TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 16-11
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TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DIRECTORS
STATE VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE
DIRECTORS
STATE APPRENTICESHIP DIRECTORS
WORKFORCE BOARD DIRECTORS
ONE-STOP CAREER CENTER SYSTEM MANAGERS

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Employment and Training Administration

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Office of Disability Employment Policy

SUBJECT: Availability of Assistive Technology (AT) Resources for Persons with
Disabilities

1. **Purpose**. To inform the public workforce system about the availability of AT resources for customers with disabilities.

2. **Background**. Each year, the One-Stop Career Centers serve thousands of individuals with disabilities, many of whom could benefit from AT. AT, such as personal amplifiers, screen readers, and specially designed keyboards, assists persons with disabilities in accessing the full array of One-Stop services and helps individuals perform the essential functions of their jobs once employed. The use of AT and the implementation of universal design concepts to promote employment opportunities of people with disabilities are important. Technology and universal design "level the playing field" for job seekers with disabilities, as well as older workers and others experiencing changing functional abilities in the work place. Access to AT can help reduce the disproportionately high unemployment and underemployment of persons with disabilities. AT can also help bridge the gap between a person's physical and cognitive abilities and the job requirements. Many work place challenges can be eliminated by using AT alone, or in combination with other types of work place supports.

   The Assistive Technology Act of 1998 defines AT as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." More generally, AT is any type of technology that is used to help a person perform a task that

might otherwise be difficult or impossible to complete. This can include a closed circuit television that uses a magnifier and camera to help a person with low vision to see, screen reading software for someone who cannot see, a personal amplifier for a person who is hard of hearing, or an ergonomically designed keyboard for an individual with carpel tunnel syndrome.

AT is more than equipment; it involves a problem-solving process that identifies solutions to challenges. Depending on the person's disability and specific job, there are a range of possibilities from simple, little to no-cost solutions to more technical, specialized AT. Although the costs of AT vary greatly, most are inexpensive, and there is a wide range of resources to help pay for them. AT varies from no tech/low tech to high tech. More importantly, employers report gains in productivity and cost savings when they provide accommodations to people with disabilities. Information about types of AT, funding sources, and available resources are provided below.

3. **Assistive Technology**.

- **Types of AT**. According to AbleData, which manages a database of the types of AT available, there are 36,000 AT products in 20 categories. This includes computer applications such as alternative input devices like voice recognition; transportation and mobility aids that help individuals move from one place to another; and communications aids, which can be used in addition to or replacing the human voice. There are also architectural aids that reduce physical barriers by making changes to an individual's home, school, or work place, including ramps, elevators, lifts, and special door handles as well as prosthetics and orthotics, which can enhance or replace body parts. To link to this database visit: http://www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm?pageid=19327&ksectionid=19327.

- **Funding Sources**. The State Assistive Technology Programs, funded by the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, provide device loan, reutilization, demonstration, and financing support for assistive technology purchases. A complete list of state contacts can be found at: http://www.resnaprojects.org/nattap/at/statecontacts.html.

  The Social Security Administration's (SSA) Ticket to Work Program, an employment program for people with disabilities who receive benefits from the SSA, can be used by One-Stop Career Centers to provide funding for AT when: One-Stop Career Centers and other entities are designated as an Employment Network (EN) by SSA; and Social Security disability beneficiaries designate the One-Stop Career Center as their EN. More information about the Ticket to Work Program can be found at: http://www.chooseworkttw.net/.

  Individuals who receive or could qualify for Supplemental Security Income because of a disability can use a Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) to purchase assistive technology if the person is pursuing an employment goal. Information about PASS plans can be found at: http://www.ssa.gov/redbook/eng/ssi-only-employment-supports.htm#3.

Under certain conditions, AT may be funded through Medicare or Medicaid which can be combined with other private funding sources, including private health insurance. Information about public and private funding sources can be found at: http://www.onestops.info/article.php?article_id=22&subcat_id=3. General information about Medicare can be found at: http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/10050.pdf. Information about Medicare coverage of durable medical equipment can be found at: http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11045.pdf.   For information about Medicaid eligibility and a link to state Medicaid programs visit: https://www.cms.gov/MedicaidEligibility/01_Overview.asp#TopOfPage.

Other public sources for AT funding include funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. To qualify, a student's Individualized Education Program must include the need for assistive technology. The student can be receiving an education in a public, private, or home setting. State vocational rehabilitation agencies can also help eligible individuals attain the AT they need to meet the employment goals stated in their Individualized Plan for Employment.   Information about special education provisions can be found at: http://www.atp.ne.gov/techassist/acknowledge.html. A listing of state vocational programs is at: (http://askjan.org/cgi-win/TypeQuery.exe?902).

For injured or wounded service members transitioning to civilian employment, the Department of Defense's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program can provide an AT assessment and technology to assist in seeking and maintaining employment (http://cap.tricare.mil). This free service is also offered as an employment support for several other Federal agencies.

There are tax incentives for employers purchasing AT for one or more employees. They include the Disabled Access Credit, a Federal tax incentive program to encourage small businesses to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which equals 50 percent of eligible small expenditures; and the Federal Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal deduction, a $15,000 tax deduction for the removal of architectural and transportation barriers to accessibility. For additional information visit the Internal Revenue Service Web site: http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=185704,00.html.

4. **Additional Information**. Two additional resources available to One-Stop Career Centers and businesses to learn more about how they can help customers and employees with disabilities access and use AT to benefit their job search and performance at the workplace are as follows:

- The Job Accommodation Network provides free, confidential technical assistance about job accommodations and the ADA to individuals and workforce professionals. http://askjan.org/soar/index.htm; and

- The Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), http://www.ataccess.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=22, provides contact information for 39 ATA centers throughout the country. The ATA centers provide assessments for individuals to help identify appropriate AT.

5. **Action Requested**. Recipients are requested to distribute this Training and Employment Notice to the One-Stop Career Centers and workforce system partners.

6. **Inquiries**. All inquiries should be addressed to the appropriate Regional Office.