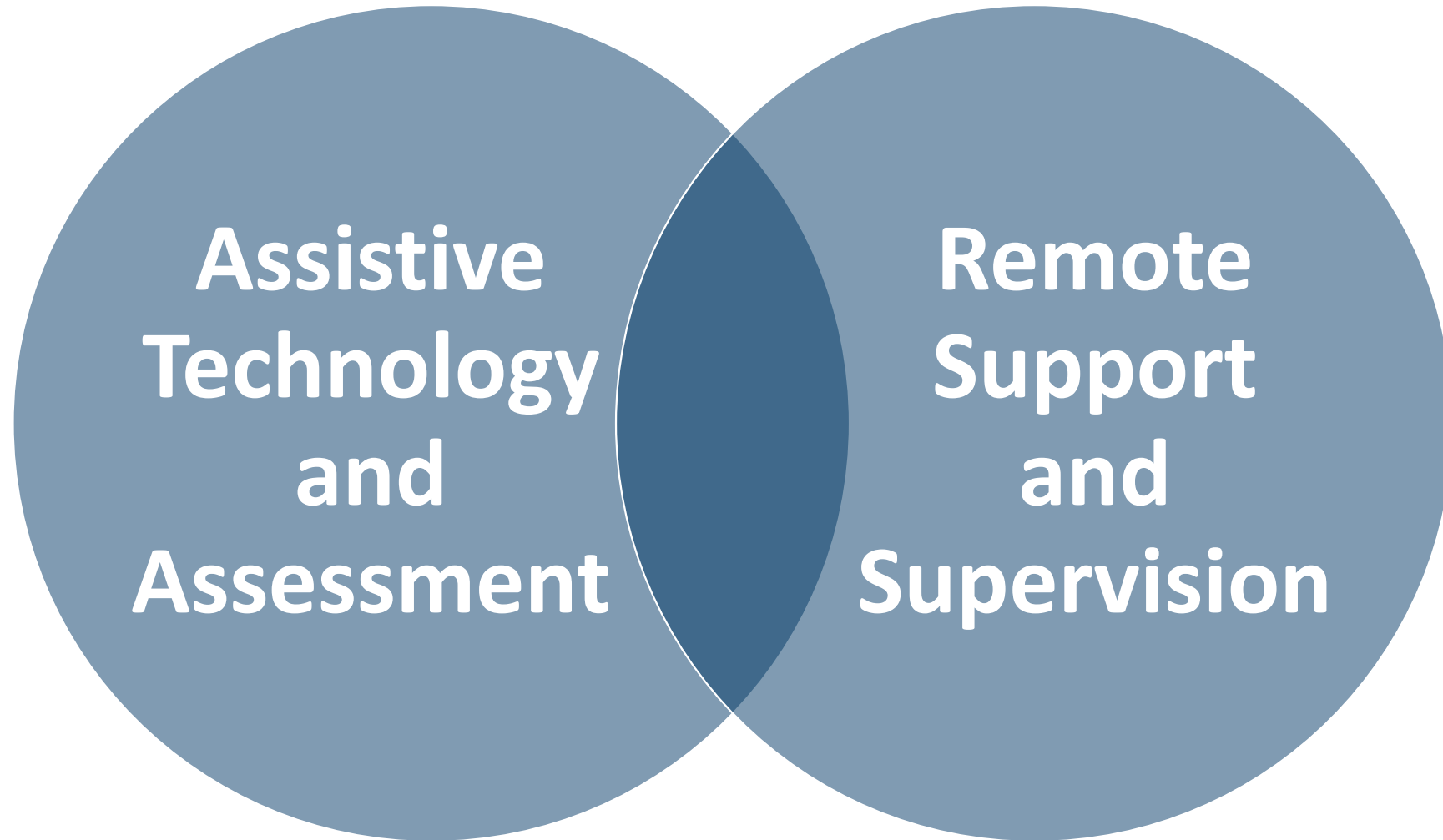# Assistive Technology

Definition: Devices, equipment or a combination of both that improve the person's ability to:

- Communicate in the community

- Control or access their environment

- Perform activities of daily living.

Assistive technology is not just the equipment, but also includes the human expertise to assess a person's needs, determine or design the best technology to meet those needs, and then train and support its use.

Remote Support

Remote Support is the provision of support within the scope of an allowable service by a staff or caregiver from a remote location who is engaged with a person through the use of **enabling technology** that utilizes live **two-way communication**

BI, CAC, CADI and DD applicable services

Remote support is allowed for the following services:

→ 24 hour emergency assistance

→ Assistive technology –assessments

→ Community residential services

→ Crisis respite

→ Family residential services

→ Family training and counseling

BI, CAC, CADI and DD applicable services (cont.)

→ Day support

→ Employment development

→ Employment exploration –Plan and Find

→ Employment support

→ Prevocational services

→ Homemaker –home management

→ Independent living skills therapies

BI, CAC, CADI and DD applicable services (other)

➔ Individualized home supports without training

➔ Individualized home supports with training

➔ Individualized home supports with family training

➔ Integrated community supports

➔ Positive support

➔ Respite –In-home, 15 min units

➔ Specialist Services

Elderly Waiver (EW) and Alternative Care (AC) programs

Remote support is allowed for the following services:

➔ Adult companion services

➔ Family caregiver services

➔ Homemaker – Home management

➔ Individual community living supports (ICLS)

➔ Respite – in-home 15 minute units

➔ Transitional services

Essential Community Supports (ECS) program

Remote support is allowed for the following services:

➔ Family caregiver coaching and counseling services
➔ Family caregiver training and education services
➔ Homemaker – Home management

Why is Incorporating Support Technology So Important?

Staffing shortages

Technology offers our greatest chance at surviving the current and future staffing issues which are projected to only become worse

Increased independence!

"For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible." –IBM training manual, 1991

Waiver Services that Fund or Support the Usage of Technology

- [24 Hour emergency assistance](#)

- [Assistive technology](#)

- [Environmental accessibility adaptations](#)

- [Monitoring technology](#)

- [PERS](#)

- [Specialist Services](#)

- [Specialized supplies and equipment](#)

Technology First Advisory Task Force

The Technology First Advisory Task Force was created during the First Special Session of the 2019 legislative session to advise the Commissioner on strategies to increase the use of support technology in the services and programs the commissioner administers, to enable people with disabilities to:

- Live independently in community settings

- Work in competitive integrated environment

- Participate in inclusive community activities, and

- Increase quality of life

Technology First Advisory Task Force Recommendations

Link to full [Technology First Legislative Report](#)

- Ensure that Minnesota commits to becoming a Technology First state
- Eliminate $3,909 annual cap on the specialized equipment and supplies (SES) waiver service
- Create separate billing codes for service providers to enable better tracking of expenditures related to support technology
- Increase the number of assistive technology practitioners in the state, especially those who will service greater Minnesota
- Establish a mechanism to recycle and redeploy support technology that is no longer needed
- Mandate and provide training on support technology for service and support planner

Technology First Advisory Task Force Recommendations (cont.)

- Develop, provide and expand training for people with disabilities, their families and their caregivers on support technology and related resources
- Expand the MnCHOICES assessment and support planning process to include more consideration around potential uses of support technology and the impact of any technology already being used.
- Increase funding limits for fee-for-service (FFS) items under Medical Assistance
- Amend waiver plans and the Community-Based Services Manual (CBSM) to include the federal definition of assistive technology (AT) when combining AT and SES
- Amend waiver plans to allow waivers to cover internet costs when internet access is needed for support technology to function in the person's home (when certain criteria are met)
- Allow assistive technology to be approved under the traditional waivers and bought directly by the person or provider in typical shopping venues, e.g., Amazon, Best Buy, etc.

System Related Access Barriers – Provider Enrollment

- Challenges with provider enrollment –can be over a year long process and we are not sure why that is

- Very few Assistive Technology Professionals/assessment providers willing to work with state of MN (currently **only 4 out of 576** enrolled providers are still actively working with people on a waiver) due to the state's cumbersome billing process and being an unreliable payment source

System Related Access Barriers – Service Planning

- Technology not assessed for properly/sufficiently in MnCHOICES assessment and often not included in support plan development

- Service planners have lack knowledge on using Assistive Technology and on how to have discussions with people on how they could use assistive technology

- In 2017 only **2.4%** of people receiving the MnCHOICES assessment were referred for an assistive technology assessment
  - 2018= 2.7%
  - 2019= 3.0%
  - 2020= 3.1%

System Related Barriers – Authorizations

Lack of Authorizations by Lead Agencies

- When actually assessed to see if technology can meet someone's needs and technology is recommended, lead agencies often still won't authorize it –often without explanation

- We are hearing that some lead agencies have internal committees that meet to decide whether or not to approve people's assessed technology needs –which is not done for other services and delays access. These committees have a typical 30-45 day lag

System Related Barriers – DHS Claims

- When actually authorized, it still has to go through DHS claims/complex review (allowed up to 45 days to review) and frequently denied without reason

- Provider then has to spend a substantial amount of time/staff resources on resubmitting and then it is almost always later approved, which would indicate it could have been approved initially

- Bids are typically only good for 7-30 days so if price changed have to go through whole process again

System Related Barriers – Technology Abandonment

- Case managers not utilizing assessment info; choosing "cheaper" options which often end up not working for the person and can't be returned

- Lending programs offer free trials which can reduce improper technology matches, but many Case Managers do not know this resource exists

- Lack of availability of on-going training for person when technology upgrades or retraining of support staff after staff turnover

System Related Barriers – Service Access Inequities

- Funding inequities: people on BI, CAC, CADI and EW waivers are subject to a very low annual funding cap of $3909 to meet both their assistive technology and specialized supply needs –people on DD waiver are not subject to this cap/no cap for DD

- Due to the lack of assessment providers in general, there are often cultural and communication barriers for people from diverse backgrounds attempting to utilize technology assessment services

Discussion

Thoughts, ideas, questions or concerns?