



**The Massachusetts Initiative to Maximize
Assistive Technology in Consumers' Hands:
Federal Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report**

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Charles Carr, Commissioner
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Executive Summary

MassMATCH Statistics

- 683 assistive technology (AT) devices were loaned by MassMATCH partners to state residents. AT loans allowed people to test drive devices or fill a short-term equipment need.
- 319 people learned about AT at device demonstration events.
- 41 people with disabilities helped pilot the new Long Term Device Loan Program (for devices valued under \$500). The program is run in partnership with Easter Seals and saved consumers a total of \$11,556.
- Get AT Stuff, the New England “Craig’s List” for AT, completed 27 exchanges, saving Massachusetts residents an estimated \$49,304 over retail.
- The Massachusetts AT Loan Program provided \$1,396,740 in financial loans to 67 borrowers. The program has a loan approval rate that is 3% higher than the national average. Most loans were made to purchase vehicle modifications.
- 944 people were trained on AT topics.
- 727 people received information and referral services.
- 29,706 people were reached through public awareness activities.
- An additional 8,105 people visited the MassMATCH website.

MassMATCH Highlights

- MassMATCH funds two AT Regional Centers, in partnership with Easter Seals in Boston and United Cerebral Palsy-Berkshire in Pittsfield. The Centers provide a variety of AT services to people of disabilities of all ages.
- MassMATCH began a partnership with the Stavros Center for Independent Living to provide refurbishment of power wheelchairs, power scooters, and power standers. Additional partners are currently being sought to expand these services to more regions of the state.
- In partnership with Easter Seals, MassMATCH launched the Long Term Device Loan Program. The program provides devices valued under \$500 to users for as long as they need them.
- MassMATCH held its first ever AT Summit for state agency AT staff. The Summit helped identify AT service gaps and began work toward cross-agency collaboration.
- MassMATCH conducted extensive training to help launch the AT Assessment Tool. The Tool was created to help people with disabilities and elders access the AT services they need in order to make a successful transition from facility-based care to community living (or to help them remain in their communities). Trainings were conducted with discharge planners, advocates, and others.
- MassMATCH created a state AT Staff Directory to chart who provides what with regards to AT services for people with disabilities. The directory was created to identify the state’s AT human resources, encourage cross-agency collaboration, and to help preserve and maintain valuable AT services into the future.

Introduction: Meeting the Requirements of the AT Act of 2004

MassMATCH is one of 56 state initiatives federally funded through the AT Act of 1998 as amended in 2004 (hereafter “the AT Act of 2004”). It stands for the Commonwealth’s initiative to “Maximize Assistive Technology (AT) in Consumer’s Hands,” and its goals are to improve awareness of and access to assistive technology for people with all kinds of disabilities, of all ages, and for all environments. The 2004 AT Act amendments specifically call for improving access to AT in the areas of education, employment, community living, and IT and telecommunications.

The AT Act of 2004 does not directly pay for AT devices. Instead the emphasis is on funding initiatives that create better access to affordable and appropriate equipment. Each state is required to carry-out the following:

State-level Activities

1. State finance systems (for individuals to affordably purchase AT)
2. Device reutilization programs (to exchange, repair or recycle used equipment)
3. Device loan programs (for short-term trials of equipment)
4. Device demonstration programs (to see and try out equipment)

State Leadership Activities

1. Training (with a portion focused on transition assistance)
2. Technical Assistance (with a portion focused on transition assistance)
3. Public awareness, information and assistance
4. Coordination and collaboration (among entities responsible for AT policies, procedures and/or funding of AT devices/services)

In addition, states must have an advisory council to provide consumer-responsive, consumer-driven advice on the design, implementation, and evaluation of all activities state-level and leadership initiatives funded by the AT Act grant.¹

In FFY09, MassMATCH worked to take stock of the state’s human resources for AT services, understand the programs these individuals run, and identify key gaps in services as well as opportunities for resource sharing. To do so, MassMATCH held its first AT Summit for all state-agency AT staff, created an AT Staff Directory to encourage interagency collaboration, and initiated partnerships to launch a new durable medical equipment reuse/refurbishment program (i.e. manual and power wheelchair recycling). The overarching goal is to foster an interconnected AT services system that maintains and shares its expertise, is responsive to residents with multiple disabilities, and works together to serve as many residents with disabilities as possible.

¹ For more detail on state requirements: www.ataporg.org/atap/legislative?id=act1998

State-level Accomplishments

1. State Financing: The Mass. Assistive Technology Loan Program

The Massachusetts Assistive Technology Loan Program is an Alternative Financing Program (AFP) funded jointly by the federal government and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is an interest buy down and loan guarantee program enabling people with disabilities and families to access affordable credit to purchase AT. The program is administered by Easter Seals of Massachusetts, and Sovereign Bank is the program's lending partner.

To be eligible for a loan, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- They must have a disability or represent someone with a disability. For example, a parent might submit the application for a child with a disability.
- The devices being sought must be used primarily to increase the independence of someone with a disability.
- Applicants must have been Massachusetts residents for the past six months.

The program allows eligible individuals to borrow between \$500 and \$25,000 for program-guaranteed loans. In addition, there is no upper loan amount for loans provided directly by Sovereign Bank without a program guarantee. The rate is negotiated every twelve months (throughout FFY09 it was 4.5%). Loan terms are based on the expected life of the needed item, from three years for computers to seven years for adapted vans. Guaranteed loan terms may be customized to meet an individual's repayment needs.

Loan Applications

For FFY09 the AT Loan Program loaned \$1,396,740 to 67 borrowers, another 14 applicants were approved but chose to not take out a loan. The AT Loan Program loan approval rate was 72%. This approval rate is 3% higher than the national average.

Table A: AT Loan Program Approval Rate vs. National Approval Rate Average

FFY08 Loan Applications	Number	Percentage	National Percentage
Approved	81	72%	69%
Denied	32	28%	31%
Total Processed	113		

43% of the approved loans were made to applicants with incomes above \$35,000 per year. 27% went to incomes of \$15,000 per year or less.

Table B: Number of Loans and Approval Rate by Applicant Income

	Applicant Annual Income						Total
	\$15,000 or Less	\$15,001 to \$20,000	\$20,001 to \$25,000	\$25,001 to \$30,000	\$30,001 to \$35,000	\$35,001 or More	
Number of loans	18	6	8	2	4	29	67
% of loans approved	27%	9%	12%	3%	6%	43%	100%

To ensure that assistive technology loans are accessible by the Massachusetts disabilities community, Easter Seals contracts with more than 20 AT access sites across the state to provide outreach, marketing and individual assistance with completing AT Loan Program loan applications (when necessary). These access sites include independent living centers, elder organizations, disability-specific organizations, AT providers and rehabilitation facilities as well as statewide Device Demonstration and Device Loan programs. Additionally, AT Loan Program brochure and informational materials have been translated into six alternative languages to reach people with disabilities from under-served and un-served communities.

Table C: Point of Origin of Applications

FFY09 Applications	Number
Access Sites	13
AT Loan Program Directly	122
Total	135

Loan Type and Purpose

The average loan was \$20,847 with an interest rate of 4.5%. 52% of the loans approved were interest-buy down only. 48% were interest buy-down with a loan guarantee (extending credit to applicants who would not otherwise have been approved by the lender).

Table D: Approval Rate by Loan Type

Loan Type Approved	Number	Percentage of Total Approved
Interest Buy-Down	35	52%
Interest Buy-Down + Loan Guarantee	32	48%

Broad ranges of AT and AT services are allowable under the AT Loan Program. The loans are commonly used to help purchase vehicle modifications, adapted computers, computer software, durable medical devices and portable ramps. In addition, the AT

Loan Program offers funding for assistive technology services to help people determine which device may be right for them. These services help people locate and purchase items, train them on their use, and provide maintenance and repair.

As the following table demonstrates, in FFY09 96% of the total amount financed went to vehicle modifications and transportation needs (which correlates with the bulk of the applications coming from non-metro areas). 3% was loaned for the purpose of environmental adaptations.

Table E: Number and Value of Loans Made by AT Device/Service Type

Type of AT Device/Service	Number of Devices Financed	Total Value of Loans	% of Amount Loaned
Vision	1	\$3,906	<1%
Hearing	3	\$8,985	<1%
Speech communication	0	\$0	0%
Learning, cognition, and developmental	0	\$0	0%
Mobility, seating and positioning	0	\$0	0%
Daily living	0	\$0	0%
Environmental adaptations	4	\$45,166	>3%
Vehicle modification and transportation	58	\$1,336,975	96%
Computers and related	1	\$1,708	<1%
Recreation, sports, and leisure	0	\$0	0%
Total	67	\$1,396,740	100%

AT Loan Program Customer Satisfaction

46 of 67 loan recipients provided feedback on their satisfaction with the loan program. As the table below demonstrates, 81% were highly satisfied or satisfied with the program (37 total recipients); 4% were somewhat satisfied (2 recipient), and 15% were not at all satisfied (7 recipients).

Table F: Customer Satisfaction

Customer Rating of Services	Number of Customers	Percentage of Responders
Highly satisfied	27	59%
Satisfied	10	22%
Satisfied somewhat	2	4%
Not at all satisfied	7	15%
Sub total (responders)	46	
Non-respondent	21	
Total	67	
Response Rate	67%	

AT Loan Program Success Story:

Robert, a 44-year-old man living with end stage kidney disease, osteoarthritis and osteodystrophy, came in to Easter Seals last spring for assistance purchasing a converted van. He needed the vehicle because his condition had worsened, and he could no longer load his wheelchair into his car.



Robert’s situation was urgent. To live he needed to make it to dialysis three times each week, and he was now entirely dependent on family and friends and public transportation. By the time he’d approached the AT Loan Program he’d already been turned down by multiple funding sources, and with many medical bills and health that made employment impossible, a conventional loan was far out of reach.

The AT Loan Program acted quickly. It helped Robert secure a guaranteed loan at a low interest rate. With this loan Robert was able to purchase an already converted used Dodge Grand Caravan.

Thanks to the AT Loan Program, Robert regained a great deal of independence. He no longer relies on sporadic accessible public transportation or the generosity of his friends and family. The AT Loan Program provided the assistance no other program could make possible.

2. Device Reutilization: GetATStuff and the Long-Term Device Loan Program

GetATStuff.org

GetATStuff.org is website of the Assistive Technology Exchange in New England. GetATStuff’s goal is to put AT that is currently not being used into the hands of someone

who can benefit from it. The exchange offers a free "classified ad" so people can buy, sell, give away, or post their need for equipment (on the website we call it a "virtual AT porch sale").

MassMATCH joined with the AT Act programs of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont to create GetATStuff. The site is designed to serve New Englanders, but residents in neighboring states may post as well. Users may sort postings by geography and/or device category or keyword.

In FFY09, there were 290 new users registered. There were 4,229 hits to the website, 375 requests for contact information (contacts between posters and respondents), and 27 completed exchanges.

Table G: Community Participation Between FFY07 and FFY09

Activity	FFY07 (02/07-09/07)	FFY08	FFY09
New Users to Register	183	283	290
Hits to Listings	687	3,580	4,229
Items Posted for Sale/Free	65	75	106
Items Posted as Needed	18	23	39
Completed Exchanges	1	23	27

The equipment category with the highest number of postings "for sale" or "as needed" was mobility, seating and positioning.

Table H: Items Posted For Sale/Donation

Category	Number
Vision	11
Speech Communication	2
Learning, Cognitive, Developmental	1
Mobility, Seating & Positioning	55
Daily Living	14
Environmental Adaptations	10
Transportation and Vehicle Modifications	6
Computers and Computer-related	5
Recreation, Sports, and Leisure	2
Other	0
Total	106

Table I: Items Posted As Needed

Category	Number
Vision	2
Hearing	1
Mobility, Seating and Positioning	12
Daily Living	7
Environmental Adaptations	8
Transportation and Vehicle Modifications	4
Computers and Computer-related	2
Recreation, Sports, and Leisure	1
Other	2
Total	39

There were 27 completed exchanges in FFY09 saving New England AT consumers a total of \$49,304 (as compared with the purchase of new equipment). Not surprisingly, most transactions were in the category of mobility, seating, and positioning.

Table J: Cost Savings As Reported By Sellers

Type of AT Device	Number of Completed Exchanges	Total Estimated Current Purchase Price	Total Amount for which Devices Were Sold	Savings to Consumers
Vision	3	\$2,774	\$500	\$2,274
Hearing	0	0	0	\$0
Speech communication	2	10,300	0	\$10,300
Learning, cognition and development	1	325	0	\$325
Mobility, Seating & Positioning	15	\$27,140	\$625	\$26,505
Daily Living	1	\$2,400	\$0	\$2,400
Environmental Adaptations	2	\$5,900	\$1,300	\$4,600
Transportation and Vehicle Modifications	3	\$4,400	\$1,500	\$2,900
Total	27	\$53,229	\$3,925	\$49,304

GetATStuff Performance Measures

As the table below shows, 39% of GetATStuff recipients (nine respondents) provided feedback for how the exchange program served them. Four reported they could only afford AT through the exchange program. Three reported the AT was only available to them through the program. One reported it was easier to buy the AT this way than to pursue the other program available to him or her. Most recipients wanted the AT for community living.

Table K: Primary Purpose for the Need for AT: GetATStuff

Response	Education	Employment	Community Living	Prefer Not to Answer	Total
I could only afford the AT through this program	1	1	6	0	8
The AT was only available to me through this program	1	0	2	0	3
The AT was available to me through other programs, but the system was too complex or the wait time was too long	0	0	1	0	1
None of the above	0	0	2	0	2
Sub total	2	1	11	0	14
Non respondent	13	0	0	0	13
Total					27

GetATStuff User Satisfaction

Most sellers were highly satisfied with the service.

Table L: Feedback from Sellers

Seller Rating of Services	Number
Highly Satisfied	24
Satisfied	1
Satisfied somewhat	2
Non respondent	0
Total	27

The thirteen recipients who provided feedback were satisfied. Twelve were highly satisfied.

Table M: Feedback from Recipients

Recipient Rating of Services	Number
Highly satisfied	12
Satisfied	1
Non respondent	14
Total	27

GetATStuff User Profile

Mrs. Smith is a 72 year old woman who had a stroke in January of 2009. By May, however, she had recovered to the point where she was able to take very short walks around her backyard accompanied by her daughter, Joanne. As one who loves the outdoors, and an avid walker before her stroke, Mrs. Smith was anxious to try longer walks but was afraid she lacked the stamina to do so. She was also petrified that if she ever needed to stop and rest, she may not have a place to comfortably sit down.



Joanne wanted to take her mother for longer walks, too, but found that doing so, along with her two young boys, was too much of a gamble. The one time she risked taking them all into the neighborhood quickly became stressful. She could not stay with her mother and also keep up with her young boys.

To solve the problem, Joanne spoke with her mother about looking into the possibility of getting a manual wheelchair. A wheelchair, she figured, would give her mother the breaks she needed, while also allowing her to keep up with the boys. Her mother agreed, but the problem became affording one.

Because of tight finances, Joanne was glad when a staff member at one of MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation regional offices referred her to MassMATCH and the GetATStuff.com website. Here Joanne found a nearly new manual wheelchair for an affordable price.

It took just three days to carry out the transaction, and the wheelchair made an immediate difference for the entire family. "Now that I have the wheelchair," Mrs. Smith reports, "we are able to go out more often. Because when I get tired walking, we quickly switch to the wheelchair." Joanne also says that going out is much easier and that all of them are much happier because they visit the park more often and go to many more places.

Plus the boys like to push their grandmother, too (under her supervision!)

Long-Term Device Loan Program

The Long-Term Device Loan Program for Low Cost Devices (aka “the mini loan program”) began as a pilot in January, 2009 through a MassMATCH partnership with Easter Seals-MA. The program loans AT devices valued at under \$500 to applicants who demonstrate financial need. The loans are “open-ended” which means that borrowers may use the devices for as long as they need them to live more independently. The program is available to residents of Massachusetts with a disability and family members who are applying on behalf of their relative with a disability.

In this pilot phase, Easter Seals is purchasing new devices based on applicant needs. When these items are no longer needed, they will be returned and made available to future borrowers. MassMATCH supports the administration of the Long-Term Device Loan Program, and Easter Seals-MA is funding the devices.

In FFY09, the program saved 41 borrowers a total of \$11,556. The program provided computers, vision aids, mobility aids, and communication devices. The program is continuing in FFY10.

Table N: Cost Savings to Borrowers

Type of AT Device	Number of Devices on Long-Term Loan	Total Estimated Current Purchase Price
Vision	2	\$393
Hearing	26	\$6,560
Speech communication	1	\$94
Learning, cognition and development	0	0
Mobility, Seating & Positioning	2	\$290
Daily Living	0	0
Environmental Adaptations	3	\$1,364
Transportation and Vehicle Modifications	0	0
Computers and related	7	\$2,855
Recreation, sports and leisure	0	0
Total	41	\$11,556

Long-Term Device Loan Program Performance Measures

Table O: Primary Purpose for the Need for AT

Response	Education	Employment	Community Living	Total
I could only afford the AT through this program	4	0	22	26
The AT was only available to me through this program	0	0	0	0
The AT was available to me through other programs, but the system was too complex or the wait time was too long	1	0	14	15
None of the above	0	0	0	0
Non respondent	0	0	0	0
Total	5	0	36	41

Long-Term DLP User Satisfaction

Table P: Feedback from Borrowers

Recipient Rating of Services	Number
Highly satisfied	2
Satisfied	1
Satisfied somewhat	1
Not at all satisfied	1
Non respondent	36
Total	41

Long-Term DLP Success Story

Maria is a 46-year-old woman with multiple medical issues in addition to Cerebral Palsy, learning disabilities and low vision. She uses a wheelchair and relies on personal care attendants for her Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). Because of her disabilities she finds it difficult to work and her sole income is SSI.



Maria approached the Long-Term Device Loan Program because she was frustrated at having to rely on others to keep track of her appointments and remind her about what she needs to do each day. She'd found a TADI talking organizer that worked well for her and would give her back some autonomy, but it was well out of her reach financially. She'd heard of the Long-Term Device Loan Program and wondered if it could help.

Easter Seals approved her request for the device, purchased it to become a part of the Long-Term DLP inventory and delivered it to her home. The device allows her to keep

track of her own schedule, appointments, phone numbers and addresses. Maria is delighted because she has gained more independence.

Device Loan: AT Regional Centers Device Loan Program

MassMATCH funds two AT Regional Centers to provide a variety of AT services to people who need them. United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) in Pittsfield operates the AT Regional Center serving western Massachusetts, and Easter Seals (ES) in Boston operates the AT Regional Center serving eastern Massachusetts. One of the MassMATCH services they provide is the short-term device loan program.

Device short-term loans offer people with disabilities the opportunity to use equipment up to four weeks free of charge. Device short-term loans serve several functions:

1. Consumers use them to “test drive” and learn about equipment before purchasing.
2. Employers use them to find appropriate “reasonable accommodations” for employees with disabilities (as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act) and to avoid wasting resources on uninformed decisions.
3. Educators use them to integrate their students with disabilities into school activities at the start of the school year as they assess what equipment works best and while equipment is being procured.
4. People with disabilities use them to help justify the purchase of durable medical equipment (DME). Insurance providers often require proof of a short-term trial of the equipment before providing reimbursement for DME expenses. Equipment vendors do not always provide trials or they may have prohibitive fees.

In FFY09, a total of 683 devices were loaned by the AT Regional Centers. As the table below illustrates, the most utilized device loan category was Speech Communication. 205 of 683 devices loaned (30%) were in speech communication.

Table Q: Devices Loaned by Device Category

Device Category	Devices Loaned	
Speech Communication	205	30%
Vision	120	<18%
Hearing	83	12%
Computers and Computer-related	117	17%
Daily Living	62	9%
Learning, Cognition, and Developmental	41	6%
Environmental Adapt.	50	>7%
Mobility, Seating	1	<1%
Vehicle Modifications and Transportation	0	0%
Recreation, Sports and Leisure	4	<1%
Total	683	100%

Equipment loans are used by a broad range of professionals, as well as individuals with disabilities and their families. In FFY09, the AT Regional Centers were particularly effective at reaching people with disabilities and their family members (47%), education representatives (23%), and representatives of technology (13%).

Table R: Device Loan Participants by Category

Category of Participants	Device Loans	
Individuals with disabilities	127	30%
Family members	73	>17%
Reps of Education	97	23%
Reps of Employment	0	0%
Reps of Health, Allied Health, Rehab.	43	>10%
Reps of Community Living	12	3%
Reps of Technology	55	13%
Others	13	3%
Total	420	100%

The vast majority of FFY09 device loan participants used the program to help make a purchasing decision (77%).

Table S: Loans by Purpose

Loan Purpose	Device Loans	
Purchase Decision	326	77%
Loaner	19	>4%
Accommodation	52	>12%
Other	27	>6%
Total	424	100%

Device Loan Customer Satisfaction and Performance Measures

93% of borrowers who provided feedback were satisfied with their device loan experience. Most were highly satisfied

Table T: Device Loan Customer Satisfaction

Customer Rating of Services	Consumers	Percentage of Responders
Highly satisfied	77	61%
Satisfied	41	32%
Satisfied somewhat	8	6%
Not at all satisfied	1	1%
Sub total (responders)	127	
Non respondent	293	
Total	420	
Response rate %	30%	

Most device loan users who provided feedback, and who were borrowing AT in order to make a purchase decision, went on to decide the AT met their needs. As the table below demonstrates, these were 73 of 143 responders (51%). 42 of 143 users (29%) reported the AT would not meet their needs. And 28 (20%) were undecided.

Table U: Device Loan Access Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Education	Employ.	Comm. Living	IT/ Telecom.	Totals
AT meets needs	33	3	36	1	73
AT won't meet needs	19	0	22	1	42
No decision	15	7	5	1	28
Sub total (responders)	67	10	63	3	143
Non respondent	73	22	86	2	183
Total	140	32	149	5	326
Response Rate	48%	31%	42%	60%	44%

Device Loan Success Story: UCP-Berkshire

An educator came to the MassMATCH AT Regional Center in Pittsfield looking for a device that would help a middle school student she was working with to communicate. The student, she explained, was non-verbal, but high functioning on the Autism spectrum. A UCP staff member took into consideration this student's hand mobility, motor skills, and his general interest in today's technology, and recommended a new device that had just been added to the device loan inventory. It was an iPod Touch with Proloquo2go communication software.



Communication on the Go for iPhone and iPod touch

The teacher was excited to try it with her student. Halfway through the trial she called asking how she could go about purchasing one. The device, she reported, worked great for a number of reasons. It was easily programmable to customize for the student; he was able to use it in his day to day routine, and most importantly, the device did not make him stand out in a crowd, but was cool like what his peers had. Plus, the student was able to use the calendar to maintain his schedule and loved that he could download his own music.

At the end of the trial his family bought him the device, thrilled that it was also relatively inexpensive as compared with so many communication devices on the market.

Device Loan Success Story: Easter Seals-Boston

Last spring, a woman with progressive hearing loss, “Susan,” came in to the AT Regional Center in Boston to learn about assistive listening devices. At work she found she was sitting out of board meetings, group interactions, and avoiding telecommunications. She confessed that she had not told her workplace about her condition, and was not fully ready to embrace the challenges she was facing. She was, however, using hearing aids and willing to begin to learn more about “what was out there.”



Center coordinator Katie Krusinski showed Susan many devices during her visit so she could decide what she liked, what didn’t work for her, and what was, as she described, “amazing.” Since a primary challenge she identified was using her cell phone, Katie showed her the advantages of an amplified powered neck loop. The neck loop works to eliminate feedback and environmental sounds by calibrating a cell phone (or mp3 player) directly to a user’s hearing aids. It eliminates the need for and works better than a headset, providing the user dramatically greater clarity. For Susan, the difference was so profound that she broke into tears. Here was one problem with a potential solution.

Susan came away from the device demonstration with the neck loop on short-term loan to trial in a variety of settings. At the end of the loan she decided not to purchase the device just yet, and instead attend an upcoming AT Regional Center information session dedicated to AT for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She was also considering contacting the Mass. Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for help with her workplace challenges. To Katie it was clear that the device demonstration and device loan were part of Susan’s journey with hearing loss and that she was taking steps as she was ready for them. The ATRC was helping her to learn about her options without encouraging rash decisions, and when the time came to acquire equipment, Susan would make informed choices that she would be ready to put to work.

4. Device Demo: AT Regional Centers Device Demonstration Program

Device demonstration is the opportunity for an individual or group to see AT in action. It is an essential part of the MassMATCH AT Regional Centers holistic approach to AT services. Individuals with disabilities, their family members, human service providers and others come to the centers to learn about new AT products, see how they work, and find AT solutions appropriate to their or their clients’ needs, desires, and functional capabilities. Device demonstration can be for a particular device or multiple device options. Device demonstrations may lead to a short-term device loan, and, perhaps, help with a Mass. AT Loan Program application.

In FFY09, the AT Regional Centers provided a total of 229 demonstrations. As the table below shows, these were primarily for Speech Communication, Vision, Hearing, and Computers and Computer-related devices.

Table V: Demonstrations by Device Category

Device Category	Demonstrations	
Speech Communication	52	23%
Vision	61	27%
Hearing	27	12%
Computers and Computer-related	37	16%
Daily Living	22	<10%
Learning, Cognition, and Developmental	20	9%
Environmental Adapt.	6	<3%
Mobility, Seating	1	>0%
Vehicle Modifications and Transportation	0	0%
Recreation, Sports and Leisure	3	>1%
Total	229	100%

319 individuals participated in device demonstrations in FFY09. Most were people with disabilities and their family members (a total of 145 individuals or 45%). Representatives of education were the next largest category, followed by health representatives, and representatives of community living.

Table W: Demonstration Participants by Category

Category of Participants	Demonstrations	
Individuals with disabilities	73	23%
Family members	72	>22%
Reps of Education	70	22%
Reps of Employment	3	1%
Reps of Health, Allied Health, Rehab.	47	15%
Reps of Community Living	43	>13%
Reps of Technology	5	<2%
Others	6	2%
Total	319	100%

Of the 128 participants who provided feedback, 46 found AT that met their needs (36%). 20% of all participants found AT that would meet their needs.

Table X: Device Demonstration Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Education	Employ.	Comm. Living	IT/ Telecom.	Totals
AT meets needs	27	3	13	3	46
AT won't meet needs	12	0	10	0	32
No decision	32	1	24	3	60
Sub total (responders)	71	4	37	6	128
Non respondent	56	8	22	5	101
Total	127	12	79	11	229
Response rate	56%	33%	47%	55%	56%

87% of device demonstration customers who provided feedback were satisfied; 46% were highly satisfied

Table Y: Device Demonstration Customer Satisfaction

Customer Rating of Services	Consumers	% of Responders
Highly satisfied	82	46%
Satisfied	72	41%
Satisfied somewhat	23	13%
Not at all satisfied	0	0%
Sub total (responders)	177	
Non respondent	142	
Total	319	
Response rate %	55%	

Device Demonstration Success Story: UCP Berkshire

This past September, Chris, a nine-year-old boy with Down Syndrome, came in to the ATRC in Pittsfield with his parents. His special educator is a “frequent flyer” of the Center and had recommended he come in to try out augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. Chris is non verbal and up until this time his school had been using sign language to communicate with him. But Chris was hard to understand; he tends to use approximations for signs, and his teacher, the ATRC “frequent flyer,” knew they could do better.



At the Center, Dawn Matthews and Maneera Murphy demonstrated several different AAC products, devices which display pictures, symbols, and graphics that a non verbal person can touch to voice their needs, feelings, or anything else they choose. The first product they showed him was a Dynavox Express. It's a small hand held device that has a better speaker system than the iPod Touch. The display on the device, however, proved too small to be effective for Chris.

To address this limitation, Maneera next showed him a Dynavox V5. This Dynavox has a large display field, but it is also quite heavy, too heavy, in fact, for Chris. Feeling like Goldilocks, Maneera next sought a happy medium with a Springboard by Prentke Romich. The Springboard is not as heavy, but has a good sized dynamic display, like the Dynavox, which means its symbols can change to correspond with Chris's activities as they vary throughout the day.

Chris liked the look and feel of the Springboard, and Maneera saw another advantage to this choice for Chris: the Springboard has the capacity to record a real child's voice. Most AAC devices use synthesized computer voices of different kinds so at the touch of a finger (or other method of access), a computer grown-up voices the words selected by the child. This device could allow Chris to sound like the 9 year old boy that he is. Maneera suspected this feature might work well for Chris, and his parents and special educator were eager to put it to full use as well.

As result of the equipment demonstration, Chris and his parents went home with a 4 week device loan during which time the Springboard was customized with activity boards and the voice of a peer from his classroom. Hearing a child speak his words visibly delighted Chris, which got Chris's teacher thinking.

Each morning she starts her class with the whole room singing her good morning song. It's a ritual that up until now had inadvertently excluded Chris. With the Springboard, she realized, Chris could join in. Cleverly she asked the child whose voice was recorded on his device if he'd be willing to record their morning song for Chris as well. The child agreed and now the morning routine is a part of Chris's routine as well. Chris uses his Springboard to sing along as a member of his class, and he even gets to sound like one.

Thanks to the ATRC, Chris and his team were able to find exactly the right device for his needs, and his school district is now acquiring the Springboard for his long-term use.

State Leadership Accomplishments

1. Training

The National Information System for Assistive Technology (NISAT) defines training activities as “instructional events, usually planned in advance for a specific purpose or audience, that are designed to increase participants' knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding AT” ([NISAT glossary](#)).

An example of a training activity conducted during FFY09 is the workshop that was held during the AT Summit MassMATCH hosted on May 22, 2009. This conference brought together representatives from state agencies that serve people with disabilities. During the conference, Barbara Lybarger, an attorney with a disability herself, conducted a workshop on how to produce accessible materials. Participants, all AT service providers, left the training better educated on what issues to consider when planning meetings, events, and workshops, and what steps to follow to make meetings and materials accessible to people with disabilities.

Training Topics

In FFY09, MassMATCH provided training to a total of 944 individuals statewide. Trainings funded by MassMATCH most frequently cover either AT products and services alone or blend topics to best suit their intended audience. In FFY09, 307 individuals received training on AT products/services, and another 472 were trained on a blend of topics areas (these may have included AT products/services, AT funding/policy/practice, and IT/telecommunication access).

Table Z: *Number of Training Participants by Topic*

Primary Topics of Trainings	Participants
AT Products/Services	307
AT Funding/Policy/Practice	19
IT/Telecommunication Access	12
Combination of any/all of the above	472
Transition	134
Other Topic (specify)	0
Total	944

Transition

The AT Act of 2004 calls for a portion of each state’s training activities to be related to transition. In FFY09, 134 (or 14%) of the MassMATCH training activities were transition related (and carried out by the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, see Table Z above). “Transition related” means the trainings provided information to support individuals navigating the transition from school to work or post-secondary education, or from institutions into community living. In addition, trainings may provide AT information to help people remain in their communities.

An example of FFY09 transition-related training is the series of 5 workshops MassMATCH hosted across the state for staff of agencies that work with people with disabilities and elders. The series trained staff in the use of a MassMATCH developed tool designed to identify AT devices that may help facilitate the transition of consumers

from nursing facilities into the community. Attendees practiced using the assessment tool, saw demonstrations and handled a variety of AT devices, and received information on AT funding options. Altogether 134 individuals were trained.

Training Participants

Educators were the most common participants of AT trainings in FFY09 and represent 31% of total attendees. They are followed by health professionals (24%) and representatives from community living (17%).

Table AA: Number and Type of Training Participants

Category of Participants	Trainings	
Individuals with disabilities	85	9%
Family members	46	5%
Reps of Education	294	31%
Reps of Employment	13	1%
Reps of Health, Allied Health, Rehab.	226	24%
Reps of Community Living	165	17%
Reps of Technology	3	<1%
Others	99	10%
Unable to Categorize	18	2%
Total	949	100%

2. Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is a direct problem-solving service provided by the statewide AT program staff to public or private agencies, groups, or programs. TA helps improve services, management, policies and/or outcomes and may be a single meeting or involve multiple contacts over an extended duration (NISAT glossary).

An example of MassMATCH TA provided in FFY09 is the assistance provided to staff of the State Information Technology Department serving all Massachusetts's Human Service Agencies. The TA covered methods of purchasing and providing AT to state employees with disabilities as part of the state's efforts to enhance the diversity of state employees.

Table BB shows a breakdown of the 16 TA service hours provided by MassMATCH over the course of FFY09.

Table BB: Technical Assistance Services Provided

Agency/Program Type	Product/Service areas expertise provided	Duration of TA provided	Hours TA provided
1. Employment Agency	Web accessibility	<3 months	2
2. Employment Agency	Specific AT device assistance	3-5 months	10
3. Technology	AT service delivery options	<3 months	2
4. Technology	AT Purchasing and service delivery options	<3 months	2
Total Hours TA Provided			16

3. Information & Assistance

MassMATCH provides information and assistance (I & A) through its AT Regional Centers and directly from MassMATCH program staff at the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission. Generally I & A activities are responses to individual requests for AT information and assistance. This may be referral assistance to other agencies or entities that can provide the services, products or AT information needed. It may also be assistance with other related disability topics (NISAT glossary).

In FFY09 MassMATCH provided I & A to 727 recipients. 45% were individuals with disabilities and family member (329 recipients), 20% were representatives of education (145 recipients), and 14% were representatives of health, allied health, and rehabilitation (101 recipients), and 22% were family members (112). Most requests for information were for an AT device or service (485). AT funding was the next most requested type of assistance (145).

Table CC: Combined I&A Recipients by Category and Types of Assistance Received

Information & Assistance Recipient Category	Recipients by Assistance Type			
	AT Device/ Service	AT Funding	Related Disability Topics	Total
Individuals with disabilities	120	38	20	178
Family members	111	23	17	151
Reps of Education	88	43	14	145
Reps of Employment	6	0	1	7
Reps of Health, Allied Health, Rehab.	72	17	12	101
Reps of Community Living	36	19	3	58
Reps of Technology	6	0	3	9
Others	46	0	27	78
Total	485	145	97	727

4. Public Awareness

Public awareness activities are designed to reach large numbers of people. These can include public service announcements, radio talk shows and news reports, newspaper stories and columns, newsletters, brochures, and public forums ([NISAT glossary](#)). MassMATCH.org is also a public awareness initiative, and is treated separately below.

As Table DD demonstrates, in FFY09 MassMATCH reached 29,706 individuals through its public awareness activities (not including the MassMATCH website). Public awareness was accomplished through a blend of outlets and activities. Presentations, expos, and conferences reached 7,027, the highest percentage of the individuals reached (24%).

Table DD: Individuals Reached by Public Awareness Activities

Public Awareness Activity	Number of Individuals Reached			
	UCP	ES	MRC	Combined
Newsletters	2,500	0	1,267	3,767
Other Print Materials	2,220	0	260	2,460
Listserv	0	5,531	399	5,930
Internet Information	1,550	2,896	276	4,722
PSA/radio/TV	5,800	0	0	5,800
Presentations/expos/conferences	947	2,032	4,048	7,027
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	12,997	10,459	6,250	29,706

MassMATCH Website: Version II

FFY09 saw the release of Version II of www.MassMATCH.org—a complete redesign and upgrade of the MassMATCH website. Released November 1, 2008, Version II includes the following new programs and features:

- The [AT School Swap](#). Designed to maximize school resources and get students the devices they need fast, the AT School Swap will track the equipment inventory of participating schools and makes unused AT available for borrowing between schools and school districts. The site is now ready for the uploading of school AT inventories.
- The [AT Services Directory](#). The Directory helps users find providers of AT services and training close to home. MassMATCH partnered with the New England INDEX to create this AT-targeted search engine.
- Enhanced [Get Help](#) features. In addition to improved Consumer Advocacy, Technical Assistance, and Transition Assistance resource pages, the Get Help menu now includes fully-operational Ask the Expert, AT Forum, and AT Product Review options.
- An improved [Fund Your AT](#) guide helps users navigate federal, state, and privately funded sources for AT.
- [For Educators](#), [For Employers](#), [For Providers](#) home pages. New portals help these targeted audiences find what they need.
- Improved navigation and accessibility. MassMATCH programs and other online resources are now easier to find. Users can “roll over” the banner menu, available from any page on the site, and quickly locate features and programs. The Event Calendar and Resources menu are now top-level. The Home page is available as one or two columns.

According to Google Analytics, FFY09 saw 8,105 unique visitors to the MassMATCH website. The average number of pages viewed per visit was 4, and the average time on the site per visitor was 3 ½ minutes. Google Analytics also shows that 54% of users viewed 1 page per visit, and 46% viewed more than 1 page.

Table EE: FFY09 Website Usage

Total Unique Visitors	Average Pages Per Visit	Average Time On Site
8,105	4.03	3:30

As Table FF shows below, on average, 779 unique visitors accessed the MassMATCH website each month in FFY09. The statistics also show a sharp increase in usage during the month of April which likely correlates to the AT Expo Easter Seals hosted during that month which promoted MassMATCH resources.

Table FF: FFY09 Website Monthly History

Month	Visitors*	Visits	Page Views
October 2008	376	571	3,992
November 2008	883	1,090	3,116
December 2008	520	750	3,276
January 2009	567	726	2,116
February 2009	694	923	3,273
March 2009	747	1,004	4,032
April 2009	1,130	1,460	7,348
May 2009	841	1,056	4,131
June 2009	855	1,106	4,126
July 2009	739	951	3,741
August 2009	699	848	3,273
September 2009	894	1,146	4,497
Average Monthly	779	1,005	3,902

*These are “unique” visitors as recorded monthly.

5. Coordination & Collaboration

“Coordination and collaboration involves working with other entities to improve access to AT devices and services...” ([NISAT glossary](#)). During FFY09, MassMATCH staff worked to improve access to AT services through five collaborative efforts. These were:

Convening the AT Summit

On May 22, 2009, MassMATCH sponsored an AT Summit in Shrewsbury to bring together staff members of state agencies who provide assistive technology services to Massachusetts residents. Over forty AT staff attended as well as other interested state agency personnel. During the summit, attendees identified service gaps and challenges, feedback which is helping inform MassMATCH’s course of action toward improving AT service delivery.

Launching the Long-Term Device Loan Program for Low Cost Devices

In collaboration with Easter Seals MA, MassMATCH launched the Long-Term DLP in FFY09 as a pilot. The program served 41 consumers and will continue in FFY10. The Long-Term DLP is providing devices valued at under \$500 for as long as a user needs them, thereby filling an access gap left by the AT financial loan program (AT Loan Program) which finances devices that cost upward of \$500 only.

Partnering to Create a DME Reuse Program

During FFY09, MassMATCH began collaborating with the Stavros Center for Independent Living to provide a DME reuse program for used power wheelchairs, power

scooters, and power standers. MassMATCH is seeking additional partners for DME reuse in FFY10 in order to expand the service to other regions of the state.

Mapping of State Agency Personnel with AT Expertise

During FFY09, MassMATCH conducted cross-agency outreach to gather profiles of all state agency staff with AT expertise. As result, an AT Staff Directory spreadsheet was created to record the specialized skills, populations served, years on the job, etc. of state personnel with AT expertise. The Directory will be distributed among health and human services agencies during FFY10 to serve as a tool for intra-agency collaboration, and to help staff provide better AT services to residents who are eligible for services from multiple state agencies.

Training on the AT Assessment Tool for Transition Assistance

The AT Assessment Tool was created in collaboration with Easter Seals MA to help ensure that anyone looking to move into (or remain within) the community is assessed for AT and directly provided with AT advocacy resources. During FFY09, MassMATCH launched the AT assessment tool and provided training in its use to discharge planners, advocates, and others who work with people with disabilities and elders transitioning to community living. Additional training is planned for FFY10.

Forward Thinking

MassMATCH continues to work on multiple fronts to promote awareness of and access to AT throughout the state human services delivery system, among public and private employers, within school systems, among advocacy groups, and directly to people with disabilities.

In addition to continuing current programs, here are some of the efforts soon (or currently) underway:

Improving Access to High-Tech Driver Evaluations and Training

MassMATCH is providing technical assistance to MRC's division of Vocational Rehabilitation to create better access for driver evaluations to residents in eastern Massachusetts. With the use of ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funding, MRC's VR division will be acquiring an adapted vehicle for evaluating and training individuals with disabilities. At present, many people are having to leave the state for these services or are acquiring adapted vehicles without first learning what their capabilities and needs are for driving.

Preserving and Improving Access to Unique AT Services for More Residents with Disabilities

In collaboration with the MICEO (Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities) grant entities, including the Institute for Human Centered Design, MassMATCH is visiting facility based AT Centers at DDS and MHS to document the unique services they provide for children and individuals with complex medical and intellectual needs. The effort lays the groundwork necessary toward

preserving and expanding services that focus on customized design and fabrication not funded by MassHealth and other insurance. These institutions have been slated for downsizing and closure, but these services are unique and have the potential to serve many more residents in the Commonwealth.

Improving Employment Outcomes for People With Disabilities

MassMATCH will be collaborating with the Work Without Limits (a MICEO grant program) to improve understanding of and access to AT and AT services for people with disabilities who are looking for or seeking to retain employment. Particular attention will be focused on training the staff of the 6 regional career centers on AT awareness and MassMATCH resources. MassMATCH is also working with MRC's division of Vocational Rehabilitation on an ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funded AT toolkit to improve awareness among potential employers of the availability of AT to support workers with disabilities.

Piloting the AT School Swap

MassMATCH has applied to the Shapiro Foundation for a collaborative project with Northeastern University to bring a minimum of 6-8 schools online with the AT School Swap initiative. The project would help the schools identify and upload their AT inventories to the ATSS database and work with a programmer to tailor the website to best meet the schools' needs. The ATSS is a MassMATCH initiative to encourage resource sharing among schools and school districts with AT devices.

Recruiting Abilities Expo to Boston for 2011

MassMATCH will be looking into bringing the Abilities Expo to the Boston area for 2011. The Abilities Expo is a showcase for cutting edge AT as well as a venue for disability related workshops, events, activities, and entertainment.

Improving the Online Device Loan Program

MassMATCH is partnering with Northeastern University to create accessible video clips of AT in use for embedding on the AT Short-Term Device Loan online inventory. The goal is to create a way for people with disabilities, their family members, advocates, and service providers to have a way to browse AT most effectively. The project is ongoing and involves student interns along with members of the MassMATCH AT Advisory Committee.

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