# **Background**

In partnership with the State Plan for Assistive Technology Committee, the Department of Rehabilitation’s Assistive Technology Program created the Assistive Technology Engagement Survey to determine how Californians learned about, obtained, and used AT to better serve them. 100 people responded to the survey, which allowed individuals to select multiple options on several questions; therefore, percentages for some questions will not sum to 100. The following is a summary of findings rounded to the whole percentage.

# **Summary of Outcomes**

Of those surveyed, 88 percent either personally use or have a family member who uses an assistive device or piece of equipment. 36 percent have insurance through their employer, 25 percent have insurance through Medicare, and 21 percent are insured through Medi-Cal.

Almost half (47%) of those surveyed state their insurance is the biggest barrier to obtaining assistive technology (AT) as it does not pay for items needed. Thirty-three individuals state they don’t know where to go to find AT, who to turn to for help to find the right AT, which AT would help them, or how to find that information.

When an individual needs information about AT, they are most likely to search the internet for information (57%) about it, contact their doctor or healthcare provider (46%), reach out to their local Independent Living Center (42%), or ask a friend or family member (32%). While a small majority of individuals prefer to receive information about AT online (66%), half would like to receive information in-person, and 18% would be happy with either option.

More than half of those surveyed purchase their AT out-of-pocket (53%) off the internet (50%) or get it from their doctor or healthcare provider (49%). If they cannot obtain it from either of those sources, they will buy it from a medical supply store (40%), reach out to an ILC (26%), or borrow one from a friend or family member (22%). Once they no longer need their AT, there is an 80 percent chance that the item is donated, 42 percent chance it is given to a friend or family member, and a 28 percent chance that it is kept in a closet or garage in case it’s needed again. Only 14 percent of individuals sell their AT and 11 percent throw it away.

Seventy-three percent of those surveyed would be interested in participating in a program that would allow them to borrow assistive technology, devices, or equipment for up to six weeks.

These individuals state they would like the following items to be included in a device lending program: vision equipment and aids, wheelchair ramps, walkers, shower chairs, power assist devices, wheelchairs, wheel chair accessories, hoyer lift, computer mouse/trackball/touchpad, wireless headphones, on-screen keyboard, voice recognition software, emergency power generator, robotic arm, articulating arm support, universal remote, tablet or e-reader, backyard gate latch and opener, solar power storage, reachers, software, smart home devices, ergonomic office equipment, computerized prosthetics, amplifiers, mobility devices, braille display or notetaker, all terrain wheelchair, safety devices, and durable medical equipment.

When asked if they would be interested in a program that offered low interest loans for assistive technology, devices, and equipment, one-third state they would consider participation, 56 percent would not participate, and five individuals feel that no one should have to go into debt for AT. The items individuals would buy utilizing this program include wheelchairs, vehicle modifications, home modifications, sports wheelchairs/bikes, lifts or ramps, assistive power devices for manual wheelchairs, toilet seat raisers, phones, automatic door openers, computers, assistive software, hearing aids, and computerized prosthesis.

# **How the State can help**

When asked how California’s Assistive Technology Program can help to better meet their needs, Californians across the state replied:

* Provide more outreach and information. Be proactive in keeping up to date on new technology and make resources easy to find and access.
* Provide better access to affordable reuse equipment, short-term loans, and training.
* Help us to navigate insurance claims, appeals, letters of medical necessity, waiver programs, and provide help to access to AT we need.
* Train hospital discharge planners and maintain relationships to ensure needs are being met immediately.
* Don’t silo disabilities into different places; provide technical assessments for all disabilities at all locations.