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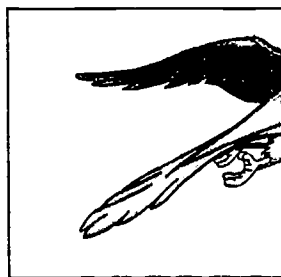
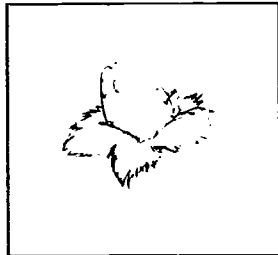
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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides an introduction to assistive technology services for children and adults with disabilities in North Carolina. Key terms such as "self-advocacy" and "assistive technology" are explained, as are provisions of major state and federal legislation and Social Security Income for the families of children with disabilities. Specific services and options are then discussed by age level, including mandated services for preschoolers, Individualized Education Programs for school-age children, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, Individual Transition Plans, and the appeals process. Each page includes contact information for support groups, hotlines, and state and federal agencies. (PB)

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# The Journey to Independence through Assistive Technology

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## Project Information

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# Advocacy and Self-Advocacy

## How to Help Others and Yourself

Individuals with disabilities and their families may find it necessary to use **advocacy** and **self-advocacy** skills from time to time - especially when purchasing adaptive devices.

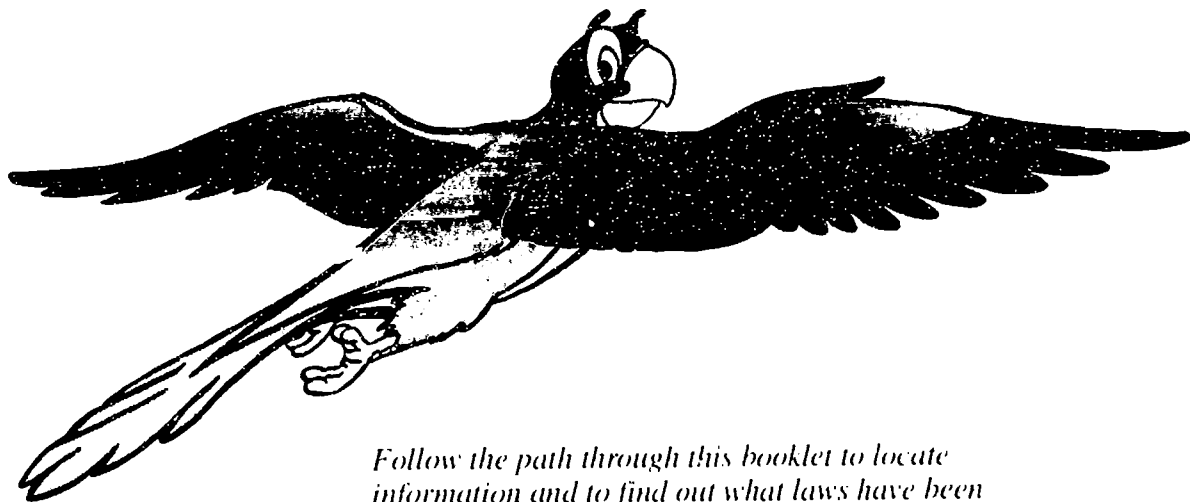
**Advocacy is helping someone by speaking or acting in their best interest.**

- ▲ It means standing up for their rights and helping them get what they need.
- ▲ It means supporting them as they make important decisions.

**Self-advocacy means speaking or acting for yourself.**

- ▲ It means deciding what is best for you and taking charge of getting it.
- ▲ It means standing up for your rights as a person.

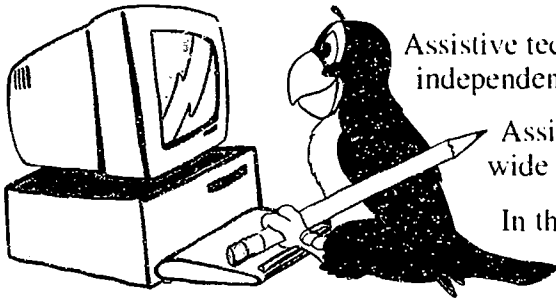
There are laws and programs that ensure services are provided for you.  
How can you find out what is available? Who provides these services?



*Follow the path through this booklet to locate information and to find out what laws have been enacted for children up to the age of 22.*

# Assistive Technology

## How It Increases Independence



Assistive technology is any **device** that helps children become more independent in all phases of their lives.

Assistive technology redefines what is possible for children with a wide range of cognitive and physical disabilities.

In the home, the classroom, the workplace and the community, assistive technology provides creative solutions that assist individuals as they go about their day to day activities.

*Some examples of assistive technology are:*

adaptive toys, computers, seating systems, manual and power wheelchairs, communication devices, special switches, assistive listening devices, closed circuit t.v.'s, magnifiers, and many more.

The staff of the North Carolina Assistive Technology Project are available to help answer questions about specific devices, funding, and the laws that are in place regarding assistive technology.

### NCATP consultants are located in your area:

Western North Carolina  
1200 Blythe Boulevard  
The Rankin Building  
Charlotte, NC 28203  
704-355-2703

Western North Carolina  
Thoms Rehab Center  
Sweeten Creek Road  
Asheville, NC 28803  
704-274-2400 ext. 4030

South Central North Carolina  
1110 Navaho Drive, Suite 101  
Raleigh, NC 27609  
919-850-2787

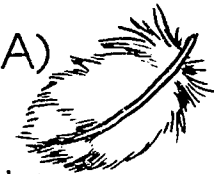
North Central North Carolina  
1510-B Martin Street  
Winston-Salem, NC 27103  
910-761-2290

Eastern North Carolina  
2313 Executive Park Circle  
Greenville, NC 27834  
919-830-8575

*For further information about assistive technology contact:*

**N.C. Assistive Technology Project • 1110 Navaho Drive • Suite 101 • Raleigh • NC 27609**  
919-850-2787 or call the Family Support Network at 1-800-852-0042

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (**IDEA**) was passed by Congress to assure that all children with disabilities receive a free, appropriate, public education (**FAPE**) which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs.

All states accept federal funding for special education, so therefore, all states must abide by this law. The local education agency or school system is responsible for **identifying, locating and evaluating** all children who need special education services.

Once the evaluation has been done an **Individualized Education Program** or **IEP** must be developed by the school system and the parents. This education plan must be reviewed annually or more often if requested by the parents. The IEP is discussed in detail in this booklet.

Children are to be educated in the **least restrictive environment** and to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities should be included in the same classes as children without disabilities.

Other related services can also be provided through IDEA that will help students benefit from education programs.

*Such services may include:*

transportation, interpreters, readers, speech therapy,  
occupational therapy, assistive technology, etc.

North Carolina provides greater benefits than the federal law requires. In North Carolina a bill was passed that states:

- “ The policy of the State is to ensure that every child has a fair and full opportunity to reach his **full potential**, and that no child (as defined in this law) shall be excluded from service or education for any reason whatsoever. ”

## Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Protecting All Students with Disabilities



Students with disabilities are protected by an additional source, **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**. Even students whose disabilities are not recognized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are covered under the civil rights of **Section 504**.

- ▲ **Section 504** states that no individual with a disability can be denied access to any program or activity that receives federal funds because of his/her disability.
- ▲ Programs that receive federal funds must be accessible to people with disabilities.
  - ▲ **They must be barrier free.**
  - ▲ **“Reasonable accommodations”** such as interpreters, assistive devices, transportation, etc., must be provided when needed.

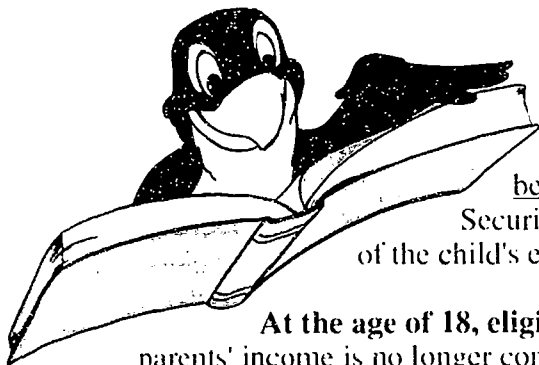
If you believe your child has been discriminated against by a program that receives money from the U.S. Department of Education, you may file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights. North Carolina residents should contact:

Office for Civil Rights, Region IV  
U. S. Department of Education  
101 Maricita St., N. W., 27th Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30323  
(404) 331-2954 Voice/(404) 331-2010 TDD

*You may also contact:*

**N.C. Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities**  
at **1-800-821-6922** for assistance.

## SSI - Social Security Income for Children with Disabilities Program Information for Parents



**Social Security Income or SSI** provides basic income for children under 18 who are blind or have a severe disability or a chronic illness. All families with limited income and resources who believe their child has a disability should call or visit the local Social Security office for complete information about SSI and a full evaluation of the child's eligibility for benefits.

**At the age of 18, eligibility is based on the individual's income.** At that time, the parents' income is no longer considered in determining eligibility. Those individuals should apply for SSI at the beginning of the month in which they turn 18.

**Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (Voice) / 1-800-325-0778 (TDD) between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. weekdays** to make an appointment.

You may also contact the **Disability Hotline at 1-800-638-6810 or 919-733-4427** for further information.



## Birth to Three Years of Age Beginning the Journey

For children from birth up to 3 years of age, who have disabilities, there are programs available to **YOU** as a *parent or family member* to ensure that your child is provided services.

One of the first steps along the road to independence is the

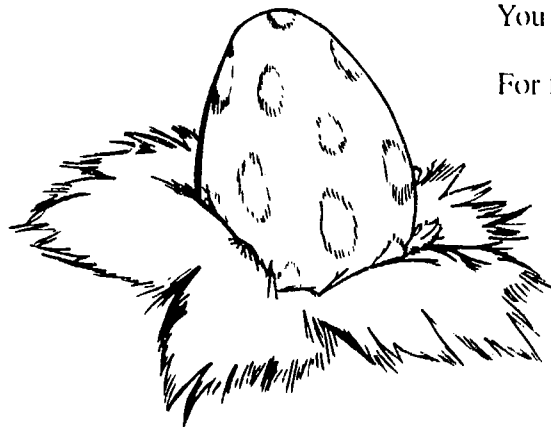
### **Early Intervention Program under Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

Children who qualify for this program are either:

- ▲ High Risk
- ▲ Developmentally Delayed
- ▲ Atypically Developed (emotionally or behaviorally)

The program can provide:

- ▲ **Assistive Technology** - purchase of devices
- ▲ **Homebound Intervention** - specialized instruction & family support
- ▲ **Specialized Therapies** - occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech & language therapy
- ▲ **Transportation** - to education programs and to special therapies
- ▲ **Family Service Coordinators** - to work with the family to identify needed services
- ▲ **Evaluations** - to determine your child's needs
- ▲ **Mainstreamed Center-Based Intervention & Respite** - for working parents and for the child's developmental needs



You can apply for services at your **local health department**.

For further information, call the **Developmental Evaluation Center (DEC)** in your area.

Call the **Family Support Network** at  
**1-800-852-0042** to get the telephone number for the  
Developmental Evaluation Center nearest you.

## Preschoolers with Special Needs Providing Early Experiences

**Part B** of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) covers children with special needs who are:

- 3 and 4 years of age
- 5 years old but ineligible for kindergarten and whose developmental needs cannot be met without special education and related services.

Services that must be provided children who qualify for **Part B** are:

- a **free, appropriate, public education** or **FAPE**
- all other requirements of the state's **Part B** plan for Special Education and related services, including the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- services in the least restrictive environment
- assistive technology/assistive devices
- plans for transition into preschool and kindergarten
- family services - i.e., parent counseling and training, social work services, etc.
- impartial due process hearing

**Part B of IDEA** also provides services for children with autism and "traumatic brain injury" (injury resulting from external force) as a separate disability category.

*Questions and/or concerns should be directed to:*

- your local school system - teachers and special education coordinators
- the local Developmental Evaluation Center - Call 1-800-852-0042 to locate the center in your area.
- the area Mental Health Center
- Family Support Network at 1-800-852-0042
- the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities (GACPD) at 1-800-821-6922

## Programs for School Age Children The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

As your child continues to grow and progress through the system of services, the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** or **IDEA** requires that an **Individualized Education Program** or **IEP** be completed for each student with a disability.

The **IEP** is a method of documenting in writing plans for services to be provided on a yearly basis. It should include programs and services to meet the educational needs of the individual child and should be based on the results of a multidisciplinary evaluation.

The **IEP** includes:

- ▲ **the current level of functioning of the child**
- ▲ **the annual goals**
- ▲ **the short-term objectives**
- ▲ **how progress will be evaluated**

The need for assistive technology services must be considered along with other educational needs and must be identified on an individual basis. **Cost and/or lack of availability of equipment cannot be used by the school as a reason for not providing technology.**

If included in the **IEP**, assistive technology services and devices:

- ▲ must be provided at **no charge** to the family
- ▲ must be provided within a "**reasonable amount of time**"
- ▲ must not be limited to in-school use if the device needs to be used at home as part of your child's **public education**

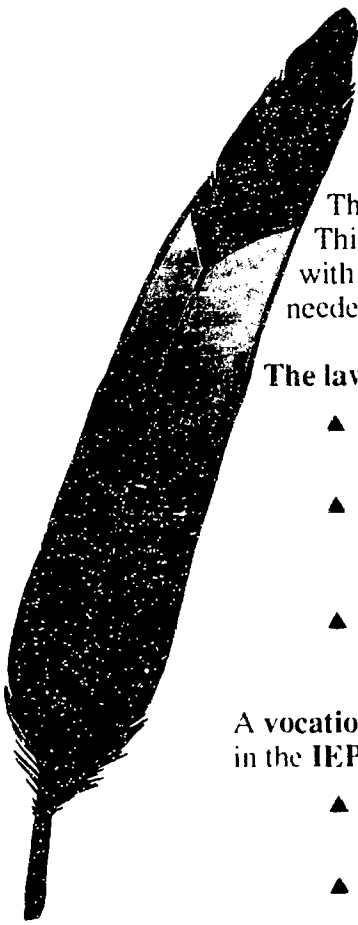
It is very important that you, as a family member or advocate, be actively involved in writing the **IEP**. Attend the IEP meeting and work closely with school professionals and others as you create a program that will meet your child's unique needs.

If you have questions or concerns, you should talk with your child's **teacher**.

For additional information on the **IEP**, contact the **Exceptional Children's Assistance Center's Parent Information Line** at **1-800-962-6817**.

To talk with an advocate, contact the **Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities** at **1-800-821-6922** for assistance.

## Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act Programs for Youth



When your child reaches the **age of 14 or enters the 9th grade**, the school system must provide information to the student and his/her parents about vocational education opportunities and about enrollment requirements.

These provisions are a part of the **Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act**. This **Act** requires that school systems determine the special needs of students with disabilities as they relate to vocational education services and to the skills needed for the job market.

### The law requires that:

- ▲ students with disabilities have equal access to recruitment, enrollment, and placement activities;
- ▲ students with disabilities can participate in the full range of vocational programs available to non-disabled students including cooperative education and apprenticeship programs;
- ▲ vocational education planning for disabled students will be coordinated between vocational education and special education.

A **vocational assessment** should be done and **vocational services** should be included in the **IEP**.

- ▲ Assistive devices needed to support the student in learning should also be included in the IEP.
- ▲ Equipment modifications and instructional aids and devices can be provided by the school system.

If you have questions about this program, contact your child's **special education teacher**.

You may also want to contact the **Governor's Advocacy Council for Person's with Disabilities at 1-800-821-6922** for further information.

# Transition Services

## Moving Along the Road to Independence

As your child nears the time to make **the transition from home and school to work**, there are programs in place that will make this move possible.

**Transition services** means a "coordinated set of activities that includes instruction, community experiences and development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives" and may include:

post-secondary education	vocational training
integrated employment	adult services
independent living	community participation

One of the first steps is to include **transition services** in your student's **IEP** no later than age 16 and as early as age 14. By setting transition services as an IEP objective, you are ready to develop an **ITP** or **Individual Transition Plan**.

An **individual transition plan** or **ITP** is a written document which outlines what training and supports a student will need to live, work and participate in the community as an adult.

At the age of 16, students and parents may begin working with a counselor from the **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR)**. VR services assist persons with disabilities in becoming employed and can include job training and equipment purchases to meet their job needs.

For more information about transition planning or if you have concerns, contact your child's **special education teacher**.

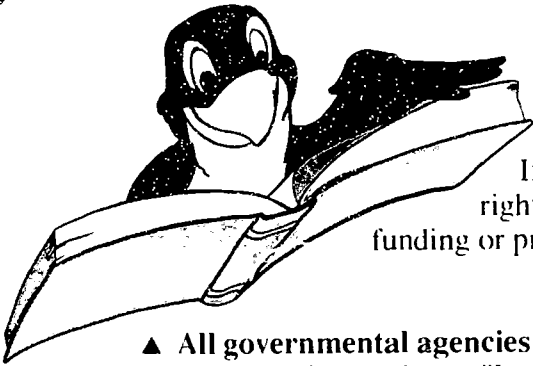
For further information about transition programs with the N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, call the local VR office.

If after talking with your VR counselor, you still have questions or concerns about VR related programs, you may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

You can get the telephone number for your local VR office and the **Client Assistance Program (CAP)** by calling the **Information and Referral Office/CARE-LINE** 1-800-662-7030 (TDD/Spanish) Monday-Friday, 8a.m.-5p.m.

Advocates are also available by calling the **Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities (GACPD)** at 1-800-821-6922.

## The Appeals Process



If your request for services has been denied, you have the right to appeal that decision. You can request a review by the funding or program source.

- ▲ **All governmental agencies have internal appeals processes** and must let you know "how" to request an appeal.
  - ▲ This information should be given to you early in the process.
  - ▲ The information may be in "**fine print**" - read, study and ask questions.
- ▲ There are **specific levels of review and specific time limits** required at each level of review.
  - ▲ How long does the agency have to respond to you?
  - ▲ How long do you have to respond to their denial?
- ▲ **Keep track** of what you have done, and what has been submitted.
  - ▲ Put everything in writing.
  - ▲ Keep copies of all forms and documents.
- ▲ **Advocacy groups and public legal organizations** are available to help.
  - ▲ Look for free assistance.
  - ▲ These groups should be well aware of laws that govern the programs.
- ▲ Use the **mediation process** to reach an agreement.
  - ▲ During mediation, the two parties try to reach an agreement out of court.
  - ▲ This may speed up the process and help your child receive services more quickly.
- ▲ In **North Carolina** you may call:
  - ▲ **The Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities at 1-800-821-6922.**

# Resources Available to Families of Children with Disabilities in North Carolina

**North Carolina Assistive Technology Project**  
(919) 850-2787 Voice/TDD

**Governors Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities**  
**General Advocacy Information**  
1-800-821-6922 or (919) 733-9250

**Social Security Information**  
1-800-772-1213 (Voice ) or 1-800-325-0778 (TDD)

**Disability Hotline**  
1-800-638-6810 or (919) 733-4427

**Client Assistance Program (CAP)**  
(919) 733-3364 or 1-800-662-7030- Information and Referral/CARE-LINE

**Exceptional Children's Assistance Center**  
1-800-962-6817

**Family Support Network**  
1-800-852-0042

**Information and Referral Services/CARE-LINE**  
1-800-662-7030 (TDD/Spanish)