

The SWAAAC Model

The SWAAAC model has been evolving since its inception; teams have grown and developed service delivery models, and their own unique policies, practices and procedures. SWAAAC teams are typically multi-disciplinary in order to provide comprehensive evaluations. Service providers from a student's school may be enlisted as part of the evaluation team if the SWAAAC team feels that a particular kind of expertise is needed, e.g. the student has a visual impairment and the SWAAAC team does not have a vision specialist. As a result of an Assistive Technology (AT) evaluation, suggestions will be provided to the IEP team regarding a student's need to use assistive technology to gain reasonable benefit from education. If the IEP team determines that AT is necessary for a student, the SWAAAC team may assist with the funding process and facilitate training for staff, parents and students as needed.

Depending upon the individual SWAAAC teams model of service delivery, a SWAAAC member may serve as a resource to the school staff, parents and students by seeing the student on a regular basis for consultation, continuing training, developing an array of accommodations, troubleshooting, etc. If the student is not seen on a regular basis, the team may still be available to serve as a resource upon request from the school, student or parent.

In some districts, there may be SWAAAC team members whose entire job is assistive technology; they need to be contacted through the referral process in order to participate in IEP development or to be available as a consultant. In other districts, AT services are provided by the school team. SWAAAC teams may need to be available in these situations to provide consultation via phone or email and to help school personnel develop training opportunities.

In the area of assistive technology, schools are faced with building staff capacity to deal with a broad continuum of needs for students, including those with mild and moderate disabilities, to those identified with the most limiting cognitive, physical and/or sensory disabilities. These students' educational environments are also as varied as the students themselves. Full inclusion, resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, and community based work settings are some examples of the educational environments in which students spend all or part of their instructional day. Within these settings are the educational personnel that support them.

Providing the educational staff with the professional development required to maintain and increase proficiency is a continuous responsibility of school districts. SWAAAC teams can be of assistance even when they are not direct service providers. Teams can provide

consultative services within the classroom setting, working with special and general educators, related service providers and para-professionals. They can model how to facilitate communication and language development, teach the writing process, as well as the use of specific equipment and software for instructional purposes.

At the level of the administrative unit, SWAAAC teams can assist by conducting a needs assessment to identify potential training needs as well as individuals on staff who can be resources. Through in-service training, teams can provide information to staff on a variety of devices, software, etc. including ways that they can be used in the instructional process. SWAAAC teams need to be able to instruct staff on how to document assistive technology consideration as part of the IEP process, as well as how assistive technology should be documented in the IEP.