

**Massachusetts
Assistive Technology
Device Loan Program**

Policies and Procedures

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Introduction

The purpose of the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Device Loan Program is to provide short term loans of assistive technology devices to individuals, employers, public agencies, or others seeking to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. The purpose of these short term loans are to assist in decision making in whether to purchase or obtain a particular device, fill in a gap while the consumer is waiting for device repair or funding, provide short term accommodation, self-education for a consumer or professional and for training.

Definitions

Assistive Technology Regional Centers: Centers, funded by the MassMATCH AT Act Program, to provide assistive technology device demonstrations and device loans within their defined geographic areas.

Borrower: Any person with a need for assistive technology who will utilize the device or devices loaned through the AT Loan Program. The borrower may also be a provider of services, such as a special education teacher, occupational therapist, employer, etc.

A borrower in good standing is one who has returned all previous devices in a timely manner, in good condition and has fulfilled all of the borrower's previous responsibilities.

Contact person: Person identified by the Assistive Technology Regional Center to contact to provide information about the program and to assist the borrower in filling out the application for the device/equipment.

Device: An item plus its components (cords, adapters, instruction manuals), where the components do not have separate inventory numbers. The "device" may include accessories that are used in conjunction with the item (such as switches, mounting arms, chargers, software).

Equipment Inventory: The Assistive Technology Device Loan Program inventory is made up of assistive technology devices that are meant for the personal use of a consumer, or for demonstration and/or training purposes.

Loan Package: The requested device(s), components and instructions.

Responsible Party: The borrower who accepts the financial responsibility for the loaned device.

Durable Medical Equipment (DME): Durable medical equipment (DME) means items, supplies or equipment designed for particular medical needs. It is called durable because it is meant to last a long time. These items include crutches, wheelchairs, hospital beds, etc.

DEVICE LOAN REQUEST PROCESS

Who May Request Loans

Requests for device loans should be made by the individual, a family member, advocate, or someone who will serve as a support person to the individual in need of the loan device during the period of time of the loan. Service providers may also make a request for devices for demonstration and loan purposes. The individual making the request will be considered the borrower and responsible party of the return of the device.

Requests by consumers will receive priority over service providers' requests.

Completing the Request Form

The contact person at the AT regional center (ATRC) may assist the potential borrower in completing the request form. The contact person is responsible for explaining to the potential borrower their responsibilities and reviewing with the borrower the value of the item being borrowed.

All items on the request form must be filled in. There should be no blanks on a request form, a dash (-) or N/A (not applicable) should be written to indicate that the item was not overlooked. Request forms are available from either regional ATRC offices and on-line. Incomplete forms will be returned to requestor for completion.

How Many Devices Can an Individual Borrow?

Individuals may borrow up to 5 devices (and their components) at a time.

If a borrower would like to add components to a loan request that has already been processed, a new request form must be completed. Additional components will not be loaned without a new and completed request form.

For a borrower in good standing, there will be no limit to the number of times that a loan may be requested. A borrower in good standing is defined by whether or not he/she has returned all previous items in a timely manner, in good condition, and has fulfilled all of the borrower's previous responsibilities.

Processing Request Forms

An individual may start the request process with the ATRC over the phone, email or via the fax. Items will not be loaned unless there is a completed signed request

form on file. Requests for items requiring a support person will not be processed unless the support person has been identified. These items will be identified on the inventory list by a “Y” under Support Required.

When the request form is received, it will be reviewed by an ATRC staff member to insure the form is complete. If the staff member finds the request form to be incomplete that staff member will contact the potential borrower to explain why the request cannot be processed.

Once the request form is completed and is received, the staff member at the ATRC will confirm the receipt of the request by phone. At that time the ATRC staff person will make arrangements with the borrower to obtain the devices. The borrower must sign the MassMATCH Device Loan Program Responsibility and Liability form before they are able to take receipt of the borrowed device. The ATRC will keep the original signed copy of any form. In the event that a device is not available or on loan, the ATRC contact person will discuss possible alternatives with the borrower and/or support person.

If an item is not available as it is already on loan, the request will be placed on the Waiting List.

Requests are processed in the order that they are received. Requests for devices by people with disabilities are given priority status over service providers that are making requests for the purpose of training and demonstration.

Any discussion or questions of the status of a request should be directed to the ATRC contact person.

Durable medical equipment (DME) that has been donated to the program can be loaned under the following conditions:

- 1) for use in the interim while awaiting repair of the same or similar device
- 2) if the individual who will use the device already had an evaluation from a professional for the same or similar device; and
- 3) if the individual already has been trained in the use of the device

DME that requires a prescription will require the sign-off by a professional such as an OT, PT or physician as to the suitability of the device to be loaned. The individual borrowing such DME will be required to sign a Release of Liability.

Individuals seeking DME to determine suitability should be referred to a DME provider.

Pick up and return

Borrowers are responsible for pick-up/return of items to reduce the costs of delivery for the program.

In the event that the borrower cannot pick up the device, the ATRC program staff will discuss alternatives such as shipping. In those situations where a device is shipped or delivered, the following applies:

- 1) Items must be delivered and picked up at the same address, unless other arrangements are made prior to initial pick-up or delivery
- 2) If no one is usually home during regular business hours, do not use a home address on the request form. Request that the device be delivered to an alternate address, e.g. family member's office, and be signed for.
- 3) If the loan package is to be delivered to a large facility such as a hospital or school, the name of the responsible person who is to receive the loan package plus specific department information and room numbers are required for delivery.

Requirements for Support

Prior to processing the request the contact person should check the inventory list to determine if a support person is required for the device. The ATRC contact person will advise the borrower of the need for a support person if necessary. A support person does not need to be a professional.

The following will define how the regional ARTC identify their inventory by support requirements:

- (a) For the loans of devices in which there is minimal set-up or training, the borrower will not be required to designate a support person. These devices will be listed on the inventory sheet with an "N" (no support needed).
- (b) For the devices that may require some assistance with set-up but do not require extensive training to use, these devices will be listed on the inventory sheet with an "S" (some support). This support may include physical assistance to unpack & setup equipment, some assembly of components, or some demonstration in order to get the borrower started. This does not require someone with extensive experience with the device.
- (c) For the loans of complex devices, a support person will be required. These devices will be listed on the inventory sheet with a "Y" (yes, support is needed). The support person must be skilled in the use of the specific device being requested. When the borrower identifies the support person, the ARTC contact person needs to review the support person's skills and experience in

order to ensure that the proper support will be available to the borrower during the loan period.

The requirement for a support person may be waived if the borrower has previously used the requested device or one similar to it. The ARTC contact person will be the one to make this judgment, and this is not an automatic decision because the borrower has borrowed the device before.

The Device Loan Package

When the device loan package is provided to the borrower it will include:

- the device, needed components and instructions
- an inventory sheet listing all of the parts included in the loan package
- a reminder to notify the ARTC contact person that the device has arrived
- information about how to contact the ARTC in case of any problems and/or questions about the device
- a notice with the date of when the device is to be returned
- customer satisfaction survey

The ARTC contact person will review with the borrower the contents of the device loan package upon its receipt to confirm the contents. In the event that it is shipped the borrower should review the inventory list and if there is an issue, notify the ARTC immediately.

Loan Period

The standard loan period is 4 weeks for all devices. A borrower may request an extension to his/her loan period. The extension period begins at the time the original loan period ends. Extensions will be granted as long as there is no one on the waiting list for the device.

A borrower requesting an extension to the loan period needs to contact the ARTC no less than one week prior to the scheduled return date. The contact person will determine whether or not the device will be available for the time of the requested extension, and then will contact the borrower of the decision.

Borrower's Responsibilities and Liability

The borrower is responsible for checking the contents of the loan package upon its receipt to verify that all the contents identified on the checklist are included, and if not to notify the ARTC immediately.

If the borrower does not return all of the components of a device and/or notify the lending ARTC of problems with returning it, he/she is financially responsible for the replacement value of the device or any missing components.

In the case of loss of a device, the borrower will be held financially liable. The borrower must contact their lending ATRC immediately.

In the case of theft, the borrower is not held responsible, as long as the borrower immediately reports the incident to the police and provides a copy of the police report to the lending ATRC.

The borrower is not held responsible for equipment breakage or malfunction that may occur during normal use. However, the borrower could be held liable if he/she does not notify the ATRC immediately. The borrower should not attempt to have repairs done without the ATRC's consent.

It is illegal to copy any software that is the property of the ATRC. The borrower is responsible for the software loaned to him/her as part of the loan package.

Failure to comply with these policies will result in the borrower's loss of privileges to use the AT device loan program in the future.

The borrower will receive a Customer Satisfaction Survey each time a device is loaned out. The completed survey needs to be returned with the loan package. Surveys are available in alternative formats or can be completed over the phone.

Waiting List

If a potential borrower's request has been placed on the waiting list and has been there for more than 60 days, then the ATRC contact person will contact the individual with updated information.

This information will include a projected date as when the device would be available. The contact person must determine if the prospective borrower chooses to remain on the waiting list. The contact person must also discuss alternative sources and means to borrow the device.

In an effort to provide a consumer –friendly program, the waiting lists will be reviewed on a regular basis to identify items that frequently appear, letting the ATRC know that more units should be ordered when funds are available.

Management of Lost and Damaged Items

Missing items:

When a device is returned with missing components, the staff of the ATRC will immediately contact the borrower to inform him/her that the loan package was returned with components missing and their replacement cost. If the staff person is unable to reach that person via telephone (2-3 attempts) then a letter will be sent to

the borrower. The contents of letter may vary depending on the replacement value of the device and/or components.

If the item(s) are worth \$100.00 or less:

The letter will list the missing component(s) and instruct the borrower to return them to the ATRC at their own cost, as per the terms of the loan program. The letter should also make the following statements:

- 1) a response is required within the next two weeks, and giving a specific deadline;
- 2) the borrower loses access to the device loan program until he/she responds and demonstrates that an effort has been made to locate the missing item/s or returns them.

If the borrower cannot locate and the ATRC is convinced that a reasonable effort has been made, access to the device loan program may be re-instated. If the borrower does not respond to the letter, his/her borrowing privileges remain suspended.

If the item/s is worth more than \$100.00:

The letter will list the missing item(s) and will instruct the borrower to return the items at their own cost, as per the terms of the loan program. The letter should include a copy of the instruction sheet that is packed with each device, highlighting the borrower's responsibilities and reviews the following points:

- 1) a response is required within two weeks, giving a specific deadline;
- 2) the borrower is financially liable for the replacement cost of any missing components that are not returned;
- 3) the replacement cost of the missing component's
- 4) the borrower will be invoiced for the replacement cost of the component(s) if they are not returned by the deadline; and
- 5) the borrower loses access to the device loan program until the items are returned or paid for.

The ATRC will log all attempts to contact borrower.

Damaged items that were not reported promptly:

The ATRC contact person will send a letter to the borrower if items are returned damaged and have not been previously reported as such. The contents of the letter may vary depending on the repair or replacement cost of the damaged item(s).

If the cost is under \$ 100.00:

The ATRC will send a letter to the borrower which specifies the item(s) that was returned in a damaged condition and describes the damage. The letter should also make the following points.

- 1) the borrower violated the conditions of the loan process by failing to immediately report the damages to the lending ATRC.
- 2) the borrower is suspended from access to the loan program and may not request additional loans until he/she has contacted the ATRC to review responsibilities for access to the loan program.
- 3) any additional violation of the responsibilities of the borrower may result in permanent suspension of borrowing privileges.

If the cost is more than \$ 100.00

The ATRC sends a letter to the borrower and specifies the item(s) that was returned in a damaged condition and describes the damage. This letter should also include a copy of the borrower's signed request form highlighting the responsibilities of the borrower and make the following points.

- 1) the borrower violated the conditions of the loan process by failing to immediately report the damages to the lending ATRC.
- 2) the borrower is responsible for the repair or replacement of damaged equipment if the damage is beyond normal wear and tear.
- 3) the borrower loses access to the device loan program until the payment is made.

Damaged items that were reported:

In the event that a borrower does report damage to equipment, his/her liability will be determined based on whether the damage reasonably occurred during normal usage. This assessment will be made by the lending ATRC staff. If necessary, the lending ATRC will provide an estimate for repair or replacement.

Devices that are not returned when loan is due:

If a device is not returned when it is due, the ATRC contact person will immediately contact the borrower to access what has happened. If unable to reach the borrower by phone after three attempts, the ATRC contact person will send a letter. The letter will describe the device in detail and instruct the borrower to return it at his/her own cost, as per terms of the loan program. The letter should include the following points:

- 1) a response is required within two weeks, giving a specific deadline.
- 2) the borrower is financially liable for the replacement cost of the device and/or any components that went with it.
- 3) the replacement cost

- 4) the borrower will be invoiced for the replacement cost of the device if it is not returned by the deadline; and
- 5) the borrower loses access to the device loan program until the device is returned or paid for.

The ATRC will log all attempts to contact borrower.

Tracking and record keeping of missing, damaged, and overdue items:

- A) Item is returned: The ATRC contact person will notify the borrower that his/her privileges has been reinstated once the items have been received and determined to be in good working order.
- B) Payment is made: Once a payment is made, the ATRC contact person will notify the borrower that his/her privileges have been reinstated.
- C) Borrower does not respond or make restitution: Each ATRC will keep a master list of all individuals who have lost access and privileges to the loan program.

Monthly Updates

Each ATRC will keep a listing of all items that are missing or returned in damaged condition. All individuals on the list are barred from additional loans until the borrower has provided an acceptable response to notification that an item was missing or damaged, the item is returned or the borrower has paid the costs of repair or replacement. Even if a borrower has reported a lost/broken device and is assuming responsibility, the item would still be listed until it has been paid for and additional loans would be withheld until payment is made.

For additional information contact:

MassMATCH

MRC

27 Wormwood Street

Boston, MA 02110-1616

1-866-682-9955 (toll free) 617-204-2851 (voice) 617-204-3815 (TTY)

email: massmatch@mrc.state.ma.us

