



State Assistive Technology Act Program

COVID-19 Emergency Response

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can State/Territory AT Programs purchase additional supplies and equipment needed to respond to the current emergency situation?

Yes. State and Territory Assistive Technology Programs funded under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended (AT Act of 2004) are able to reallocate funds for the state-level and state leadership activities conducted under Section 4 to utilize them as needed to support reconfigured Section 4 activities in response to the emergency situation. As a formula funded program, Section 4 grantees do not need federal approval to modify budget allocations for grant award funding. Items that might need to be purchased due to the emergency situation include sanitization/sterilization supplies, additional AT device inventory, telework and teleservice related equipment and services, etc. If Section 4 funds are reallocated or redirected for emergency situations, appropriate records and cost documentation must be maintained in case of a review or an audit.

2. Can all Section 4 activities be provided remotely?

Most Section 4 activities can be provided remotely. There may be some services that do require direct recipient or participant contact and decisions should be made at a local level about how to handle those unique situations consistent with public health guidance and social distancing initiatives.

3. Can data be reported in the APR when activities are conducted remotely?

Yes. Many Section 4 activities can be effectively provided remotely including training, technical assistance, awareness, state financing activities, drop-ship of short-term device loans or refurbished devices and even device demonstrations. Creativity is encouraged to adapt activities to remote delivery mechanisms during this emergency to continue service provision and report activities in the Annual Performance Report (APR).

4. Can State/Territory AT Programs revise contracts/agreements with partners to reconfigure or suspend their activities and continue paying them with Section 4 dollars?

Yes. Grantees are encouraged to adapt their State/Territory AT program to continue the provision of services through the COVID-19 response. Grantees

are encouraged to revise agreements with partners to continue to provide reconfigured services to the maximum extent possible and to continue to flow Section 4 dollars to partners to mitigate the negative economic impact of the current emergency situation. Grantees will need to work with internal fiscal, contracting, and accounting offices of their administrative home (state agency, university, etc.) to revise agreements and continue payments to partners for reconfigured deliverables. (See CATADA Data Brief #11 Data Considerations in Emergency Situations for more detailed information.) Federal approval of contract revisions is not required.

5. What do reconfigured Section 4 activities typically include?

To some extent this depends on the structure of the particular AT Program as centralized or decentralized. Most all programs have moved staff to remote work settings, revised staff responsibilities from direct client contact to remote client service and/or other supportive activities like doing remote follow-up with consumers, remote tracking of devices out on loan and extending loan periods or implementing revised mechanisms for device return, developing written materials to support program operation, revising sanitization protocols to use when strict isolation is no longer needed, etc. Converting to remote services can be a challenge in a decentralized structure where the State/Territory AT Program does not have direct control over the staff and working environment of partners. In some cases, specific equipment will need to be purchased to enable remote work/service, e.g. computers, expanded internet access, internet boosters, etc. Grantees are encouraged to be flexible in using Section 4 dollars to support reconfigured services and these unique expenditure needs.

6. Can the liquidation period for Section 4 grants be extended if necessary due to an emergency situation?

Yes. On a case-by-case basis, liquidation extensions can be granted to help a grantee fully liquidate funds that were obligated by the end date but could not be liquidated (e.g. dollars were obligated for a device purchased but could not be liquidated due to supply chain disruption or similar). Hopefully the timing of the current COVID-19 emergency is far enough away from the end of the federal fiscal year to provide grantees with an opportunity to reallocate dollars in an attempt to fully obligate FY 2019 award funding by September 30, 2020 and fully liquidate by December 31, 2020.

7. Can demonstrations be conducted without the participant having hands-on access to the device to be explored?

Yes, so long as the device can actually be explored to enable decision-making without hands-on access. Otherwise the event would likely be a training or awareness event instead. The Annual Performance Report (APR) instructions indicate that "If a demonstration is to be conducted without the participant having direct (hands-on) access to the devices to be demonstrated, the

interaction must be structured to ensure the device can be adequately explored to enable decision-making.”

8. How can State/Territory AT Programs report short-term device loans where devices are never returned, due to widespread closures of schools and other borrower agencies?

When a decision is made that a device will never be retrieved from a borrower, the grantee should close that loan and report it in the APR with the data that is available which should be everything but performance measure and satisfaction rating which will be reported as non-respondent. All the other data will be available on the front-end of making the loan and is not conditioned on the device being returned or gathering additional information from the borrower.

Please remember that all decisions about the length of time a device is out for short-term loan are made by grantee internal policies and not dictated by the Annual Performance Report (APR). (See CATADA Data Brief #2 Short-Term vs. Open-Ended Loans for more detailed information.)

9. Should State/Territory AT Programs be concerned that numbers decrease in the FY 2020 Annual Progress Report (APR) because of service suspension or reconfiguration during the COVID-19 emergency?

No. State/Territory AT Programs are encouraged to adapt their programs to be responsive to the AT needs of those in the community. There are no targets that must be met by an individual grantee in their APR either in volume of numbers reported by activity nor in percentages computed for performance measures and satisfaction. Data decreases are routinely seen in emergency situations (e.g. prior hurricane, flood and similar natural disaster events). Grantees who do have significant decreases usually provide a short, succinct description of the reason for the decrease in the notes section for that activity. An emergency situation is not the time to be concerned about "output numbers" or "bean-counting". The focus should be on mitigating the negative impact of the emergency to the maximum extent possible. Grantees who have minimum output requirements or other similar metric targets for contractors/partners will need to consider revision of those due to the current emergency (see Questions 4 and 5 for more discussion of revising agreements with contractors/partners.)

10. Do State/Territory AT Programs need to update their State Plan for AT if services are suspended or reconfigured in the COVID-19 emergency?

No. The State Plan for AT is a high-level, three-year plan that describes the typical structure used to conduct Section 4 activities. It does not need to include or be updated to describe operational changes in an emergency

situation. Since the State Plan for AT for 2018-2020 is currently being submitted if a grantee chooses to include some description of reconfigured services that is acceptable, but it is not required.

11. With the evolving COVID-19 situation, what is the best way to explore effective practices and procedures of other State and Territory AT Programs in order to continue to provide state-level and state leadership activities?

The AT3 Center is continuing to scan challenges posed and solutions implemented by states and territories to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities and older adults through virtual or other measures. They will update the AT3 Center website on an ongoing basis with contact information and resources to assist State/Territory AT Programs. That site can be accessed at: <https://www.at3center.net/home>.

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