

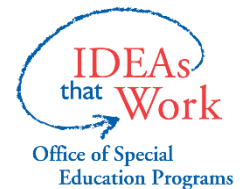
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[National Center on Accessible Digital
Educational Materials & Instruction]

More to the Myths and Facts: Addressing Accessible Educational Materials in the 2024 Assistive Technology Guidance

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In January 2024, the Office of Educational Technology and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) published a guidance document, *Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices and Services* (U.S. Department of Education, 2024). Commonly referred to as “the AT guidance document,” the publication provides support on a range of issues related to the procurement, implementation, and evaluation of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for children with disabilities. The Department presents these issues in a series of 28 Myths, each accompanied by a clarifying Fact and a detailed explanation grounded in the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The AT guidance document is a highly useful resource for both families and professionals who rely on the IDEA to ensure children with disabilities receive equitable access to education and are prepared for postsecondary opportunities. The Department’s “Myths and Facts” approach effectively clarifies the most common misconceptions about local educational agency (LEA) responsibilities related to the provision of AT devices and services under IDEA.

At the same time LEAs and families are benefiting from the AT guidance document, there’s an opportunity to provide information about a child’s need for accessible educational materials (AEM) under IDEA. Like AT devices and services, the provision of AEM is a requirement under IDEA. The purpose of this document is to supplement the AT guidance document by adding the relevance of AEM to each issue raised by the 28 Myths and Facts.

Users of this document are advised to read the [AT guidance document](#) fully. The information provided in the AT guidance builds on the foundation of the relevance of AEM to each Myth and Fact presented in this document. Therefore, the reader will gain the most clarity by reading a specific Myth/Fact in the AT guidance document and then referring to this document to learn how AEM relates to that same Myth/Fact.

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I. AEM in Relation to the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The term “accessible educational materials” or AEM was defined by OSEP in the 2014 priority for a National Center on Accessible Educational Materials for Learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2014):

As used in this priority, “accessible educational materials” means print- and technology-based educational materials, including printed and electronic textbooks and related core materials that are required by State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and LEAs for use by all students, produced or rendered in accessible media, written and published primarily for use in early learning programs, elementary, or secondary schools to support teaching and learning.

As stated in its definition, AEM includes digital materials that are produced to be accessible for all children, as well as materials that are rendered in accessible formats for a child with a disability (e.g., print textbooks converted to accessible digital text and videos that are closed captioned). Critical differences exist between these two categories of AEM, including distinct legal foundations.

SEAs and LEAs minimize delays in the provision of AEM for children with disabilities by procuring digital educational materials that are produced to be accessible from the beginning. For example, digital accessibility requirements and procedures can be embedded in the edtech procurement process. This, in addition to related digital accessibility guidelines, informs publishers and vendors of the educational agency’s commitment to its legal obligations aligned to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for web and mobile app accessibility (89 FR 31320). The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Version 2.1, Level AA is the technical standard required under a new ADA Title II update, which goes into effect for large LEAs on April 24, 2026, and for small LEAs on April 26, 2027 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). Although the new Title II rule includes limited exceptions, LEAs will be required to provide an accessible format of an inaccessible material should it be needed by a child with a disability. This is consistent with LEAs’ existing obligations under Title II of the ADA.

Like title II of the ADA, IDEA also requires SEAs and LEAs to provide accessible formats when needed by a child with a disability. Furthermore, the IDEA includes provisions to improve the timely delivery of accessible formats. The purpose of this document is to inform individualized education program (IEP) Teams of the right of children with disabilities to receive accessible formats in a timely manner under IDEA, and to provide support in the context of the AT guidance document.

II. AEM and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA requires SEAs and LEAs to provide accessible formats of educational materials to children who need them in a timely manner (Part B, Section 612 (a)(23) and Section 613 (a)(6)). The law requires that each State establish its own definition of “timely manner.” Definitions adopted by States commonly include the phrase “at the same time,” meaning a child with a disability who requires accessibility receives educational materials in the format(s) needed at the same time children without disabilities receive the same materials.

IDEA references Section 121 of the U.S. Copyright Act for guidance and procedures related to the provision of accessible formats for eligible children. Section 121 provides a copyright exemption that permits agencies and organizations that have a primary mission to serve the needs of persons with disabilities to create accessible formats without requesting permission of the copyright holder. Under Section 121, an “accessible format” is defined as:

[A]n alternative manner or form that gives an eligible person access to the work when the copy or phonorecord in the accessible format is used exclusively by the eligible person to permit him or her to have access as feasibly and comfortably as a person without such disability.

-20 U.S.C. § 121(d)(1)

In practice, accessible formats are technically produced from materials that are primarily static text and images, whether print or digital. An example of an inaccessible digital material for which an accessible format may be produced is an untagged PDF file, which cannot be accessed by assistive technology. Braille, large print, audio recordings, tactile graphics, and accessible digital text are common examples of accessible formats.

The term “eligible person” in the definition of accessible format is defined as:

(A) an individual who, regardless of any other disability—

(A) is blind;

(B) has a visual impairment or perceptual or reading disability that cannot be improved to give visual function substantially equivalent to that of a person who has no such impairment or disability and so is unable to read printed works to

substantially the same degree as a person without an impairment or disability; or

(C) is otherwise unable, through physical disability, to hold or manipulate a book or to focus or move the eyes to the extent that would be normally acceptable for reading.

Professionals who can certify that a child is an eligible person include:

Doctor of medicine, doctor of osteopathy, ophthalmologist, optometrist, psychologist, registered nurse, therapist, and professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or welfare agencies (such as an educator, social worker, case worker, counselor, rehabilitation teacher, certified reading specialist, school psychologist, superintendent, or librarian.

To help SEAs and LEAs provide accessible formats to eligible children in a timely manner, IDEA established the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) and the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) in 2004. Publishers submit digital files in the NIMAS specification to the NIMAC online repository, and authorized users in the States download these files to expedite the production of accessible formats in a timely manner.

States are required to adopt NIMAS as the specification used to produce accessible formats of instructional materials covered under IDEA. At the time of the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, educational materials were predominantly provided in standard print. In fact, the term “print instructional materials” is the term used in IDEA with the definition, “Printed textbooks and related printed core materials that are written and published primarily for use in elementary school and secondary school instruction and are required by a State educational agency or local educational agency for use by students in the classroom.” In 2020, the Department issued a Notice of Interpretation clarifying that the definition of “print instructional materials” includes inaccessible digital materials

when those materials can be converted into the valid NIMAS file format. In general, this requires the digital material to be static text and images with a linear reading order.

All 50 states and the eligible territories have chosen to coordinate with the NIMAC to acquire NIMAS source files for expediting the production of accessible formats. Under IDEA, all SEAs and LEAs that coordinate with the NIMAC are required to include language in their instructional materials adoption contracts and purchase agreements, directing publishers to submit files in the NIMAS specification to the NIMAC. [Visit the website of the NIMAC](#) for more information or contact the NIMAC at nimac@aph.org.

The responsibility of the IEP Team is to navigate the process of ensuring that a child with a disability who needs accessible formats receives them in a timely manner. When the educational materials for which accessible formats are needed are included under IDEA (i.e., meet the definition of printed or inaccessible digital text instructional materials), SEAs and LEAs can utilize the NIMAC. Section III includes guidance for IEP Teams to acquire accessible formats of materials not available in the NIMAC, as well as resources for accessible videos.

III. Addressing AEM in the Myths and Facts Surrounding Assistive Technology Devices and Services

This section directly aligns with the AT guidance document. For each AT Myth & Fact, the relationship to AEM is presented as an “AEM Tie-In,” followed by a detailed explanation.

Requirements for AT & AEM Under Part B of the IDEA

When to Consider AT & AEM

AT Myth 1: Assistive Technology (AT) should only be considered at some individualized education program (IEP) Team meetings.

AT Fact 1: Each time an IEP Team develops, reviews, or revises a child’s IEP, the IEP Team must consider whether the child requires AT devices and services.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 1: Though it is not specified as a requirement under IDEA, the IEP Team is strongly encouraged to consider whether a child needs

accessible formats and which formats they need each time they develop, review, or revise an IEP.

Timely access to accessible materials is an obligation of public agencies under IDEA to ensure that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and participate in the general education curriculum as specified in the IEP (71 FR 46618). While IDEA does not specify a requirement that the IEP Team consider a child's need for accessible formats of educational materials, the IEP development process is the most appropriate mechanism for ensuring that children with disabilities who need accessible formats receive them in a timely manner. As with AT devices and services, the IEP Team determines the type of accessible format or formats that the child needs. IEP Teams are advised to consult with their SEA for guidance on where in the IEP a child's need for accessible format(s) should be specified.

Requirements to Provide AT & AEM

AT Myth 2: Providing AT devices and services is optional under IDEA and an LEA does not have to provide AT devices and services if there are no funds available for the AT device and service.

AT Fact 2: IEP Teams must consider AT devices and services for all children with IEPs and must provide the AT devices and services at no cost to the parent if the IEP Team determines they are necessary to provide FAPE for the child.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 2: The SEA or LEA is responsible for providing accessible formats in a timely manner, at no cost to the parent, when the IEP Team determines that a child needs accessible formats of educational materials.

When the IEP Team determines that a child needs an accessible format to access the materials used in the general education curriculum, the SEA or LEA is responsible for providing those educational materials in the format(s) required by the child in a timely manner (§ 300.172 (b) (3) and § 300.210 (b) (3)). As with AT devices and services, the IEP Team must consult with knowledgeable individuals if there is no one on the team with sufficient knowledge of how to select and acquire accessible formats. In addition to their [State or territory AT Act Program](#), IEP Team members can request technical assistance from their [State AEM Contact](#).

Considering Services for AT & AEM

AT Myth 3: Providing an AT device to a child with a disability satisfies the IDEA’s AT requirements.

AT Fact 3: IDEA requires IEP Teams to consider whether a child with a disability needs AT devices and services.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 3: Though the definition of accessible formats does not include services, they are important to effective provision and use by children with disabilities.

Unlike AT, the definition of “accessible format” does not include a service component. That does not mean, however, that a child with a disability does not need assistance with the use of an accessible format. Services related to accessible formats of educational materials are important to the effective provision and use by children with disabilities. These services include selecting the format(s) needed by the child; acquiring the format(s) from appropriate sources; and supporting the child, family, teachers, and related service providers with the effective use of the accessible format(s) in teaching and learning. For example, a child who is visually impaired must be provided instruction in braille and the use of braille as accompanying services, unless the IEP Team determines this would not be appropriate (see [Myth & Fact 4](#) and the “braille provision” in IDEA).

Evaluations for AT & AEM

AT Myth 4: An AT evaluation must be conducted prior to providing an AT device and service to a child with a disability.

AT Fact 4: An AT evaluation can be included as an AT service for a child but is not required under the IDEA.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 4: Unless a child is blind or visually impaired, IDEA does not specify requirements for an accessible format evaluation.

Like AT devices and services, the appropriate type of accessible format needed by a child with a disability is determined by the IEP Team. In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, there is an important “[braille provision](#)” in IDEA. Under Consideration of Special Factors, a child who is blind or visually impaired must be provided instruction in braille and the use of braille unless the results of an evaluation lead the IEP Team to determine that

braille is not appropriate for the child (Section 614 (d)(3)(B)(iii)). In the case of children with other disabilities who meet the criteria of “eligible person,” IDEA does not specify requirements for an accessible format evaluation. In deciding whether or not to conduct an evaluation, it is important for the IEP Team to refer to the broad definition of the term “accessible format.” In addition to braille and tactile graphics, common examples include large print, recorded audio, and accessible digital text. For example, an accessible format evaluation for a child with a reading disability may include trials of human-narrated audio recordings, digital text, and a combination of the two. The IEP Team should take into consideration that the format or combination of formats a child needs may depend on the subject matter. Therefore, a range of curricular material should be included in the evaluation process.

Responsibility to Provide Services for AT & AEM

AT Myth 5: Children can learn to use an AT device on their own; educators have no obligation to provide training to a child or their family.

AT Fact 5: It is the responsibility of the LEA to ensure that the child with a disability, parents, and educators know how the AT device works through the provision of AT services.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 5: Services may be required to support a child’s use of accessible formats to effectively participate in the general education curriculum as specified in the IEP.

Unlike AT, the definition of “accessible format” does not include services for a child with a disability, family, teachers, or related service providers. Services may be required, however, for the child to use the accessible format(s) for effectively participating in the general education curriculum as specified in the IEP. Examples of services that the IEP Team can consider and potentially provide to ensure the child can successfully use the accessible format(s) include but are not limited to:

- Training the child on the technology and specific features used to deliver the content in the accessible format (e.g., speech recognition, text to speech, switch access, screen reader software, literacy software, braille device, screen magnification software, or specialized apps);

- Training for special education and related service providers, including paraprofessionals, on instructional strategies to support the child with using the accessible format effectively and independently;
- Coordinating the process of acquiring the accessible format for all applicable educational materials and ensuring the child receives them in a timely manner;
- Training for general education teachers on how the child will use the accessible format to access the materials of the curriculum; and
- Training for the parents, teachers, and related service providers on how to support the child while using the accessible format at school, home, work, and in the community.

Documenting Decisions for AT & AEM

AT Myth 6: Specific AT decisions do not need to be included in the written IEP document.

AT Fact 6: IDEA requires the IEP to include a statement about a child’s special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 6: IDEA does not require the IEP Team to consider a child’s need for accessible formats of educational materials. However, to ensure timely access and provide FAPE, the IEP process is the most appropriate mechanism for LEAs to document decisions about accessible formats.

As stated under Myth/Fact 1, IDEA does not include a specific requirement that the IEP Team consider a child’s need for accessible formats of educational materials. However, the IEP process is the most appropriate mechanism for ensuring that children with disabilities who need accessible formats receive them in a timely manner. As with AT devices and services, the IEP Team can document accessible format decisions. IEP Teams are advised to consult with their SEA for guidance on where in the IEP decisions related to a child’s need for and use of accessible formats should be specified.

Including AT & AEM in Transition Plans

AT Myth 7: AT does not need to be considered as part of the secondary transition process (i.e., transitioning out of high school to post-secondary education, employment opportunities or adult services).

AT Fact 7: AT should be considered for inclusion in a child’s transition plan, as AT devices and services create more opportunities for that child to be successful in their post-secondary plans.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 7: Accessible formats should also be considered for inclusion in a child’s transition plan, as a child with a disability who needs accessible formats in the IEP will typically continue to need those formats beyond high school.

For all of the reasons presented by the Department in relation to the requirements and benefits of including AT devices and services in a child’s transition plan, accessible formats should also be included. Free and low-cost services that provide accessible formats are available to eligible persons across the lifespan in all settings. Consistent with training on how to use an AT device, transition plans should include training for individuals with disabilities on how to independently acquire and use accessible formats in post-secondary life. For example, individuals transitioning to a college or university should be trained in the process of requesting accessible formats of academic course materials from a Disability Services Office. Individuals transitioning to employment should be prepared for various scenarios within for-profit and non-profit businesses for requesting accessible formats of materials needed to fulfill their job responsibilities.

Use of AT & AEM in State Assessments

AT Myth 8: AT cannot be used for participation in State academic assessments.

AT Fact 8: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires States to provide the appropriate accommodations, which includes the use of AT devices for students with disabilities as part of their State assessments.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 8: Appropriate accommodations for State assessments include providing the assessment in an accessible format for a child with a disability who requires it.

A child with a disability who requires the use of an AT device to participate in State and districtwide assessments may also require those same assessments provided in an accessible format. Therefore, the Department’s explanation under Myth/Fact 8 as related to AT devices also applies to accessible formats.

Common Myths and Facts about AT Devices and Services & AEM

Low-Tech to High-Tech AT & AEM

AT Myth 9: AT always involves an electronic device and is always high-tech.

AT Fact 9: Many AT devices or tools may be computer based, but items like visual schedules and calendars, binder clips, squishy balls, or stickers may also be considered AT.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 9: Accessible formats can be either digital or paper based.

Like AT devices, accessible formats of educational materials are not necessarily electronic. Examples of paper-based or hard copy formats include embossed braille, tactile graphics, and large print. Examples of electronic formats include digital braille, digitally recorded audio, and digital text. A child who is blind or low vision or a child who is deaf or hard of hearing may need features of accessible video, such as closed captions, audio description, and embedded ASL. Furthermore, a child may need a text transcript of a material provided in an audio format, such as a podcast.

Specific Disabilities Requiring AT & AEM

AT Myth 10: AT devices and services should only be considered for children with certain disabilities.

AT Fact 10: AT must be considered for all children with IEPs and can play an important role in the provision of FAPE, regardless of the type of disability. AT has been proven to be effective for children with a variety of disabilities.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 10: Accessible formats should be considered for all children with IEPs.

Similar to AT, there are common misconceptions about the types of disabilities for which accessible formats can be considered. For example, it is a common misconception that accessible formats of educational materials are only for children who are blind or have low vision. While IDEA requires IEP Teams to consider the needs of a child who is blind or

visually impaired for instruction in braille and the use of braille (Myth/Fact 4), children with other types of disabilities are eligible to receive accessible formats. For example, if the IEP Team determines that a child who is dyslexic needs text-to-speech software, the accessible formats of audio and digital text should be considered for inclusion in the child's IEP. If the IEP Team determines a child with a physical disability needs an AT device to access educational materials, such as switch-scanning technology, the accessible format of digital text should be considered for inclusion in the IEP. Consistent with the decision-making process for AT devices and services, IEP Teams should consider the individual needs of the child and make accessible format decisions accordingly.

Use of AT & AEM Across Different Environments

AT Myth 11: AT devices and services are only needed for the academic classroom and only for use at school.

AT Fact 11: A learner's AT device should be used across all environments to both improve the child's use of the AT as well as to ensure the child is provided their required support throughout the day.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 11: If the IEP Team determines the use of one or more accessible formats is needed to provide FAPE to the child with a disability, the child's use of the accessible format(s) must be supported across all environments.

The explanation presented by the Department as it relates to AT devices applies to the use of accessible formats. An example presented by the Department of a child who requires text-to-speech software also applies to accessible formats. That is, a child who requires text-to-speech software needs materials in an accessible digital text format in order for that AT to be implemented; therefore, wherever the child uses text-to-speech software, the child will also need material in accessible digital text. Another example: A child who requires a refreshable braille display should have access to that device in all environments, along with the digital braille files of the necessary materials.

Individualizing AT & AEM for a Child with a Disability

AT Myth 12: An AT device and service that works for one child will work for all children.

AT Fact 12: AT devices and services need to be responsive to a child’s individualized needs.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 12: The provision and use of accessible formats need to be responsive to a child’s individualized needs.

Children with disabilities may use a range of accessible formats depending on the learning context. For example, a child who uses braille for one class may primarily rely on audio in another. In addition, children with the same disability may utilize different accessible formats. For example, one child who has low vision may be learning to read braille, while another may use text magnification. The determination of the primary reading media and the accessible formats which should be available to the child in a given class or setting should be made by the IEP Team. Decisions about what format(s) to provide should be made based on individualized assessment, not on factors such as teacher preference, expediency, or cost. Often, advanced planning and coordination are required to ensure that all educational materials – including teacher-created materials – are ready for a child to use in the format(s) indicated in the IEP. One or more members of the IEP Team should be knowledgeable about the selection, acquisition, and use of accessible formats that meet the unique needs of the child with a disability. Guidance and technical assistance are available from [State AEM Contacts](#).

Terms Related to AT & AEM

AT Myth 13: Accessible technology and AT are the same thing.

AT Fact 13: Accessible technology and AT are not the same. Accessible technology is a term used to describe technology that is designed in a way to support many different users, while AT is a term that describes a piece of technology that is selected to perform a specific task for an individual child with a disability.

AT Myth 14: AT, universal design, universal design for learning (UDL) and accessible educational materials (AEM) are the same thing.

AT Fact 14: AT, universal design, UDL and AEM each have their own unique purpose and definitions under Federal law.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myths & Facts 13 & 14: The definition of AEM includes materials that are converted to accessible formats for use by eligible children with disabilities.

For a deeper analysis of the definition of AEM and accessible formats, a type of AEM, see [Section II, AEM and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#). The definition of AEM presented in AT Myth/Fact 14 was adopted for the purpose of technical assistance after the 2014 award of the National AEM Center.

Outcomes of the Use of AT & AEM

AT Myth 15: Using AT devices and services will not improve child outcomes.

AT Fact 15: Research demonstrates that use of AT devices and services improves child outcomes in all settings.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 15: Consistent with AT, research indicates that the provision and use of accessible formats benefit a child's ability to participate and make progress in the general education curriculum, as well as achieve positive employment outcomes.

Reading digital text in conjunction with listening to the text in audio format has been documented to be an effective intervention for children with reading disabilities (Jackson et al., 2022; Keelor et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2018). It has also been shown that the combination of refreshable braille or screen magnification and text-to-speech technology can augment the reading rate of children who are blind or have low vision (Jackson, 2021). Additionally, studies of sample participants have shown a correlation between braille reading skills and education, employment, and financial outcomes for adults who are blind or have low vision (Ryles, 1996; Silverman & Bell, 2018).

Motivation While Using AT & AEM

AT Myth 16: The use of AT devices lowers a child's motivation because it does the work for them.

AT Fact 16: Research shows that AT increases a child's motivation to complete assignments.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 16: The use of accessible formats enables an eligible child to access otherwise inaccessible material of the general curriculum.

The research cited by the Department under AT Myth/Fact 16 includes a study in which “children with disabilities reported that being able to listen to text through their AT devices while also reading assisted in comprehension and completion of assignments” (p. 10). Examples of accessible formats that enable a child to listen to text through AT devices and, therefore, complete assignments include digital text and human-recorded audio.

Addressing a Child’s Refusal of AT & AEM

AT Myth 17: If a child doesn’t want to use AT, a teacher doesn’t need to follow up to model and encourage the child to use the AT.

AT Fact 17: If a child does not want to use an AT device, it is critical that the IEP Team works with the child to understand and address the root cause of the child’s refusal.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 17: As with AT, if a child does not want to use an accessible format, it is critical that the IEP Team works with the child to understand and address the root cause of the child’s refusal.

Consistent with the reasons the Department presents for AT, a child may not want to use an accessible format. Therefore, the recommendations provided under Myth/Fact 17 apply to cases where a child refuses an accessible format.

Ownership of AT & AEM

AT Myth 18: When children are using their own devices for AT, there is less responsibility on the school or educator.

AT Fact 18: AT devices and services written into the IEP are the responsibility of the LEA. There may be flexibility if the parent and the LEA agree on using a child’s device instead of using an LEA’s AT device.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 18: Whether materials are used on an LEA’s or a child’s own device, SEAs and LEAs are responsible for developing digital rights policies and procedures for the legal distribution and use of accessible formats.

When digital accessible formats are provided to a child, whether on a device supplied by the LEA or the child's own device, digital rights policies need to be followed. IDEA requires SEAs and LEAs to establish and disseminate policies and procedures to prevent the illegal copying or distribution of copyrighted digital content. An accessible format use policy can be included in the IEP or in another document available to the parents and relevant staff in the school and LEA. Digital rights managers in SEAs and LEAs are helpful with overseeing the legal delivery, distribution, and use of digital accessible formats.

In addition to those listed in the AT guidance document, the following responsibilities should be considered by the IEP Team in direct relation to the provision and use of digital accessible formats on devices owned by either the child or the LEA:

- Ensuring the device is loaded with the software program(s) and/or app(s) needed to deliver all accessible formats needed by the child;
- Uploading/downloading accessible format files to the device in a timely manner; and
- Managing digital rights of copyrighted materials provided to the child.

Common Myths and Facts about Deploying AT Devices and Services & AEM

Timely Availability of AT & AEM

AT Myth 19: Buying AT devices takes a long time and won't give timely services to the child as required.

AT Fact 19: IDEA requires that as soon as possible following the development of the IEP, special education and related services are made available to the child in accordance with the child's IEP. This includes AT devices if they are required as part of the child's special education or related services.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 19: As with AT devices, accessible formats should be made available to the child in accordance with the child's IEP as soon as possible following the development of the IEP if they are required as part of the child's special education or related services.

As with AT devices, the amount of time it can take to acquire an accessible format varies widely, depending on the format required and whether the material has already been

produced in the needed format by one or more agencies. Federally funded programs are available to help SEAs and LEAs meet the IDEA's requirement to provide accessible formats to a child with a disability in a timely manner (Section 674(e)):

- [Bookshare](#) is an OSEP-funded project that provides a range of accessible digital formats, and membership is free of charge to eligible children in early learning programs, elementary, or secondary schools.
- States are allocated, annually, some funds to purchase specialized educational materials from [APH](#), including but not limited to braille and large print ([Federal Quota Program](#)). All States have one or more APH Ex Officio Trustees who can assist in placing orders with APH.
- The [National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled \(NLS\)](#) and its network of State libraries provide braille and audio. The [NLS has a children's resource collection](#) for those eligible under 18 years of age, as well as their teachers and parents.
- Some States have an Instructional Resource Center (IRC) that maintains a library of accessible formats and manages requests for materials for eligible children. Information about IRCs is available from [State AEM Contacts](#).
- The [Described and Captioned Media Program \(DCMP\)](#) is an OSEP-funded project that provides accessible educational videos, and membership is free of charge for families and school personnel who have at least one child with a disability.

The searchable [Louis Database of Accessible Materials](#) includes information on materials available from over 50 organizations, including Bookshare and APH.

The IEP Team should be aware that when the needed accessible format is not already available from a provider, the turnaround time for production may be lengthy. The search for accessible formats of educational materials needed by the child must begin as soon as possible following the development of the IEP.

Cross-Department Collaboration for Supporting AT & AEM

AT Myth 20: All AT devices must be approved by an LEA's information technology (IT) department.

AT Fact 20: The IEP Team makes the determination on what AT device and service is necessary to meet the child's needs.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 20: As with AT decisions, the IEP Team determines what accessible format(s) a child with a disability needs.

To ensure that the child receives the accessible format in a timely manner and is able to use it effectively in the general education curriculum and other appropriate settings, the IEP Team collaborates with information technology (IT) and other relevant personnel.

Qualified Personnel for Providing AT & AEM

AT Myth 21: Only staff who specialize in AT can deploy AT devices or provide AT services.

AT Fact 21: IDEA requires the IEP Team to have representatives of the LEA who are qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 21: As with AT devices and services, the individuals involved or the process(es) needed to select, acquire, and support the use of accessible formats of educational materials vary according to the child's needs as determined by the IEP Team.

General education teachers, special education teachers, AT Specialists, teachers of students with visual impairments, teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and related service providers are examples of professionals who may be considered to help determine the unique needs of the child and the most effective process(es) for providing accessible formats. Technical assistance is available from [State or Territory AT Act programs](#) and [State AEM Contacts](#).

Technical Assistance for AT & AEM

AT Myth 22: There are no resources available to LEAs who can provide technical assistance on AT devices (e.g., loaning and testing of AT devices).

AT Fact 22: Every State has a State or Territory AT program that can provide device demonstrations and device loans to LEAs so they may evaluate an AT device's effectiveness prior to purchasing.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 22: In addition to technical assistance related to AT devices and services, [State or Territory AT programs](#) often have staff who are skilled

in the provision and use of accessible formats. Additionally, several OSEP-funded centers provide technical assistance for SEAs, LEAs, and parents.

The OSEP-funded [National Center on Accessible Digital Educational Materials Instruction \(NCADEMI\)](#) supports LEAs in the process of determining a child’s need for accessible formats, selecting the format(s) needed, acquiring the materials in the format(s) needed, and supporting the child, family, and staff with using the accessible format in all environments. Additionally, OSEP-funded providers of accessible formats, including [Bookshare](#) and [DCMP](#) offer technical assistance with using their services and materials. LEAs can also reach out to their [State AEM Contact](#) for technical assistance.

AT & AEM Requirements Under Part C of the IDEA

AT Myth 23: Infants, toddlers, and their families do not benefit from AT devices and services.

AT Fact 23: AT devices and services can and often do support infants, toddlers, and their families in meeting the developmental needs of an infant or toddler with a disability and the needs of the family to assist appropriately in the infant’s or toddler’s development.

AT Myth 24: IDEA Part C does not contain any provisions regarding AT devices or services.

AT Fact 24: Both the IDEA and its implementing regulations include AT devices and services as an early intervention service.

AT Myth 25: AT does not need to be considered when a toddler transitions from early intervention services to special education services at the preschool level.

AT Fact 25: AT must be considered when a toddler is transitioning from early intervention services to preschool, regardless of whether the child currently receives AT services through an IFSP.

AT Myth 26: State lead agencies and early intervention services (EIS) providers are not eligible to access technical assistance from State AT programs.

AT Fact 26: State AT programs serve all individuals of any age, including infants and toddlers, and with any type of disability.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myths & Facts 23, 24, 25, & 26: The IDEA requirements related to AEM are specific to Part B. However, there are AEM-related considerations that parents and providers can make while an infant or toddler is receiving Part C services.

As part of the development of the individualized family service plan (IFSP), families and service providers can consider the types of materials the child will use once enrolled in early childhood education. For example, print-based books in a preschool program may not be accessible to children with a range of disabilities, including a child who is blind or has low vision, a child with a physical disability that impacts fine motor movement, or a child who has not yet been identified as having a reading disability. A Part C to Part B transition plan in the IFSP can include training and services to prepare the child to be as independent as possible while using a variety of early childhood education materials. The earlier accessible formats are introduced to children with disabilities, the more opportunities they will have to independently learn and develop alongside children without disabilities. For example, beginning readers who are learning braille need practice with contractions in addition to learning letters, grammar rules, and spelling skills to which all early readers are introduced (Emerson et al., 2009).

Common Myths and Facts about AT & AEM Costs and Funding Sources

Cost of AT & AEM

AT Myth 27: AT is expensive.

AT Fact 27: While some AT may be expensive, there are many forms of AT devices and services with little to no cost.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 27: As with AT, some types of accessible formats may be expensive to produce. Examples include embossed braille and tactile graphics. Federal funding offsets the cost for SEAs and LEAs to provide accessible formats of educational materials.

IEP Teams should be aware of the federally funded sources of accessible materials listed under Myth/Fact 19. Additionally, the [Federal Quota Program](#) distributes funds to States

for the purpose of purchasing accessible materials and educational products from APH for use by children who are blind or have low vision.

Funding Sources for AT & AEM

AT Myth 28: There are limited funding sources for AT devices and services.

AT Fact 28: There are multiple funding sources for AT devices and services.

AEM Tie-In for AT Myth & Fact 28: There are multiple funding sources for accessible formats.

The Federal funding sources for AT devices and services that are presented by the Department under Myth/Fact 28 also apply to the provision and use of accessible formats.

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