

## HEALTH SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

Madam Chair and members of the Health Services Interim Committee, for the record, my name is John Vastag and I currently serve as the team leader for the Interagency Program for Assistive Technology. (IPAT) Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today on the services provided under the IPAT umbrella.

North Dakota was originally awarded the Assistive Technology Act grant in the last quarter of 1993. In 2005, IPAT moved out of state government and became the Governor's Implementing Entity for the Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) with the North Dakota Association for the Disabled nonprofit umbrella providing fiscal services. In 2009, IPAT established itself as a non-profit organization with 501c3 status. IPAT has continued in that role ever since, but has expanded services well beyond the AT Act, as I will cover with you shortly.

IPAT is somewhat unique as not only are we the designated AT Act implementing agency, we also have numerous other programs under the IPAT umbrella. IPAT is also unique in that it covers all ages (youngest has been under one and oldest 105); and we provide services for people with all types of disabilities including vision impairments, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Autism, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's to name a few.

IPAT is governed by a volunteer board of directors. In the right hand pocket of your packet, you will find a listing of the current board of directors, as well as, our current organizational chart. The majority of our IPAT team is made up of Assistive Technology Consultants who are highly trained experts in the field of assistive technology (AT).

In the left hand pocket of your folder is a document which shows the IPAT umbrella of services. You may want to take it out and take notes as I walk you through each program and describe for you how the program benefits your constituents as by enhancing their quality of life while providing a significant return on investment on the citizens tax dollars we receive.

## 1) AT Act

- a. Two year contract in which the Federal funds flow through the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- b. The two year budget for this program is approximately \$1.3 million with \$700,000 plus of federal funds and \$580,000 of general funds. The first state general funds came to the program in 2007 in the amount of \$500,000.
- c. Required to provide AT equipment demonstrations, short-term equipment loans, an equipment reuse program, trainings, public awareness events, informational blog and website, information and assistance, and alternative financing programs as discussed below.
- d. As stated above, AT Act programs are required to have at least one alternative financing program. IPAT has two; a Financial Loan Program and a Last Resort Funding Program. Since 2011, IPAT has implemented the Possibilities Fund, our Last Resort Funding Program. We have organized fundraising events to raise dollars that have purchased approximately \$140,000 worth of equipment for citizens from all across North Dakota. Each March, July and November, a committee meets to review the requests and make determinations on which requests can be funded. Funds raised pay for equipment such as communication devices, ramps, alerting devices for people who are deaf, and more. We only fund those requests when all other avenues of payment have been exhausted. Usually, we have many, many more requests for funding than our limited resources can accommodate.
- e. One other requirements of the AT Act is the establishment of a Consumer Advisory Council (CAC). The AT Act is very specific about the membership makeup of the Consumer Advisory Council. It requires membership from State agencies such as DHS, DPI and others and also requires that at minimum, 51% of the membership be consumers.

- f. **Unique Initiative-IPAT established Home First Centers in Fargo (2013) and Mandan (NEW-July 2016)**-which are “houses” built in each our offices, which contain all the rooms of a home filled with various assistive technology. The primary focus of our Home First Centers is to increase awareness to the public of all the possibilities that AT brings to help a person stay safely and independently as possible in their home of choice and out of a nursing home, which currently costs an average of approximately \$94,000 a year, per person, in ND.

## **2) Assistive Safety Device Distribution Service (Senior Safety)**

- a. One year contract through DHS, with the Federal funds flowing through the Aging Services Division of DHS.
- b. Program provides safety devices to your senior constituents that are over 60 years of age and meet the requirements.
- c. Each individual is limited to \$300 of equipment per contract period.
- d. Of the \$155,000 contract just under \$112,000 is for equipment purchases such as the Med Ready, grab bars, Medical Alert Systems etc.

## **3) Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Service (Specialized Telephone Program)**

- a. Two year contract through DHS, with the State funds flowing through the Aging Services Division. Funds provided by the Telephone access line surcharge.
- b. The program provides specialized telecommunications equipment to meet the needs of North Dakota citizens who have severe hearing, speech or physical impairment.
- c. \$250,000 contract with the largest portion covering the cost of various telecommunication devices.
- d. Recent amendment to the contract to include adapted cell phones when appropriate.

#### **4) Deaf-Blind Program**

- a. In 2012, IPAT was designated by the FCC as the North Dakota implementing agency for the Deaf Blind Telecommunications Grant, iCanConnect.
- b. This was a four year pilot project on the national level that just recently was converted from “pilot” status to a full program status.
- c. The program provides specialized equipment to meet the needs of North Dakota citizens who have both a hearing and a vision impairment.

#### **5) Assistive Technology Financial Loan (ATFL) Program** (this is a separate contract with separate funds, but it is also part of the AT ACT reporting requirements as mentioned above).

- a. In 2002, IPAT partnered with Security State Bank of Jamestown to establish an Assistive Technology Loan Program.
- b. In 2003, IPAT and Protection and Advocacy were awarded \$1.27 million for the Alternative Financial Loan Program.
- c. Designed to be used for the more expensive items that cost between \$500-\$50,000 such as motorized wheel chairs, modified vehicles, ramps, home modifications, etc.
- d. IPAT charges 1% over prime and is able to spread the payments out over a longer time so individuals do not have to come up with significant cash to acquire the assistive technology they need.
- e. If the individual request is turned down by the bank, IPAT has a review committee that takes a second look at the application to determine if it is one that will qualify for the program and be guaranteed-similar to a guaranteed student loan program.

#### **6) Sprint**

- a. This is a small annual contract that Sprint pays IPAT to do presentations on the various telecommunications devices available.
- b. During any given twelve month period, IPAT conducts 14-18, four hour presentations across North Dakota for this program.

## **7) Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Program**

- a. This program is a Purchase of Service agreement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and focuses on the students aged 14-21 who are currently enrolled in the K-12 education system.
- b. The focus of the program is on help students (special emphasis on the rural districts) prepare for the transition out of the K-12 system to their next chapter in life.

## **8) Fee For Service**

- a. On occasion, IPAT will get requests to conduct Assistive Technology assessments, consultations, and trainings from various funding sources such as employers, WSI, the VA, schools, vocational rehabilitation, waiver programs, etc. The main focus of the assessments is to determine the assistive technology that will help a person stay at home, learn in school, return to work or stay employed in his or her current position.

I will now turn it over to Tyler Merkel from our Mandan office to demonstrate several assistive technology devices and how they help your constituents stay safe and independent.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the IPAT story. I would be happy to answer any question you may have.