

# TECHNOLOGY TODAY

## ODP Technology Taskforce Newsletter



This is the tenth edition of ODP Tech Taskforce's newsletter: *Technology Today!* We understand accessibility is key and strive to support individuals with disabilities, family members, and providers with resources, events, and other important updates in the assistive technology world. The hope is that you will learn something new and pass it along to others.



### Call for Personal Stories



Our Taskforce is always looking for more individuals with disabilities to provide personal stories. We want to know how supportive technology has made a positive impact on people's lives. These personal stories can be in the form of videos, blogs, or written essays. They will be highlighted in our future newsletters.

If you're interested or want to know more, reach out to: [ra-PWODP\\_Outreach@pa.gov](mailto:ra-PWODP_Outreach@pa.gov)

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## Empowering Lives with Technology: Penn-Mar Assistive Technology Library

Penn-Mar Human Services launched its Assistive Technology (AT) Library a year and a half ago. This innovative library allows individuals to borrow and test various assistive technologies, exploring how these tools can enhance their lives at home, in the community, and at work. The initiative is funded by an ARPA grant aimed at enhancing Home and Community-Based Services.

The AT Library empowers individuals by providing access to technology solutions, fostering independence and confidence. We created an in-house resource where the people Penn-Mar supports can try out various assistive technologies, gaining exposure and experience.

In collaboration with state assistive technology programs, we selected the most beneficial items for our AT library. If a specific technology is not available in-house, we work with the state assistive technology programs to source the best solution.

The Penn-Mar Assistive Technology Library is a vital resource, opening new possibilities for engagement and independence, and helping individuals make informed decisions that enhance their quality of life.

### **Interested in building an Assistive Technology Library? Here's how to get started!**

If you're looking to create your own Assistive Technology Library, follow these steps:

**Identify Funding Opportunities:** Seek out grants and funding programs to help purchase devices for your AT library.

**Assess Needs:** Understand the unique needs of the individuals you support. Conduct surveys or focus groups to discover which types of assistive technology will make the biggest impact.

**Collaborate with Experts:** Team up with state assistive technology programs or tech vendors. Their insights can help you select the best devices for your library.

**Build a Collection:** Start with a few key items and gradually expand your collection. Focus on a variety of devices that can meet a wide range of needs.

**Create a Lending System:** Develop an easy and efficient process for borrowing and returning items. Ensure users have the support they need to make the most of the technology.

**Evaluate and Adapt:** Continuously assess the impact of the devices and adapt your collection based on user feedback.

These steps can serve as a roadmap to initiate and develop your own Assistive Technology Library.

## Mobile Application Resources

**Be My Eyes:** People who are blind or have low vision now have three powerful tools in one with Be My Eyes. This app on your smartphone can allow people to get visual descriptions of anything when they need it. Connect with more than 7 million volunteers. Or use the latest AI image describer. Or connect with dedicated company representatives to help with their products. Volunteers are available for 185 different languages. It is free - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This app is only available on iPhone and iPad.

**Flip Writer AAC:** This app provides unique supports for adults and children with speech, hearing, and complex needs. Flip Writer allows users to type messages displayed on two displays, one facing inward and one facing outward for your communication partner(s). Designed for an iPad.

**The Sounding Out Machine:** This app acts as an Assistive Reading Device. It helps children focus on challenging words in their texts, and then models how to sound out those words. Designed for an iPad.

**GoNoodle:** Make screen time active with 300+ dance videos, yoga exercises, and mindfulness activities for kids! The library includes great activities for brain/movement breaks. This app is available only for iPhone, iPad, and Apple TV.

## Personal Story

**“It’s my hope that Braxtyn’s story helps encourage others and make them aware of the assistance that is out there.”**

**Braxtyn is the youngest child of six and is very loved.**

**“Everyone in our family takes part in helping improve Braxtyn’s world and care for him,” says his mother, Angela.**

**He was born with spina bifida, which affects the formation of the spine. This can lead to a variation of decreased sensation and lack of mobility. Braxtyn was also born with hydrocephalus and Chiari II malformation. Wearing braces on his ankles, he took his first independent steps when he was 18 months old. Braxtyn relied heavily on a posterior walker until almost his third birthday in May 2022.**



**[Click here to read Braxtyn’s story written by the PA Assistive Technology Foundation.](#)**



## TEMPLE UNIVERSITY'S TECHOWL COMMUNITY SPACE GRAND OPENING

On April 18, 2024, The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University held a Grand Opening Open House from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at their new Community Space. The event featured demonstrations, tours, and more. The TechOWL Community Space has a barrier free entrance and an accessible restroom. An ASL interpreter was available throughout the Grand Opening events. All were invited to stay for the entire two-hour open house or just come for just a quick visit. The day was a great success and was enjoyed by many participants.

This unique resource is a place where people can explore tools and technology to discover what works for them. The team there is excited to offer a variety of hands-on experiences in this space. Some possible activities that visitors can investigate are:

- Trying cutting-edge vision equipment, mobility devices, and other assistive tech options;
- See 3D printing in action for creating assistive devices;
- Discover accessible video gaming with the Xbox Adaptive Controller;
- Using tools for basic wheelchair maintenance.

### Planning to Visit?

If there is a specific device you are interested in, consider emailing them ahead of time or filling out the [“Connect With TechOWL” form](#) so that they can arrange for you to meet with the best staff member to answer your questions. All are encouraged to visit the new public community space dedicated to assistive technology. It is a great opportunity to try out the devices that interest you or to pick up free equipment from the donation program.

“TechOWL's Community Space” at the Institute on Disabilities is located on Temple's main campus on the ground floor of Morgan Hall at 1223 Cecil B. Moore Avenue. The location is accessible by car, bus, or subway. If you are dropping items off, you can pull over along the storefront. Free 15-minute parking is available under the row of flags. A paid visitor lot is also available down the street. If you have any questions before you arrive, please call 800-204-7428 or email [techowl@temple.edu](mailto:techowl@temple.edu).

### [Temple University directions, maps and parking information.](#)

Community Space schedule:

- Monday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
- Tuesday 1:00 PM-5:00 PM
- Wednesday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM
- Thursday 1:00 PM-5:00 PM
- Other hours by appointment. Email [TechOWL@temple.edu](mailto:TechOWL@temple.edu)

## Upcoming Events

### TechOWL - Communication Partner Instruction: Considerations for Supporting Adults who use AAC

- **What:** An AAC webinar series to learn about how to support and empower the teams of individuals who work with adult AAC users.
- **When:** October 30 at 12:00 PM
- **Location:** Zoom
  - [Registration & More Information](#)

