



"Rules of Thumb" for Self-Advocacy*

No matter what AT funding source you pursue, the following tips will save you a lot of time and help increase your likelihood of success.

1. Do Not Give Up! Persevere!
2. Get your AT needs properly evaluated and documented.
Most AT funding sources require documented proof of your need for the equipment or services you are requesting. An appropriately certified professional such as a doctor or therapist, or sometimes a team of professionals, may do this. The evaluation process itself will help determine which particular device(s) and services are right for you.
3. Keep accurate records. Write down any disability-related services you receive. Remember to note the location, the date, and the reason for the service. You may be asked to recall or access this information several months (or even years) afterward. Keep copies of all documents related to your disability, such as prescriptions, reports of evaluations, receipts for treatments/medications, and expenses you incur that are in any way associated with your disability. Such documents may enable you to be reimbursed for equipment/services or to purchase them through Social Security Administration work incentive programs.
[Download the AT Advocacy Checklist](#)
4. Be prepared to work. Accept responsibility for locating and/or working with your AT funding source. Do not assume it is someone else's job or expect that service providers will automatically understand your needs. You know your situation best; that makes you your own best advocate.
5. Keep asking questions until you understand what is expected of you and what you can expect from others. Make notes before and after the call. Gaining access to funding can sometimes be a complex process, and

understanding the system greatly enhances your likelihood of success...so be determined when seeking information. If you don't quite get it, don't be ashamed to say, "I don't understand—please explain again more simply...more slowly." Most service representatives respond positively to such requests. If not, simply ask politely for someone who will. Along similar lines, precise communication is crucial. Formulate your questions before you make the call and write them down. Leave space for responses and write them in during the discussion. Even when you've carefully worded your question, it is still possible that the service representative may misunderstand. Try asking the same question another way, perhaps in simpler terms.

6. Be patient and be persistent. There is no one best approach that fits every situation. The solution may involve trying several options, or combining two or more to produce the desired outcome. Keep trying, be creative, and most of all, don't give up. In many cases, particularly with insurance, negative decisions can be reversed by appeal. Simply regard the denial as a "request for additional information."
7. Take a firm approach, but always be polite. Remember that agency and service representatives are people too. Treat them with the same dignity and respect that you expect from them even when they fail to assist you properly. You'll get more cooperation (and better service) that way.
8. Final Rule—Don't Forget Rule #1.

*This page was created by the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative available at www.dati.org.