Adjust, adapt, and repeat. Adjust, adapt, and repeat. Such is the nature of the development of assistive technology. For example, Mikelle will get a brand spanking new talker (ECO or iPad) and she’ll be over the moon with excitement. It will take her weeks to figure out just exactly where her favorite apps are, like Netflix and Facebook, where her communication program is hidden and then before you know it there’s a newer and better device launching on the market and she’s suddenly three steps behind again.

Advancement is unavoidable

It’s in our nature to be constantly looking for smoother, faster and easier ways to do things. This can be both beneficial and detrimental to someone like Mikelle because even though technology allows her to do so much more with her life it also causes quite a few stumbling blocks along the way. She depends on her technology: her chair to retain her independence; her iPad/ECO to communicate her feelings; and her phone to keep in touch with her friends.

Just the other day Mikelle and Taylor, her roommate, were walking to the grocery store when her chair got stuck in a large pile of snow. Taylor was unable to lift her up onto the sidewalk from the street without the aid of two strangers who were passing by and kindly offered to help. One day, perhaps, she’ll have a chair that hovers over paltry things like snow. Until then we are forced to work with the limitations of her technology.

Every piece of technology brings its own set of issues. These issues just mean that there’s still more adjusting to be done by tech companies and more adapting for Mikelle. Over the course of her life, Mikelle has already seen so much improvement in this field. She can now do things like text or call her friend by connecting her phone over Bluetooth to her ECO device. In this way what she says is more easily conveyed, it’s clearer and it’s more true to her because there’s no interpretation of her words: just exactly what she wants to say.

One way Mikelle uses her technology to connect with others in everyday situations is through humor. She’ll use her iPad to order coffee, tell flirty guys they ‘better watch out because I’ve got my girls,’ and ask if her chair makes her butt look big. Her technology creates those small moments that lead to big and important relationships in her community.

For Mikelle, technology is an everyday reality. It helps her do so many things that she simply could not do without. As long as we keep developing new and better ways for assistive and universal technology to help people with disabilities, we can continue to help improve future opportunities for folks like Mikelle and revel in how life shines beautifully for all of us.

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Facing the Challenge of Technology

We’ve all been there, just like Mikelle.

You’ve carefully learned the newest technology and then it changed...again.

Now, we are asking you to not only stay up with your own changing technology in the form of smart phones, big screen TV’s, Chromecast, YouTube, blogs and websites, but to become an expert in assistive technology. Or so, it seems.

It is true—one needs to become 21st Century Rehabilitation advocate-in-chief in your family or organization. Things have always improved for people with disabilities with strong advocacy—why should this be different?

The digital divide is widening. As providers and parents, we are often the gatekeepers to the world of technology, the place where most of us participate daily. We manage our finances, keep in touch with our doctors and friends, we have apps to keep us on time, help us when we are lost and entertain us. Why wouldn’t a person with a disability want the same thing?

True, it’s overwhelming and frequently frustrating to keep up with the latest and greatest technological breakthrough.

However, we adjust, adapt, and repeat—just like Mikelle.

Does it really need to be so hard? No.

You’re about to learn the most important advice we have about embracing technology. When you learn these simple steps—life changes as quickly as you can say "power on."

Step 1: Empathize with your struggle.

Identify exactly where you are struggling. Ask yourself, what is holding you back from making sure you engage in the world of assistive technology, iPads and smart phones and all they can do for you? Once you become clear about the obstacles, then you can find the strategy to overcome them.

Judging yourself and feeling inadequate is easy. You may be tempted to label yourself a person who is never going to “get it”.

Adjust, adapt, and repeat.

The pace of change is roaring though the 21st Century like a locomotive. It gathers speed daily, often feeling quite intrusive. Yet, we have grown accustomed, even enjoying many of the advantages which follow it as it traverses the landscape of our lives. Think about remote controls, texting, Skype and FaceTime, and Facebook. YouTube and Google are your encyclopedias as you research areas of interest and need.

When we began to look at Mikelle’s need to communicate, assistive technology was just emerging as a viable way to give a voice to her speechless life. We knew Mikelle had stories to tell, a need to connect with her peers and to fully participate in her education. We ran into funding issues, like you will.

Our solution? We simply asked our community to help us figure it out. Everyday people, who knew Mikelle, understood she had to catch the technology wave or be left behind dug into their own pockets and helped Mikelle purchase each of these devices.

As cliché as it sounds, you have to ask in order to receive.

Lifelong learning defines the 21st Century. As gatekeepers, it is our job to quench the thirst people with developmental and intellectual disabilities have for more knowledge, access and enriching experiences in their lives.

Otherwise, they become different from us. We segregate them 21st Century style.

Challenges will make it tempting to stay in the 20th Century.

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For instance:

- Who will pay for the devices?
- Who pays for internet access?
- Who pays for increased data usage if they have an iPad or smart phone.

Do not count yourself out because of these challenges.

We have figured out how to move people with disabilities out of institutions and into jobs; and out of group homes and into their own homes and apartments. Our guess is when we come together and are as committed to accessing the on-line community as we were to integrating people with disabilities into their communities of choice, we will get it done.

**Step 2: Go beyond the promise of technology and find the benefits.**

Take a minute and ask yourself the big question, “Will technology make life easier for you? How about the person you support? Ultimately, the answer is “Yes.”

Imagine having your medical records read to you in the privacy of your own room. Or using a head switch to take inventory at the local bookstore using your iPad—and getting paid to do it as a valued member of the workforce? Or sharing pictures and stories about your friends using an ECO or Dynavox? Or running a small business via your on-line store and blog? Or with a simple click of the mouse, you can update the schedule for caregivers and support staff notifying everyone in an instant.

It is all possible just by your willingness to change someone’s life for the better. You have done it before—you can do it again, 21st Century style.

*“People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, have a right to independent living and choice. Disability-related challenges often interfere with this right. Assistive technology has the potential, when combined with other support services, to promote independent living and choice.”*  
—Bryan R. Bryant, PhD, Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk

The benefits to you as a provider, special needs parent, guardian, or family member are immense. Your own personal marketability grows, you become more connected to the time you live in and you grow in your own knowledge. You get to exercise the grey matter between your ears, connect with a younger generation and give them an opportunity to learn from your broader experience. Important, since one day they will inherit the world. Let’s face it, technology allows us to heal each as we build better communities, help more people leave their isolated lives and enter into the conversation of life.

**Step 3: Where to start?**

While it may feel impossible, it is not.

You just have to be a little prepared…

We all look for the easy button. We love simple, straightforward answers to our nagging problems or inspirations. And, to get started all you need…is a plan.

You may be thinking sounds too difficult or too much work. Where will you find the time?

The truth is you already know how to do it. You have been planning for years. Think of all the IEP (Individual Educational Plan) and Person Centered Planning sessions you have attended. You are more than halfway there!

All you need to do is add to the planning process with an ITP…an Individual Technology Plan.

Contact us at www.TheShiningBeautifulSeries.com and join our email list and we will gladly send one to you.

Call us and we will come speak with your organization and help you develop your plan for embracing the new rehabilitation reality.

Remember: be like Mikelle and the others we support daily.  
Adjust, adapt, and repeat…Advancement is unavoidable.
Assistive Technology (AT) is used by many people of all ages every day. It can be as simple as reading glasses or as sophisticated as a computer software program that transcribes the spoken word into written text. Across the lifespan, AT can have very specific purposes. This article gives examples at different stages of life.

**Early Intervention**
For infants and toddlers, AT is used to adapt their environment to support their ability to participate actively in the home, childcare program, or other community settings. This includes the ability to play successfully with toys and other children, communicate needs and ideas, make choices, and move independently.

AT solutions could include: helping a child to sit in their highchair by building support with towels, modifying their spoon by increasing the size of the handle, making a book easier to look at by putting spacers between the pages, or helping a child feel an object they cannot see by adding texture to the object. It can also include more sophisticated technology such as communication or mobility devices.

**School Aged Children**
In the school setting, AT is the lifeline that provides students with equal access to information and learning in the classroom and the world. AT may help students with physical disabilities, speech impairments, visual or hearing impairments or learning differences. A successful AT intervention combines the efforts and support of the student, the parents, the classroom teacher and the supporting educational team.

Examples include:
- Literacy software such as Text-to-Speech and Word Prediction
- Speech-to-Text software for individuals who are physically unable to access a computer
- Audio book players for individuals who have a vision impairment, as well as those with print disabilities
- Apps can be utilized with accessibility features to increase access
- Apps for learning, communicating, magnification screen reading, navigating, organization, studying, reminding, scheduling, reading, completing assignments, developing projects; as well as navigation, shopping, and Activities of Daily Living
- Software to magnify a computer screen to read a bus schedule, signs or menus, or invert text colors, increase mouse and cursor sizes
- Screen reading software and keyboard shortcuts to access the internet, email, and other computer applications for communication, research, and learning
- Refreshable Braille Displays to access information on the computer
- Graphic Organizers to brainstorm ideas, outline, and create visual templates and study guides to use for writing a paper, creating a project, or studying for a test

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• Adjustable equipment for access or seating and mobility solutions
• Adjustable monitors, keyboards, keyboard trays, large-font keyboards also provide equal access
• Trackball mice and joystick options for mouse control
• Augmentative and Assistive Communication devices can also be utilized for computer access and environmental controls, in addition to communication.

**Employment**

For individuals who are working, AT is considered a reasonable accommodation that can make it possible to successfully complete critical functions of required job tasks. Most solutions are inexpensive and can be as simple as rearranging a workspace. Other solutions include:

**Vision**
- Computer with voice output
- Screen magnification product
- Closed Circuit Television system (CCTV)
- Tactile markers for identifying key equipment or item locations.

**Hearing**
- Certified sign language interpreter
- Visual or tactile alerting systems
- Telephones with amplification devices and visual alerting systems
- Fire alarms with visual and auditory alerting systems
- Captioned video training materials

**Mobility**
- Touch screens
- Ergonomic keyboard
- Writing devices and aids
- Adjustable height desks and work tables

**Cognitive**
- Telephone auto-dialer
- Larger buttons on equipment
- Memory aids
- Talking devices
- Color coded labeling

**Seniors**

As we age, the potential for disability increases. We all want to stay in our homes as long as possible. AT provides a vital role keeping us as independent as possible and safe at an affordable price. These devices also make it much easier to carry out activities of daily living. There are many ways our bodies change as we age, examples of AT solutions include:

**Hearing**
To maximize the listening environment personal listening devices are essential. Alarm clocks, fire alarms, and doorbells are equipped to provide flashing light signals and/or vibration signals. Telephones are available that amplify a caller’s voice or provide written text of the callers conversation on a screen similar to a small computer screen. Amplifiers are available for televisions and closed-caption services which provides printed words on the TV screen.

*continued on page 6*
**Vision**

Magnification and additional lighting are key solutions for individuals with vision impairments.

Talking devices are also very popular. Talking clocks not only announce the time, but also the date. They can provide the time in large print or come with Braille labeling. Large button and Braille phones with a voice recognition feature make using the phone much easier.

Reading large print books and magazines or listening to CDs is available free through the Colorado Talking Book Library. Newspapers and magazines are also read daily for free on the Colorado Audio Information Network. Local libraries also provide free audible and electronic versions of books online. Computer screen magnification programs and screen text reading programs are both available to assist individuals to be more independent in their use of the computer. Signature guides assist in locating signature spaces on checks and written contracts. Large print check book ledgers and address books are also available.

**Dressing**

Sock aids are provided to individuals after knee or hip surgery to assist in getting their socks on. They are also useful for individuals with back problems or individuals who have difficulty reaching their feet. For individuals with difficulty using their fingers, buttons and zippers can be a source of frustration. Velcro closures, elastic thread for cuff buttons, and zipper pull additions are just a few solutions.

**Grooming**

Bath chairs and shower benches make bathing safer and more comfortable. For individuals who stand in the shower rubber strips or mats provide a safer environment and prevent slipping and falling. Hand-held shower sprayers also reduce the need to move around in the shower and reduce the potential for falls.

**Mobility**

Common devices for mobility come in a variety of sizes, shapes and styles. Devices include wheelchairs, scooters, walkers and canes. Ramps and lifts can also make a home more accessible. Lift chairs assist individuals in getting in and out of chairs by raising them from a seated position.

**Medications**

It is important to take medications at the prescribed dosage and times. They can be organized or scheduled by using a variety of pill organizers that can have large print labels, Braille, or talking alarms.

**Safety and Injury Prevention**

AT designed to prevent accidents and provide a safe environment can include: motion sensor lights, grab bars, and alert systems. Motion sensor lights turn on when motion is detected and can prevent falls. Grab bars can be placed anywhere where additional support is needed, not just in the bathroom. For individuals who wander, alert systems activate when they wander beyond a certain point. Remote controls can also assist in turning on lights, opening doors, and changing the channels on a television.

**Accessibility**

An individual not only needs to be able to enter their home, but also all areas of the home.

Key holders assist individuals whose fingers have difficulty manipulating keys. Doorknob grips and extensions are available for individuals with limited use of their hands. Reachers assist individuals with grasping, reaching and bending to pick up objects with minimal effort.

**Meal Preparation**

Many assistive devices are designed for individuals with

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limited use of their hands. Solutions in the kitchen may include: devices that assist with cutting, mixing, cooking, and opening items. Suction cups and Dycem can stabilize devices to keep them from slipping. Large print cook books and talking timers are available for individuals with vision impairments. Cooking utensils with larger grips, weighted grips and swiveling heads are available to assist individuals with limited hand and wrist function and range of motion.

**Leisure and Recreation**

Cards games can be adapted by using large print cards for individuals with low vision, Braille cards for individuals who are blind, card holders and automatic shufflers for individuals who have difficulty holding cards. Board games utilizing large print and Braille are also available for individuals who have low vision or are blind. For individuals who have the use of only one hand there are adaptations that hold embroidery hoops and clamps to stabilize projects to be worked on.

Outdoors, there are many garden tools that have larger handles for easier grips, and tools that can be attached to the arm for more support. Swimming pool lifts and flotation devices allow individuals with limited mobility to remain active in water activities and fishing poles can be attached to wheelchairs that cast out and reel in automatically.

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*For more information on assistive technology in your life contact:*

Assistive Technology Partners  
601 E. 18th Ave., Suite 130  
Denver, CO 80203  
(303) 315-1280  
(800) 255-3477  
generalinfo@at-partners.org  
www.assistivetechnologypartners.org

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Substantial progress has been made in the development of assistive technology devices, including adaptations to existing devices that facilitate activities of daily living that significantly benefit individuals of all ages. These devices, including adaptations, increase involvement in...programs and activities that facilitate communication, ensure independent functioning, enable early childhood development, support educational achievement, provide and enhance employment options, and enable full participation in community living for individuals with disabilities.

—Finding (5) from the Assistive Technology Act of 2004
**The Tech Act**

Public Law 100-407, the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act, was signed into law in 1988, and was amended in 1994. Under the auspices of the Tech Act, as it is called, all states have developed systems for providing a variety of technology assistance to children and adults with disabilities and their parents and guardians. The purpose of PL 100-407 is to provide financial assistance to the states to enable them to conduct needs assessments, identify technology resources, provide assistive technology services, and conduct public awareness programs, among others.

**Assistive Technology Device is defined as:**
“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 individuals with disabilities” (Tech Act, 1988).

**Assistive Technology Service is defined as:**
“any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, and use of an assistive technology device.

Examples of AT services—taken from the law itself—include:

- An evaluation of the AT needs of an individual, including a functional evaluation of how AT would help the individual
- Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing an AT device
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, replacing, or donating an AT device
- Coordinating and using therapies, such as occupational therapy or physical therapy, with AT devices under an educational plan or rehabilitative plan
- Training or technical assistance for an individual with a disability, or his or her family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives
- Training or technical assistance for educational or rehabilitation professionals, manufacturers of AT devices, employers, providers of training and employment services, and others who help individuals with disabilities
- A service that expands access to technology, including email and Internet, to persons with disabilities.

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**iPad app touches lives of Glenwood Springs family**

*By Anna Gauldin, Post Independent Intern, July 24, 2013*

In 1986, Kara Brouhard was hit by an out-of-control skier at Sunlight Mountain Resort. She was 5 years old at the time, and her skull was shattered.

She suffered a traumatic brain injury that left her in a coma for two months, and she awoke legally blind and paralyzed on her left side.

Ever since, her parents have dedicated their time to improving Kara’s life. Despite the challenges she has faced, she is now living independently roughly six blocks from her parents’ home, primarily because of an iPad.

“Really, there’s no way Kara should be able to live independently with the disabilities she has, but technology has transformed her world,” explained her mother, Alice Brouhard.

“She’s happy. She has her own little house, she has a dog and she has support people that are there when she needs it.”

Using the iPad, Alice and Kara have organized a detailed schedule of voice prompts, which guide Kara through her daily tasks. From waking up in the morning and putting laundry in the washer to cooking dinner and locking the door at night, Kara’s iPad, “Paddy,” leads her from moment to moment.

“A lot of times, a person with a brain injury really loses contact with time,” Alice explained. “We all have an inner voice in our head, telling us what to do all the time, but [Kara] doesn’t have that. This [iPad] is the inner voice in her head that guides her through her whole day.”

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“…there is a continued need to provide information about the availability of assistive technology, advances in improving accessibility and functionality of assistive technology, and appropriate methods to secure and utilize assistive technology in order to maximize the independence and participation of individuals with disabilities in society.”

—Finding (7) from the Assistive Technology Act of 2004
Living her dream

According to both Alice and Kara, living independently has always been a dream of Kara's.

“Ever since I was little, I have wanted to live in my own house,” said Kara in a recorded presentation Alice takes to conferences and uses in her teaching. “I follow my voice reminders to help me succeed. I am very independent because of Paddy, and I am proud of myself.”

Kara lived with her parents for roughly the first 20 years after her accident, working her way through the public school system in Glenwood Springs. After her graduation in 2000, she spent two years at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, where she lived in the dorms.

After returning home, she remained with her parents until 2007, at which point the Brouhards turned to technology to transition Kara into her own home.

“She’s always wanted to live independently; she’s always wanted her own life,” Alice said. “For the last 10 years, that’s what I’ve really focused on, trying to find a way for her to live as independently as she can. I found it with technology.”

Kara’s original setup involved a specialized software program called Visions, which cost more than $3,000. After buying a computer, a touchscreen monitor and speakers to complete the arrangement, Alice said they had spent more than $5,000.

“It was timed voice prompts, with someone telling her what to do all day long,” Alice explained. “But it wasn’t her voice, so sometimes she’d listen and sometimes she wouldn’t. She outgrew it.”

When the original computer crashed in 2009, the Brouhards were forced to invest in a new one, which also required a software upgrade. Alice said the new program, Voyager, cost $1,200 and was difficult to operate, but Kara’s dependence on the voice prompts didn’t leave them any other options.

Life-changing technology

Then, in 2010, Alice discovered the iPod Touch and the iPad, recognizing the technological promise they held.

“My husband had a brain tumor, and he was left with some challenges, mainly memory and organization,” Alice said. “I started using an iPod Touch for him to record voice memos and help with scheduling and calendars. Then I thought there might be things on the iPad for Kara.”

By 2012, Alice had completely transitioned Kara from the $5,000 software and computer setup to an iPad system for $451. She replaced the $1,200 software primarily with a 99-cent app—Aida Reminder—that allows users to record and schedule their own voice prompts.

Now, the majority of Kara’s audio reminders are recorded in her own voice. Some of them incorporate songs to keep them interesting, and Alice is able to alter the recordings periodically to make sure Kara doesn’t lose interest.

“The reason I’m so passionate about the iPad is that the cost is so much lower, and it’s easy to program and use,” Alice said. “It’s been life-changing for Kara. There’s so much more dignity in living your own life, rather than having people tell you what to do all the time.”

Alice has found a number of iPad apps to improve Kara’s situation, including Visual Impact, which pairs audio recordings and visual imagery to provide step-by-step instructions for tasks such as cooking. At $49.99, it’s the most expensive app she has purchased, but she has also found a number of free applications that provide similar options.

Since introducing the iPad into Kara’s life, Alice said she has seen new uses arise consistently.

“I work at Valley View,” said Alice, who has been a registered nurse there for 34 years, “and one of the things I think about all the time is how to use the iPad to help the elderly and other people with disabilities. I’m thinking all the time about how we can use technology to help people be more independent and self-sufficient.”

Alice also discussed the iPad’s potential for war veterans returning home with traumatic brain injuries, as well as for autistic individuals, who tend to work well with the tablet.

To spread the knowledge gained from her experience both as a nurse and as Kara’s mother, Alice started a small business, Tech Able LLC, about a year ago. She provides iPad training for several agencies that work with people with brain injuries and cognitive disabilities, and she teaches classes on iPad use at Colorado Mountain College.

“With my background as a nurse, I was used to looking for answers to problems,” Alice said. “There are so many people who could benefit from thinking outside the box about how to use technology.”
Assistive Technology Helps Me To Speak And Express Ideas

When I am sleeping, I dream that I am flying. When I’m awake, technology helps me to fly.

—Max Grange

I am good at using technology. I have been using technology to speak and learn since I was 3 years old. With the use of my left hand and switch, I have been able to do things that no one thought was possible. The Rotary Club in Aspen gave me my first computer. That was one of the most important gifts I’ve received in my life—the opportunity to show people that I was smart and could communicate.

Today, I use assistive technology for my job at the Aspen Animal Shelter where I write descriptions of the dogs for posters to help them get adopted. To date, I have helped over 40 dogs find homes. I am also working with a coach through a program called HIRE to find a job doing movie reviews. My technology plays an important role to be able to share my comments about the movies I see.

Another thing I use my technology for is to write and give speeches. I speak to groups about overcoming obstacles, what it is like to be in my community with disabilities and how to help people feel like they belong. Sometimes it takes me a month or 2 months to write one speech.

Every day I connect with people by Facebook, my website and by email.

I have special programming on my Echo 2 connected to my Macbook Pro that allows me to access and write with only a few hits on my switch.

I have a few friends in my community that are very good with technology and come over and help me. It is fun to work on projects together!

Follow me on Facebook, www.facebook.com/max.grange or my blog, www.365daysofcommunityinclusion.com

As technology has come to play an increasingly important role in the lives of all persons in the United States…, its impact upon the lives of individuals with disabilities…has been comparable to its impact upon the remainder of citizens of the United States. Any development in mainstream technology will have profound implications for individuals with disabilities in the United States.

—Finding (4) from the Assistive Technology Act of 2004
If you are looking for low-cost assistive technology equipment, Assistive Technology Partners hosts AT Finder, an online tool that simultaneously searches for online classifieds and/or auction sites (Craigslist, eBay, eBay Classifieds, and Oodle). A recent search for a Pride Scooter resulted in 60 products ranging in price from $32–$3,500. AT Finder can be accessed at www.colorado.atfinder.org. If you have questions, please contact Julia Beems at (303) 315-1284 or Julia.beems@ucdenver.edu.

If you are short of funds AT Funding Sources is a searchable online database and has over 2,000 agencies that provide funding for different types of assistive technology devices and services for all ages. Searches are based on your county of residence, diagnosis as it relates to the need for AT, age, area of need, and type of device. A recent search for a 14-year-old child with autism living in Denver county needing a prompting device for school (learning, cognition, and development) for school resulted in 38 agencies that would assist. Agencies varied from public insurance (Medicaid), Colorado Department of Education, Public and Private Agencies (Joni and Friends—Christian Fund for the Disabled, Variety of Colorado—Tent 37), Grants and Trust Funds (Colorado Fund for People with Disabilities, Friends of Man, The Good Shepherd Fund), Community Service Organizations (Elks, Kiwanis), and Low Interest Loans (American Association of People with Disabilities/Digital Credit Union, PFS Patient Financing). AT Funding Sources can be accessed www.at-partners.org/ATFunding/. If you have questions, please contact Julia Beems at (303) 315-1284 or Julia.beems@ucdenver.edu.

The Colorado AT Network
An alternative for agencies who want to provide product demonstrations to their clientele is the Colorado AT Network. The Colorado AT Network supports Coloradoans in learning about and acquiring assistive technology devices or tools to assist in maintaining or increasing functional capabilities, independence, and safety at home, work, or in the community. The AT Network provides FREE monthly webinars on specific assistive technology topics that expand the ability of an agency or organization to provide information about AT devices and services to their consumers; FREE Demonstration Kit loans that allow individuals to learn about and try a piece of equipment before purchase; and FREE access to the AT needs assessments to help identify individual assistive technology needs. If you are interested in learning more about, or joining the Colorado AT Network, please contact Julia Beems at (303) 315-1284 or Julia.beems@ucdenver.edu.

The Legal Center’s Assistive Technology Program
An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. [Footnote—20 U.S.C. sec. 1401 (1)] Educators, students, parents and advocates can all use assistive technology to insure equal access to school and work for all.

Assistive technology devices come in all shapes, sizes, costs, and complexities. They can be very highly technological items like adapted computer systems with voice activation; or

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they can be very simple items like magnifying glasses, large print materials, pencil grips, calculators or book holders. All of these items, whether simple or complex, are examples of assistive technology.

We have legal tools to help us acquire assistive technology devices and services for students in school and for adults. Here is an example of an assistive technology case that The Legal Center’s Client Assistance Program resolved for an individual who was receiving services from Vocational Rehabilitation:

A man with quadriplegia sought our assistance to obtain a modified van for transportation. He found a used van that had the modifications he needed and the dealership had documentation breaking out the cost of the van and the cost of the modifications. Our client requested the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation pay for the cost of the modifications, about $21,000. The DVR counselor responded that DVR would only pay for new modifications, about $45,000.

Geoff Peterson, Client Assistance Program Coordinator, contacted first the DVR Supervisor and then the acting regional supervisor and explained that the dealership had documentation separating the cost of the van and the cost of the modifications. Both responded that DVR could not pay for the modifications as they were previously installed and the Division of Purchasing would not approve the payment request. Geoff then called the Director of the Division of Purchasing who said that as long as DVR agreed to purchase the van with existing modifications he did not care that they were already installed. DVR agreed to purchase the van and it was delivered to our client.

Attorney Jennifer Purrington is the coordinator of The Legal Center’s Assistive Technology Program. The Legal Center will assist students who need technology for school, adults who need technology for work, and people who need technology for independence. For example, The Legal Center has been assisting younger individuals residing in nursing homes to obtain assistive technology, both to be more independent in the facility, but also to move into the community. In addition, The Legal Center has been involved in making sure that local election polling places have appropriate technology and are accessible. You may contact Jennifer by calling The Legal Center at (303) 722-0300 or 1-800-288-1376. You may also find additional information on The Legal Center’s web site at www.thelegalcenter.org. Here is a link to an article on assistive technology on Randy Chapman’s Ability Blog:

http://randychapman.wordpress.com/2007/10/30/at-is-where-it%E2%80%99s-at-obtaining-assistive-technology-for-students-with-disabilities/

Meet Your Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council Members

The Council is staffed by individuals from the community and from state agencies that provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Federal legislation (The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act) mandates that a majority of Council members must be either persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities or their family members or guardians. Over the course of the next year, we will be introducing you to the dedicated individuals who serve on the Council.

**TODD COFFEY** (Denver, Older Americans Act)—is the Acting Director of the Division of Aging and Adult Services with the Colorado Department of Human Services. Todd has worked with Long-Term Care Programs for over 18 years, both in the private sector and with the State of Colorado. Before coming to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Todd was the Home and Community Based Services Waiver Coordinator with the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing. Todd received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Metropolitan State College of Denver.

**ED GEORGE** (Denver, Advocate)—is a Council Member representing Denver where he currently resides. Ed is the sixth of seven siblings. He was born at Ladd AFB, Fairbanks, AK one day after Alaska was admitted to the USA as its 49th state. His father was in the US Army. He retired in 1965 and moved the family to Montrose, CO where Ed graduated in 1977. Ed brings extensive advocacy experience from the field of mental health and has volunteered at Mental Health America since 1998.

**MIKE HOOVER** (Boulder, Advocate)—I am from Boulder, Colorado. I am autistic and I type to communicate. I like bringing my life experiences to the Council. I live in my own apartment and work in a brewery. I love working with the Public Policy Committee and giving testimony at the legislature. I like working on policy development at the local level. I need more people with disabilities to help in making a better world.

**LISA KRAMER** (Littleton, Parent)—comes to the Council with a full range of experience that motivates her to advocate for people living with a disability. She has been the patient following a car accident that left her with a traumatic brain injury as a teenager, the parent of a child with a disability after her son suffered a stroke before birth, the provider of services as the founder and executive director of Hope Farms Project and has worked on policy issues that impact people with disabilities. She serves on the Legislative and Public Policy Committee.
Analysis Seeks to Better Serve People with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

By Sarah Davidon, M.Ed.
Director of Community Education,
JFK Partners/University of Colorado School of Medicine

Numerous national reports, and recent tragic events, have highlighted the problems associated with inadequate, inappropriate, or absent mental health services for children, adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Excessive use of emergency services and psychiatric hospitals (when access to these are actually available) are only two of the unfortunate results of an uncoordinated system. The toll on individuals, their families, and the community can be tragic.

The Colorado Autism Commission and subsequently Colorado Collaborative for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disability Options (CANDO) identified the scarcity of appropriate services for children, youth and adults with these co-occurring needs as one of the most critical service issues in Colorado. CANDO was created in 2010, in response to a Senate Joint Resolution (SJR10-027) to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the Colorado Autism Commission. It has prioritized ensuring services and supports, that strengthen efficiencies and service outcomes, for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities with co-occurring mental health conditions and/or behavioral health needs.

Colorado needs a program designed to provide seamless linkages across community mental healthcare to avert crises and assure access, appropriateness, and accountability. To this end, the Colorado Legislature appropriated $50,000 effective July 1, 2013 directing the Colorado Department of Human Services to contract for a Crisis Prevention and Intervention Gap Analysis. Reggie Bicha, Executive Director of Colorado Department of Human Services, assured Senator Pat Steadman of the Colorado Joint Budget Committee in a letter dated 3/13/2013 that “the proposed gap analysis will provide an in-depth study of the current system, for services to individuals with a dual diagnosis, to identify the factors contributing to the failure of the current system to meet the complex needs of these individuals. The report will make recommendation for models that include a 24/7 response team, facilitate collaboration between stakeholders and provide evidence-based, person-centered approach to assisting individuals and their families to prevent crises situations from developing and to address those situations in a comprehensive manner when they occur.”

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You’re Invited to Join Mayor Michael B. Hancock for the 18th Annual Dan B. Davidson Excellence in Inclusion Awards

July 23, 2014, 5:30—8:00 p.m.
Holiday Inn Denver East—Stapleton
3333 Quebec Street, Denver, CO 80207

The Awards honor Dan B. Davidson, who died in 1996 at the age of 41. Dan defied the odds, set aside the advice of others, and followed his dream to live independently in the community.

In honor and recognition of Dan’s spirit, the Council recognizes exemplary practices of inclusion that support persons with disabilities to become fully participating members of their community.

The Council is seeking nominations for awards to be given to individuals, agencies, or organizations that have demonstrated visionary practices—providing exemplary service and supports—for persons with disabilities that lead to inclusion as active and valued members of their communities. The Council will recognize outstanding examples of inclusion in the following categories:

- Education
- Employment
- Community Life

Winners in each category will receive an award honoring their efforts along with a $500 honorarium and will be recognized at the Council’s annual celebration on July 23, 2014.

More information about the Awards Ceremony and a nomination form can be found at http://www.coddc.org/default.asp?page=60.

The major components of the Gap Analysis include:

- Full stakeholder participation
- In-depth analysis of individual cases to determine the medical, social and environmental factors that contribute to individual situations
- An analysis of the availability, appropriateness and access to services for the individuals who have a dual diagnosis
- Identification of statewide strengths and challenges in service delivery and coordination
- Analysis of the cost impact associated with the current system
- Recommendations for:
  - Models that provide an evidence-based person-centered approach
  - Models that link existing systems of care
  - Recommendations for next action steps

In the fall of 2013, 11 community meetings were held around the state to encourage discussion, solicit input, develop action plans, and contribute to recommendations in a report that will be presented to the Colorado State Legislature and state agencies. Additionally, a provider and consumer survey has been developed to gather additional input.

The community meetings and survey produced four main themes where gaps exist for people who experience co-occurring neurodevelopmental and mental health issues:

A. System design and funding
B. Inter-system coordination
C. Support for families and caregivers
D. Knowledge and expertise

Recommendations related to these themes will be included in the final Gap Analysis report and will be available in the fall of 2014.

For additional information, to view videos related to this initiative, and to access the survey please visit www.tinyurl.com/ColoradoGap.

Sister Act Section continued

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It was a sad day, Tuesday, January 14th, 2014, when Clarence Miller passed. Clarence was a very vocal advocate for many issues. He fought against the use of the word “mental retardation,” especially at the Arc National conventions; he was a strong proponent of real work for real pay in real places with real benefits; and he exemplified freedom on a daily basis. Randy Chapman of The Legal Center described Clarence as an individual who made ultimate use of his freedom every day. Clarence had many experiences of being denied freedom at the Grand Junction Regional Center and the Institute in Pueblo as well as ‘eloping’ (love that word) from a number of group homes in the metro area. Clarence could sniff out a denial of freedom better than anyone I know. Clarence possessed a strong intuition about when he was in an open environment; when he was around people that suppressed who he was; and if he was in a place where he was appreciated and had the freedom to express himself and live life as he saw fit. Clarence found a perfect home for himself at the Capitol. He participated in the same good ‘ol boy humor, ceremonies, and gossip as every other person under the dome.

Clarence lived with my family for a time in the early 2000’s. Individuals from human services asked me if I had a host home or a foster home. Individuals from the neighborhood asked me if Clarence were my old man. When my sons sent him to get liquor at the local shop, they asked if he was the boys’ father. Everyone had some preconceived notion about who Clarence was relative to our family and his living situation. No, we were not a host home, a nursing facility, a foster home, a religious group doing good, or part of an intentional community. The best descriptor of our relationship was that Clarence was a very good friend. He was in that role for many people as evidenced by the testimony given at his service and we are all better off for that experience. Clarence will be greatly missed by many.

Additional AT Resources for Families

The Simon Technology Center (STC) is dedicated to making the benefits of technology more accessible to children and adults with disabilities. Families can find web streaming workshops, videos, print resources, newsletters, and blogs on their web site. Many print materials are available in English, Spanish, Hmong and Southeast Asian, and Somali. http://www.pacer.org/stc/. The STC is one of the many programs supporting the families of and youth with disabilities provided by the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) PACER Center. For more information go to http://www.pacer.org/about/.

The Family Center on Technology and Disability provides a wide range of resources on assistive technology, from introductory fact sheets and training materials to in-depth discussion of best practices and emerging research. Many resources are available in English and in Spanish and can be found at http://www.fctd.info/. FCTD and the PACER Center have collaborated to produce a fully-captioned assistive technology awareness series, “AT in Action”. The series can be found at http://www.youtube.com/user/fctdvideo?feature=results_main

Tools For Life’s AppFinder

Researching and locating new apps can be an overwhelming task. “Our Favorite Apps” database promises to help make your app search much easier. This database is a unique tool that will allow you to search for apps by disability or multiple disabilities as well as by price ranges and device types. Every app housed in this database has been used and/ or tested by one or more members of the Tools for Life team along with many of our peers from across the country. With so many apps available, the Tools for Life App database will also link you to other App databases that were designed for specific disabilities. http://www.gatfl.org/favorite-search.php.