

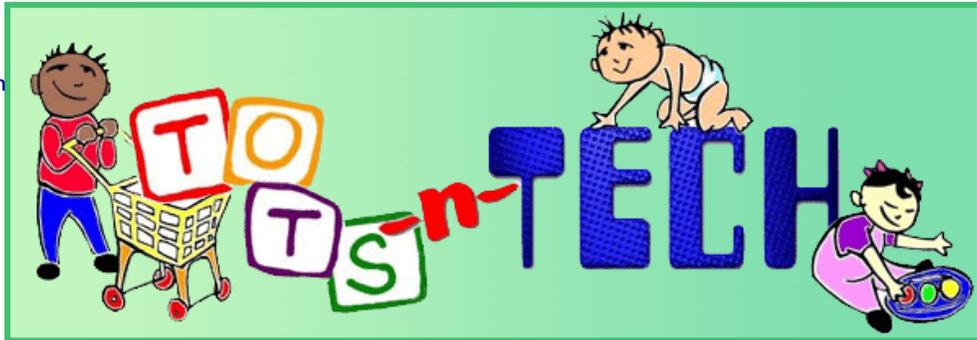


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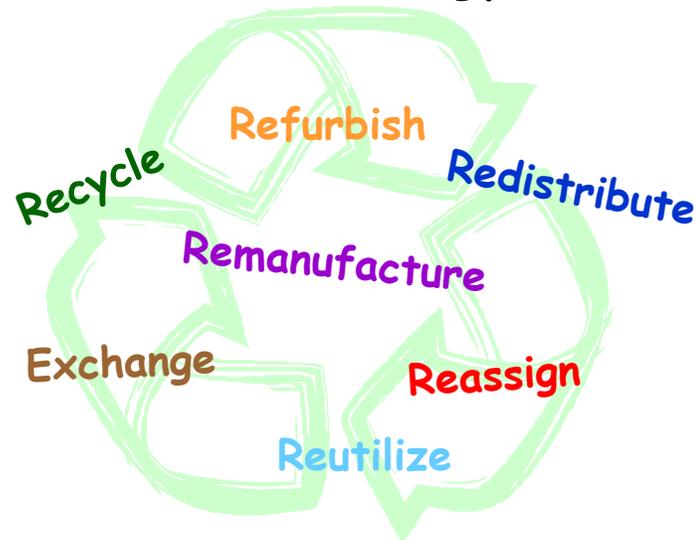
# Assistive Technology Reuse

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## Assistive Technology Reuse



What do all of the words above have in common? They all have to do with assistive technology (AT) reuse! Although there are many different words that describe reuse, one thing is clear: AT reuse helps children with disabilities access the devices they need to participate in daily activities and routines.

This resource guide provides parents and professionals with background information about AT reuse, describes the different types of reuse programs, provides information on how to start a reuse program, and lists helpful reuse resources.

### What is assistive technology (AT) reuse?

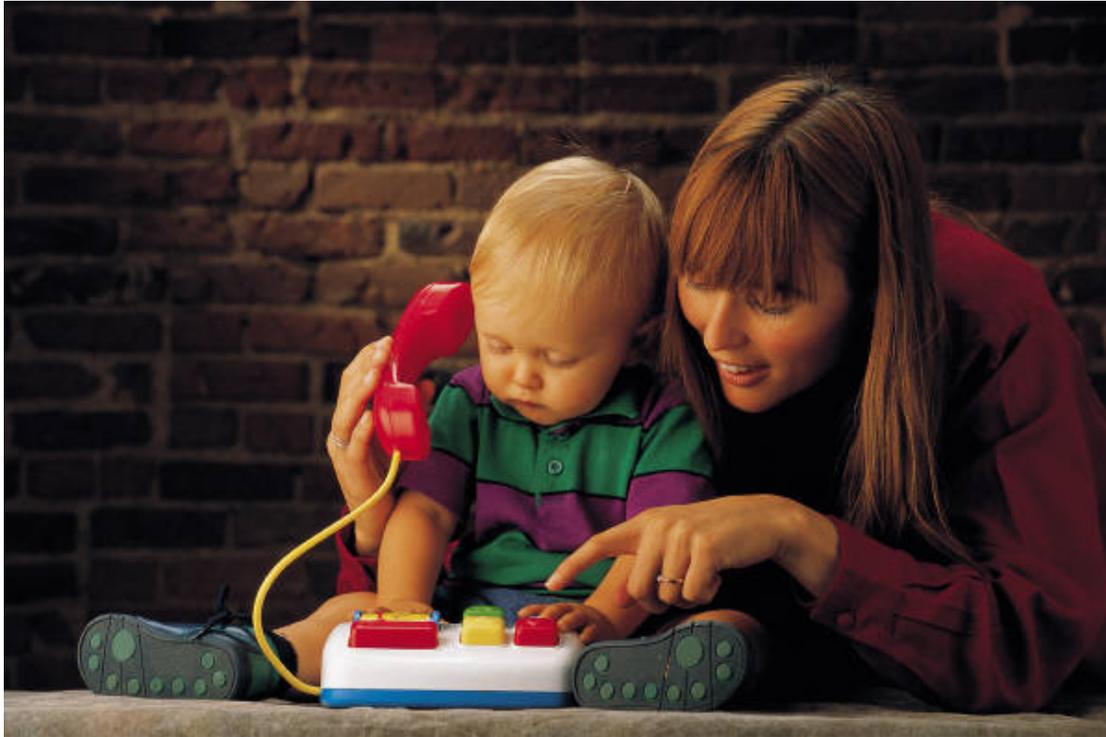
AT reuse refers to any piece of equipment, device, or aid that was once used by someone else and is now being used by another person.

### How does AT reuse help children?

Children grow and develop very quickly. As they age, children grow out of their clothing, shoes, and toys. Parents may decide to keep these items for younger siblings, donate the items to charity, or simply throw them away. Much like clothing, shoes, and toys, children are also likely to grow out of their AT devices as they age. Many times, parents of children who use AT aren't sure what to do with their children's devices. Many devices end up in basements and attics, unused and unwanted. These unused devices are perfect candidates for AT reuse programs. Parents of children who no longer use their devices can donate these used devices to reuse programs, exchange them for other devices, or even sell them (typically for a reduced price) so that other children can benefit from AT.

### How does AT reuse help children? (continued)

Assistive technology can be quite pricey, however just like a used car or used clothing, used AT can be much cheaper than a brand new item, sometimes it's even free! Because of the reduced cost, a family might be able to buy an extra device, e.g., an extra wheelchair for convenience. A family might also be able to purchase recreational items for their child that aren't covered by insurance. The reduced prices of reused AT increases the availability of a range of devices for all children with disabilities!



### What does the law say about AT reuse?

The Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) helps people with disabilities by creating statewide assistive technology programs. Programs that promote the reuse of assistive technology are required under the AT Act.

The Assistive Technology Act states that *“The State shall directly, or in collaboration with public or private entities, carry out assistive technology device reutilization programs that provide for the exchange, repair, recycling, or other reutilization of assistive technology devices, which may include redistribution through device sales, loans, rentals, or donations.”*<sup>1</sup>

States are also required to report on *“the number, type, estimated value, and scope of assistive technology devices exchanged, repaired, recycled, or reutilized (including redistributed through device sales, loans, rentals, or donations) through the device reutilization program described in subsection (e) (2)(B), and an analysis of the individuals with disabilities that have benefited from the device reutilization program”*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended (P.L. 108-634). Retrieved from <http://www.ataporg.org/atap/legislative.php>.

## What are the different types of AT reuse programs?

### *Device Recycling*

The AT device is taken and broken down into pieces that may be reused for refurbishing or remanufacturing a device.

### *Device Exchange*

An individual who wants to get rid of a particular device is matched with an individual who wants that same device (just like a want-ad or classified). The individual getting rid of the device may either sell (typically for a reduced price) or donate the device to the receiving individual. These types of programs don't usually physically handle the devices. The devices typically are exchanged directly from individual to individual, by mail, arranging a pick up of the device, or other means.

### *Device Reassignment/Redistribution*

The AT device is accepted into the program's inventory. If needed the device is repaired. The device is also sanitized. Once the device is ready for a new owner, the program offers the device for sale, loan, rental or give away. The program may also match the device to the new user.

### *Device Refurbish*

Similar to device reassignment, this program restores the AT to its "original configuration" before offering the device to a new user.

### *Device Remanufacturing*

This type of program strips the AT device and rebuilds it into a "new configuration" before offering the device to a new user.

## What kind of impact do these programs make on the lives of AT users?

The National Information System for Assistive Technology (NISAT) collects national data on assistive technology use by state AT programs. Below is data about AT reuse from their 2009 report.

27,004 AT users received reused AT. The majority (83%) of these users received their items from a recycle, refurbish, or repair program. A few individuals received their AT from open-ended loan programs (12%) and exchange programs (5%).

34,702 devices were provided by reuse programs. Most (78%) were from recycle, refurbish, or repair programs and some were from open ended loan programs (18%) and exchange programs (4%).

All types of AT were reused in all types of programs. The most common types of reused AT were mobility, seating and positioning devices, followed by daily living devices, computers, and vehicle modifications.

Overall, AT users saved a total of **\$17,229,179!**

56 out of 56 AT programs submitted data on 1 or more reuse programs.

Source: NISAT (2009). *FY 2009 state AT program data*. Retrieved from <http://www.ataporg.org/atap/nisat.php>

## **Now that I know about the benefits of AT reuse, how can I learn more about starting my own program?**

The checklist below was adapted from the resource, "So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Lending Library..." created by Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT). The checklist can be used to guide organizations in the process of starting an AT reuse program.

### **So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Reuse Program...**

#### **Find out what is needed**

- Survey other available reuse programs and consider why those do not meet your needs  
*For example:*
  - *Doesn't have what we need or what the community needs*
  - *Barriers in accessing the equipment*
  - *Liability/responsibility issues*
- Survey stakeholders for equipment needs

#### **Find out what you already have**

- Survey your organization for devices that are currently available for reuse
- Survey your partner organization(s) for devices that are currently available for reuse
- Determine if these devices are acceptable for reuse
  - Do the devices need to be repaired?
  - Are the devices needed by reuse recipients?
- Determine the type and quantity of additional devices that your organization would like to acquire

#### **Evaluate your partnerships**

*Partnerships can provide your organization with needed resources including volunteers, funds, donated devices, and technical experience*

- Survey current partner organizations for potential equipment donations (or equipment at discounted prices) and potential services
  - Will your partner organizations have a continuous supply of equipment to donate? Or will donations be sporadic?
- Survey other related organizations for new partnerships  
*Consider looking in to: other reuse programs that serve different communities or clients, technical colleges, device manufacturers*
  - Can these organizations provide donated devices or will they charge?
  - Can these organizations provide donated services or will they charge?
- Determine the benefits and drawbacks of your current and/or future partnerships
  - Make sure the partnership is "worth it!"

#### **Decide on reuse program type**

- Decide what type of reuse program you have the capability to create and will also meet your communities' needs.

*Consider your organization's:*

- Financial capabilities - how much funding is currently available? Will funding come from inside or outside sources or both? How will you raise money?

## **So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Reuse Program... (continued)**

### **Decide on reuse program type (continued)**

- Staffing capabilities - How many staff members does your organization already have? Are they able to take on additional tasks related to reuse? Is your organization able to hire new staff members? Do you have access to volunteers?
- Space limitations - Does your organization currently have enough space to house devices for reuse? How much space? Will your organization be able to acquire additional space if needed?
- Marketing capabilities - Will your organization be able to spread the word effectively?

### *Types of reuse programs*

- Exchange programs - will your organization physically handle the devices or will the devices be exchanged directly between donor and recipient? Will people be able to donate items as well as sell them for a reduced price? Will your exchange program be based online or will consumers have to come to your organization? What types of items will be exchanged?
- Recycle programs - will your organization recycle devices or will you send out the devices to be recycled? How fast will the turnaround time be between when you receive a device and when it is ready to be given to a recipient?
- Reassignment/redistribution programs - will you repair devices if needed? Who will repair the devices?
- Refurbish programs - will you repair devices if needed? Who will repair the devices? Will your organization refurbish the device or will you send the device out to another organization?
- Remanufacture programs - will you repair devices if needed? Who will repair the devices? Will your organization remanufacture the device or will you send the device out to another organization?
- General considerations
  - Is there a maximum number of devices that you are able to accept (given the amount of available space, staff, or financial resources)?
  - Will your organization charge for its services?
  - How will you match devices to individuals?
  - Will you do safety checks on the devices?

### **Decide what you will reuse and what you will not reuse**

- Find out the characteristics of your reuse recipients (ages, functional needs addressed by AT)
- Decide if you will reuse mainstream items (e.g., laptops, iPads)
- Decide if you will reuse software and how you will reuse it (adhering to licensing agreements)

#### ***Consider the following characteristics of equipment when deciding what to reuse***

- Size and weight of equipment – will you be able to store these items easily?
- Size and weight of equipment – how much will shipping cost for these items?
- Are these items easy to pack and ship?
- Will you provide items that have to be installed or permanently modified?

## **So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Reuse Program... (continued)**

### **Decide what you will reuse and what you will not reuse (continued)**

- Are the items easily cleaned or sanitized?
  - How will you clean cloth surfaces? Metal? Plastic?
  - Will you include items that are personal in nature (e.g., commode or eating utensils)?
  - Will you be able to implement sterilization procedures?
- Decide which items you will accept and reject, come up with a detailed plan for accepting and rejecting donations
 

*Consider the following:*

  - Will the device cost more to repair/refurbish than it is actually worth?
  - Is the device needed by the individuals your organization will serve?
  - If you do not accept an individual's donations will you give resources for properly disposing of the device?
  - Will you accept items that have been permanently modified for the original user? It may be difficult to reuse these items.
  - Will you accept items that require ongoing technical support?
  - Will you accept equipment that is over a certain number of years old?
  - Will you allow potential donors to send pictures of the device prior to accepting it?
  - Will you allow potential donors to specify who receives their device? (e.g., I would like this device to go to a child who...)

### **Decide how you will acquire reusable devices**

- Will you advertise for donations?
  - Where will you advertise? *Listservs, newsletters, fliers, websites, word of mouth, other methods?*
- Will you partner with device vendors? *Think about asking vendors to encourage individuals who purchase new products to donate their items once they no longer use them.*
- Will you create device drop off locations?
  - Who will transport devices from drop off locations to your program's facility?
- Will the donor drop off the equipment, mail the equipment or arrange a pick up of the equipment?
  - Who will be there to accept donated and mailed items?
  - Who will pick up the donated equipment?

### **Decide who may donate and reuse devices from your program**

- Will device recipients be able to obtain devices directly from your organization?
- Will assistive technology organizations and/or professionals be able to obtain devices on behalf of their clients?
- Will you accept devices from individuals, organizations, and professionals?
- Will the person need to be skilled in the use of the device before being allowed to receive the device?
  - How will you know they are skilled?
  - Will you provide donors with a receipt for tax purposes? If so be sure to consult with your tax advisor

## **So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Reuse Program... (continued)**

### **Establish policies and procedures for the equipment once your organization receives it**

- Who will evaluate the quality of devices received? How will devices be evaluated?
- Who will determine if the device needs to be repaired? How will devices be repaired?
- Who will sanitize devices? How will devices be sanitized?
- How will you ensure the safety of devices and who will do this?
- Who will monitor for recall product notices?
- Will you have a policy for how long you will keep items?

### **Decide how you will distribute equipment**

- How will you match devices to individuals?
- Will you let individuals “try before they buy”?
- Will the recipient pick up the equipment? Or will it be mailed to the recipient? Or will it be delivered by the program?
  - Who will be responsible for these tasks?
- Is “free” delivery available? (e.g., via intradistrict “pony” or itinerant staff)
  - How reliable is this service? How frequent?
- Will the program need to purchase shipping cases and related materials (e.g., bubble wrap)?
- Will the program need to purchase shipping services? (UPS, etc.)
- Will the program accept returns on equipment that the recipient is not satisfied with or does not want?
  - Will the program provide return postage for returned items?
- Will users be obligated to return their devices to the reuse program once they are done?

### **Decide what supports your program will be able to provide to recipients of reused devices**

*Below are examples of supports that recipients may find useful.*

- “Cheat sheets” and other supportive print materials
- User guides
- Information on manufacturer/vendor webinars and youtube videos
- Classroom-based technical assistance
- Child centered technical assistance
- Parent training

### **Establish policies regarding recipient responsibilities**

- Purchase liability protection for the program
- Will recipients be required to sign a release?

### **Decide how the equipment will be managed**

- Set up an inventory tracking system; include information regarding name, make, model, vendor, date of donation or purchase
- Create unique tags/codes for all items and affix tags/codes to each item. Tags should be removable or in an inconspicuous place so that once donated to an individual he or she can easily remove the tag.

## **So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Reuse Program... (continued)**

### **Decide how the equipment will be managed (continued)**

- Designate staff to manage devices
  - For example:*
    - Who donated which piece of equipment
    - Waiting lists - prioritization; notification
    - Where is the item located
- Designate staff to manage items in need of repair
  - For example:*
    - Troubleshoot nonfunctioning items
    - Send back to vendor (e.g., for warranty or other service)
    - Track how long vendor has the item
    - Decide a repair is *not* worth the investment
- Decide when to pull an item out of inventory
  - Establish criteria (e.g., age/condition of item)
  - What happens to it after it is removed from the inventory?

### **Establish policies and procedures to reduce device damage**

- Consider purchasing extended warranties or software upgrade plans if you are able to
  - Who will manage this information?
- Is insurance available for the device (shipping; general)?
  - Who will manage this information?
  - Who would be responsible for filing a claim?

### **Decide how and where you will store your devices**

- Space – is enough space allocated to house all of your equipment and related items?
- Shelving
- Storage containers - what kinds of containers are available?
  - Will you need extra padding/protection to the container (e.g., bubble wrap, foam)?
- Where is the storage space located? Is it readily accessed? Are devices accessible within the space?
- How much does the location cost?

### **Decide how you will market the program to potential recipients**

- Listservs
- Newsletters or fliers
- Web presence
- Other distribution methods

### **Decide how you will evaluate the program**

*Below are items to consider in developing your evaluation plan:*

- How many individuals have been serviced (unique/repeat customers)?
- Who are these individuals (demographics, disability, etc.)
- What is being reused? By whom?
- Is it possible to calculate cost savings?
- Customer satisfaction

## So You Want to Start an Assistive Technology (AT) Reuse Program... (continued)

### Make your program sustainable

- Are resources available for maintenance and repair (include batteries, cleaning supplies, etc.)?
- Are resources available for replacement of items and components?
- Are resources available to meet all staffing needs?
- Are resources available to meet other needs that may arise?

## AT Reuse Resources

### Helpful Documents

**Title:** *Discovering Hidden Resources: Assistive Technology Recycling, Refurbishing, and Redistribution*

**Organization:** RESNA Technical Assistance Project

**Website:** <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED442241.pdf>

**About:** This publication discusses the benefits of recycling and reusing assistive technology for students with disabilities.

**Title:** *Device Reutilization*

**Organization:** National Assistive Technology Assistance Partnership (NATTAP)

**Website:** <http://resnaprojects.org/nattap/activities/reutilization.html>

**About:** A collection of documents that contain information about AT reuse.

**Title:** *Reuse Your AT*

**Organization:** U.S. Department of Education

**Website:** <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/atrg/at-reuse.html>

**About:** This website contains a brochure on AT reuse that can be downloaded and distributed. It also contains background information on what AT reuse is, why it's important, who reuses AT, and how reuse can be improved.

**Title:** *Statewide AT Programs Chartbook: State Level Data from the 2009 - 2011 State Plans*

**Organization:** The National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership

**Website:** <http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/activities/chartbook/RESNA.html>

**About:** Section 3 of this document contains information about Device Reutilization Programs including program descriptions by state, program locations and fees, how devices are reassigned, and information on how agencies financially support themselves.

**Title:** *Developing Policies and Procedures for AT Reuse Programs*

**Organization:** Pass it On Center

**Website:** <http://www.passitoncenter.org/Content/ATIA2010/Developing%20Policy%20&%20Procedures%20for%20AT%20Reuse%20-%20Brodey.pptx>

**About:** This presentation from the 2010 ATIA Conference includes information on how to write policies and procedures and provides worksheets to help with drafting policies and procedures.

**Title:** *CRATE Policies and Procedures*

**Organization:** Pass It On Center and CRATE

**Website:** <http://www.passitoncenter.org/Content/ReuseConference2009/How%20to%20Start%20a%20Reuse%20Program%20-%20CREATE%20Policies%20and%20Procedure.doc>

**About:** Policies and procedures for the Citizens Reutilizing Assistive Technology Equipment (CRATE) in Utah.

## AT Reuse Resources

### Helpful Websites

**Organization:** *Pass It On Center*

**Website:** <http://www.passitoncenter.org/Home.aspx>

**About:** The Pass It On Center creates “national and state resources to foster the appropriate reuse of AT so that people with disabilities can get the affordable AT they need in order to live, learn, work and play more independently.” Their website includes a reuse program self-assessment, AT reuse presentations, webinars, reuse locations, and information on emergency management.

**Organization:** Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (State AT Programs)

**Website:** [http://http://www.ataporg.org/atap/index?id=states\\_listing](http://http://www.ataporg.org/atap/index?id=states_listing)

**About:** Find your state’s AT program on this website. Use the search function on the right side of the website that says, “Get Help in Your State” to find your AT program.

### Reuse Programs

**Program:** *AT Finder* at Assistive Technology Partners

**Website:** <http://www.atfinder.org/Default.aspx>

**About:** “AT Finder is an online tool that allows up to four online classifieds and/or auction sites to all be searched simultaneously using one simple, easy to use interface.” Craigslist (in CO and CA only), eBay, eBay Classifieds, and Oodle (all nationwide) are available to search for equipment.

**Program:** Pass it On Center’s Reuse Program Directory

**Website:** <http://passitoncenter.org/locations/search.aspx>

**About:** This directory allows you to search, nationwide, for assistive technology reuse programs. Also includes U.S. Territories. In addition to location, you can also search by ages served including ages birth to 3 and 4 to 21.

**Program:** Pass it On Center’s AT Exchange Program Listings

**Website:** <http://www.passitoncenter.org/FindAT.aspx>

**About:** At this website you will find a listing of AT exchange programs.

**Program:** *Get AT Stuff* at NE AT Exchange

**Website:** <http://www.getatstuff.com/>

**About:** An AT exchange program that serves states in the New England area including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

**Program:** *Southeastern Technology Access and Reuse (STAR) Network*

**Website:** <http://www.star-network.org/>

**About:** The STAR Network provides new and reused AT to centers that are members of their network. They serve areas of the southeast including Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

**Program:** *The National Cristina Center*

**Website:** <http://www.cristina.org/>

**About:** The National Cristina Center is one of the earliest reuse programs! It accepts donated computers, printers, and accessories and then donates them to organizations that work with people with disabilities, at risk students, and economically disadvantaged individuals.

## AT Reuse Resources

### Reuse Programs (continued)

**Program:** *Free Cycle*

**Website:** <http://www.freecycle.org/>

**About:** Freecycle is “a grassroots and entirely nonprofit movement of people who are giving (and getting) stuff for free in their own towns. It's all about reuse and keeping good stuff out of landfills. Each local group is moderated by local volunteers (them's good people). Membership is free. To sign up, find your community by entering it into the search box above or by clicking on 'Browse Groups' above the search box.”

**Program:** *Craigslist*

**Website:** <http://www.craigslist.org>

**About:** An online classified ad website. Ads are organized by location. You can use the search function (on the left side of the page) to search your area for AT.

**Program:** *Sell Stuff Local*

**Website:** <http://www.sellstufflocal.com/>

**About:** Another online classified ad website. Ads are organized by location. There is a search function that you can use to search for assistive technology.

**Additional Programs:** Try your local *Easter Seals* (<http://www.easterseals.com/site/PageServer>), *UCP* (<http://www.ucp.org/>), or *Muscular Dystrophy Association* (<http://www.mdausa.org/>) for reused AT.

#### Remember that appropriate AT reuse programs...

- are safe
- are environmentally friendly
- provide positive outcomes for AT users
- meet the needs of AT users

#### Effective AT Reuse programs...

- save money or break even
- are sustainable
- make a positive impact on the AT field

Source: Kniskern, J. & Phillips, C.P. (2008). *Pass it on! Overview of the National AT Reuse Center [PowerPoint slides]*. Retrieved from Pass it On Center's website: [http://www.passitoncenter.org/ATIAconference/powerpoints/Passiton\\_Overview\\_files/handout/index.html](http://www.passitoncenter.org/ATIAconference/powerpoints/Passiton_Overview_files/handout/index.html).



Image Source: <http://assistive.dtsl.co.nz/>

Questions? Comments? Email Jill McLeod at [jill.mcleod@jefferson.edu](mailto:jill.mcleod@jefferson.edu).  
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