



Assistive Technology Is A Part Of Everyday Life: **Housing**

#ATAwarenessDay

March 1, 2023, is National Assistive Technology Awareness Day! Congress has designated this day to recognize the role of assistive technology (AT) and AT services in the lives of persons with disabilities. Celebrate AT!

What is Assistive Technology (AT)?

AT is any item, device, or software used to maintain or improve the independence and functioning of persons with disabilities and older adults. AT devices can be “low tech,” such as a built-up handle on a spoon to improve the ability to grasp, to “high tech,” such as computers controlled with eye gaze. AT includes the services necessary to get and use the devices, including assessment, customization, repair, and training.



Wally at home with his wife in California (see page 2).

What Services Do State and Territory Assistive Technology Act Programs Provide?

AT Act Programs assist individuals with disabilities of all ages (including veterans and older adults) to identify and acquire AT that supports their independence, safety, and personal goals. Programs serve AT users directly and their family members, caregivers, educators, therapists, and employers. Anyone with a reason to learn about AT is welcome.

AT Act Programs provide opportunities to learn about and try out AT. Visitors can compare the functions and features of a range of devices through hands-on exploration. These equipment demonstrations often lead to device loans that help inform future purchase decisions or fulfill a short-term equipment need.

AT Act Programs do not sell new AT. Instead, they may provide funding counseling and financing to obtain or purchase AT. Visitors are not pressured to choose any particular product or vendor. AT users learn about devices from AT professionals who may use assistive technology themselves. AT Act Programs also support the reutilization of gently-used devices to provide free or affordable equipment. [Learn more at AT3Center.net](https://www.at3center.net).

How Does Assistive Technology Support Housing?

AT is evolving rapidly to support individuals with disabilities and older adults to live at home independently and with a higher quality of life. Smart home devices, including televisions, lights, thermostats, and security systems, now provide extraordinary environmental control opportunities for residents with mobility limitations. Devices that support memory and cognition assist older adults and others in staying current with medications. Home modifications, such as ceiling track systems, can lift persons with paralysis and move them between rooms. Service providers can remotely monitor residents' routines using sensors and then drop in via video to provide assistance, support, and companionship. However, most AT for housing continues to be

simple devices such as threshold ramps, grab bars, and transfer poles, assisting individuals in avoiding falls and saving thousands of dollars in healthcare costs.

A Story from California

Wally was unable to move home from a rehabilitation facility in California. To be discharged, Wally needed several home modifications, including a way to get to his front door. Friends contacted the FREED Center for Independent Living, a partner of Ability Tools (the California Assistive Technology Act Program). The FREED Center operates California's second busiest device loan and assistive technology demonstration center. FREED provided Wally with a portable wheelchair ramp to create an accessible path from his parking area to his porch and front door. In addition, FREED referred Wally to their Reuse and Fix It programs, where FREED refurbishes and finds new homes for gently used AT. Wally received a floor-to-ceiling transfer pole to assist him in getting in and out of bed and a toilet aid for bathing and toileting. All services were provided free of charge. In CA, the average cost of a rehabilitation facility is \$300-400 per day. With the assistance of the FREED Center, Wally avoided thousands of dollars in unnecessary healthcare costs from a more extended stay in rehab. Best of all, Wally was able to return home to his wife. ([Read Wally's full story.](#))

Examples of AT for Housing:

- shower grab bars
- Echo Show and other smart speakers
- smart security systems
- environmental control devices
- mechanical lifts
- smart appliances
- bedside commodes
- threshold ramps
- stair lifts
- kitchen safety devices (automatic shut-offs)
- lift-assist recliners
- bidets
- transfer poles

A Story from Connecticut



Joshua shows off his MedMinder in his new apartment.

When Joshua moved into a cluster apartment, his primary goal was to be as independent and safe as possible in his new home. To help support him, ATECH, a CT AT Act partner agency, demonstrated a variety of supports for daily living and assistive technology tools. Joshua has trouble remembering to take his medications. ATECH demonstrated the MedMinder because of its unique features, such as automatically locking medication compartments. Only the meds he needs to take are available to him at the appropriate time and day. When Joshua needs more general assistance at home, ATECH demonstrated the Claris Companion. This video chat device allows Joshua to reach only

pre-programmed contacts, an additional safety feature. Other devices ATECH staff demonstrated include the Ring Peephole Video doorbell, the CookStop, and the Microwave Safe-T Sensor. Joshua enjoyed these devices, and the team put them into place at his new apartment. Now he is thrilled to be achieving his goal of living independently and safely. His picture is worth a thousand words! ([Read Joshua's full story.](#))