, if the parent does not have private insurance or did not give signed parental consent to access private insurance, the device is considered property of First Steps. The Central Finance Office processes the insurance reimbursement at their office, not the family.
- Public Insurance (MO HealthNet): If the parent has MO HealthNet (i.e., Medicaid) and an assistive technology device is authorized by the IFSP, the device is considered property of First Steps because First Steps does not request reimbursement from MO HealthNet (i.e., Medicaid) for these devices.

Items to discuss with the family – Notice of Action and Consent

- If at any time the parent requests assistive technology that the IFSP team determines is not necessary, then the Service Coordinator must complete a Notice of Action refusing the parent's request for the assistive technology.
- The first time a family agrees to obtain assistive technology, the Service Coordinator must complete a Notice of Action/Consent with parental signature for "consent" to assistive technology. The date of signed parental consent is entered into WebSPOE under "Parental Consent."
- There may be a situation where a parent wants to "own" the device. In this case, the parent would decline the First Steps offer to purchase assistive technology and seek funding outside of the IFSP process. The Service Coordinator must complete a Notice of Action/Consent with parental signature for "decline assistive technology device" from First Steps.
- If a device is not the initial assistive technology purchase, but is a replacement or additional device, the Service Coordinator must complete a Notice of Action for a change in IFSP for the device; however no other consent is required.
- If a provider utilizes an assistive technology device in a short-term, trial manner in order to determine if it might be appropriate for a child (e.g., trying it out), then this does not require an IFSP team decision. Merely trying a device would not trigger a change in the IFSP and does not require Notice of Action. The Service

Coordinator would case note any discussion with the provider or family after the IFSP.

Items to discuss with the family – Transition / Early Childhood Special Education:

- If the device belongs to First Steps, the child does not qualify for ECSE, and the item is not customized for that child, the device must be recovered from the family. The device may be needed by another child in the First Steps program. If the device is customized for the child, the device may remain with the child since the device cannot be used for another First Steps child.
- If the device belongs to First Steps and the child transitions to ECSE and still needs the device, then the device may be loaned to the child's ECSE program. It is the responsibility of the SPOE to ensure that the device gets to ECSE and include the device on the SPOE inventory list. Note about loaning to ECSE: If the fair market value of the item is less than \$5,000 when it was purchased, then the "ownership" of the device can be transferred to ECSE. However, if the fair market value of the item is more than \$5,000, then the device may be loaned to the child's ECSE program. The SPOE is still responsible for tracking the device and including it on the SPOE inventory until such time that the device has depreciated. Note about depreciation: Equipment usually depreciates over a 5 year period. If a device costs \$6,000 on January 1, 2009, then the depreciation would be approximate to \$1,200 per year or \$6,000 divided by 5. In this example, the device could be transferred to ECSE after 1 year because the fair market value would be less than \$5, 000).
- At any time, a family can choose to donate a device by returning it to the First Steps SPOE office, so it can be used by another child in the First Steps program.

2. ACTIONS AFTER AN IFSP MEETING

A. The Service Coordinator shares the assistive technology request with the SPOE Director by completing the top half of the "SPOE Assistive Technology Pricing Form" that documents the IFSP team's decision to obtain assistive technology. The Service Coordinator lists any general information and a description of what device is needed (e.g., a weighted vest).

The Service Coordinator submits the "SPOE Assistive Technology Pricing Form" to the SPOE Director.

The SPOE Director determines **where and how** to obtain the device by determining the most appropriate service/device and the best economical method/location to obtain assistive technology. This should include the following:

- Check for device specifications - The IFSP team may suggest a specific item, brand name or modifications to obtain, and the SPOE may review the suggestion as part of the determination of the best economical method/location to obtain the device.
- The SPOE should determine if an appropriate item exists in inventory. The SPOE may decide to loan or borrow rather than purchase the item. The SPOE may consider construction and/or modification of certain devices.
- If the SPOE decides to purchase the device and it is not a customized device, the SPOE should obtain at least three (3) quotes from different assistive

technology providers. The device should be purchased from the assistive technology provider offering the lowest cost.

- The SPOE Director documents the process of locating the assistive technology on the bottom half of the “SPOE Assistive Technology Pricing Form.”
- Together the SPOE and the Service Coordinator will determine the best way to obtain the item that the IFSP team identified. Once the item is secured, the SPOE will notify the Service Coordinator that the item has been found or ordered.
- Note about authorizations: Devices loaned or borrowed are not entered as authorizations in WebSPOE. If assistive technology is to be purchased, then the SPOE director will:
 - a) enter the authorizations, **or**
 - b) return the “SPOE Assistive Technology Pricing Form” to the Service Coordinator and s/he will enter the authorization(s).

B. The Service Coordinator updates the IFSP document in WebSPOE:

The Service Coordinator records the following in the IFSP document to reflect the discussion and decision regarding assistive technology:

- Update child’s present levels, as needed
- Update outcomes to achieve for child and family, as needed
- **Update strategies & activities to list a general description of the device ***
- The projected dates for acquiring the device
- The method of acquisition (e.g., loan or purchase, if known)
- Specific training on the use of the device, if needed, and qualified personnel
- The setting in which the item will be used
- Note about IFSP documentation –Regardless of the method of acquisition (e.g., loan or purchase), the IFSP discussion about the need for assistive technology must be included in the IFSP document. If additional discussions are held after the IFSP meeting, the Service Coordinator must document those discussions in case notes instead.

**Required documentation for all assistive technology discussions*

The IFSP meeting must be finalized as soon as possible in WebSPOE, especially if there are additional changes in authorizations other than assistive technology (e.g., increase or decrease in provider visits). Purchasing assistive technology should not delay the Service Coordinator finalizing the IFSP. Since new authorizations are not created until the IFSP is finalized, this must be done quickly.

C. SPOE adds the assistive technology device to the SPOE inventory list.

Each SPOE office develops or maintains a system of tracking assistive technology purchases. The SPOE office shall use an inventory list to record all First Steps assistive technology items, including the devices purchased, loaned or borrowed. When attempting to locate a device, the SPOE may access the assistive technology devices within their SPOE region or a neighboring SPOE to utilize existing assistive technology devices when possible.