

Missouri Assistive Technology
Annual Report 2003 - 2004



A
DECADE



OF
SUCCESS

The Mission of the Missouri Assistive Technology Advisory Council is to increase access to assistive technology for Missourians with disabilities.

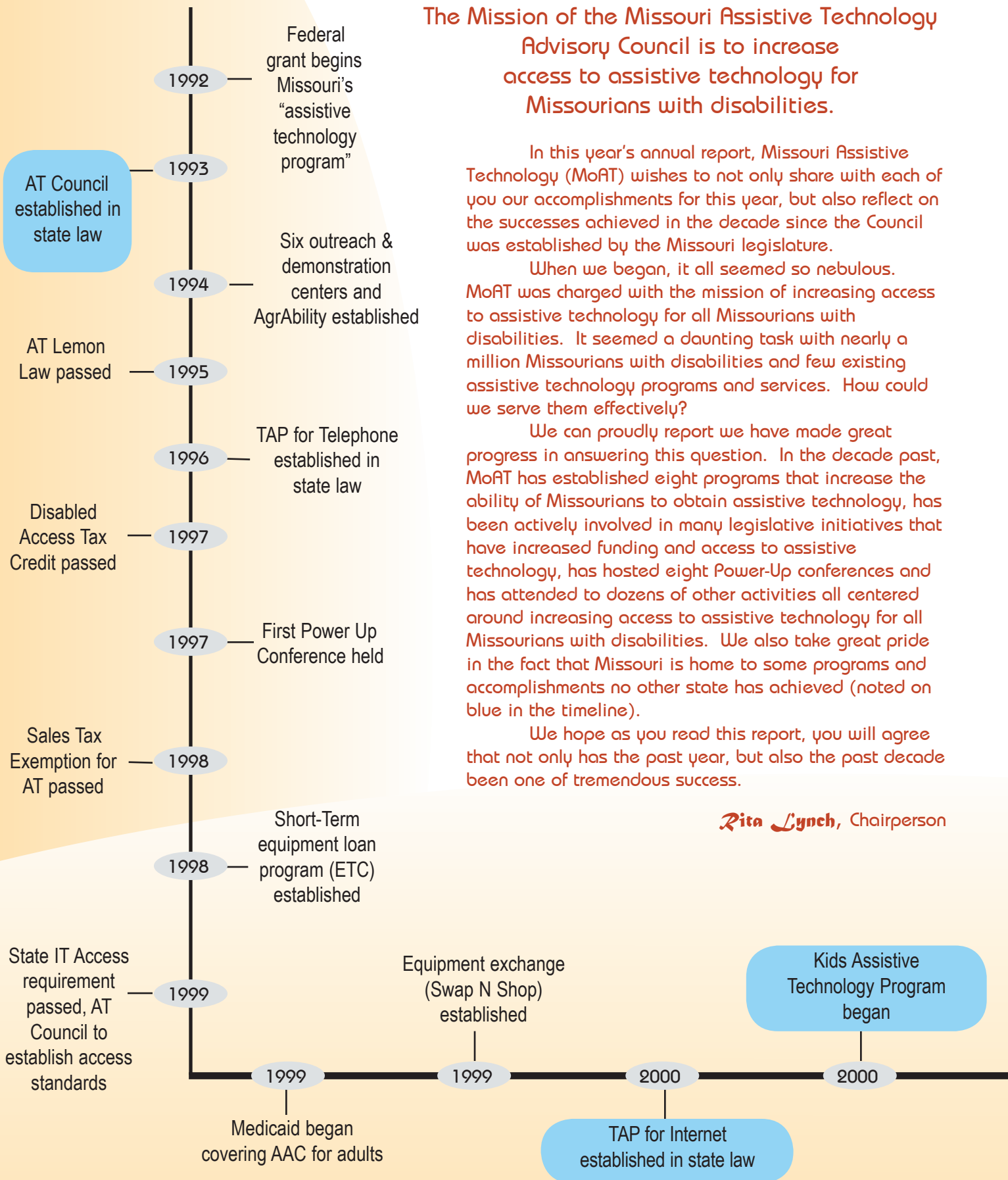
In this year's annual report, Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) wishes to not only share with each of you our accomplishments for this year, but also reflect on the successes achieved in the decade since the Council was established by the Missouri legislature.

When we began, it all seemed so nebulous. MoAT was charged with the mission of increasing access to assistive technology for all Missourians with disabilities. It seemed a daunting task with nearly a million Missourians with disabilities and few existing assistive technology programs and services. How could we serve them effectively?

We can proudly report we have made great progress in answering this question. In the decade past, MoAT has established eight programs that increase the ability of Missourians to obtain assistive technology, has been actively involved in many legislative initiatives that have increased funding and access to assistive technology, has hosted eight Power-Up conferences and has attended to dozens of other activities all centered around increasing access to assistive technology for all Missourians with disabilities. We also take great pride in the fact that Missouri is home to some programs and accomplishments no other state has achieved (noted on blue in the timeline).

We hope as you read this report, you will agree that not only has the past year, but also the past decade been one of tremendous success.

Rita Lynch, Chairperson



Council Members during 2003 - 2004

Consumer Representatives:

Rita Lynch, Chairperson
Teddi Brace, Past Chair
Chris Craig
Marnie Gustafson
Shari LaRoussa
Deana O'Brien
Karin Sack
James Summers
Rhonda Triller
Marjorie Yates

Agency Representatives:

Karen Allen - Special Education (Interim Rep.)
Jim Brinkmann - RSB, & Chairperson-Elect
Jim Casey - Dept. of Insurance
Aurita Prince Caldwell - Health & Sr. Services
Dolores Hampton - DD Planning Council
Neil Harms - Vocational Rehabilitation
Angie James - IL Center
Ed Kniest - Medical Services
Nancy Nickolaus - Mental Health

Legislative Representatives:

Senator Kenneth Jacob

Representative Kevin Threlkeld



Newborn hearing screening
mandate passed, required insurance
coverage of initial amplification

Special Education AT
Reimbursement Program
established

2000

2001

2001

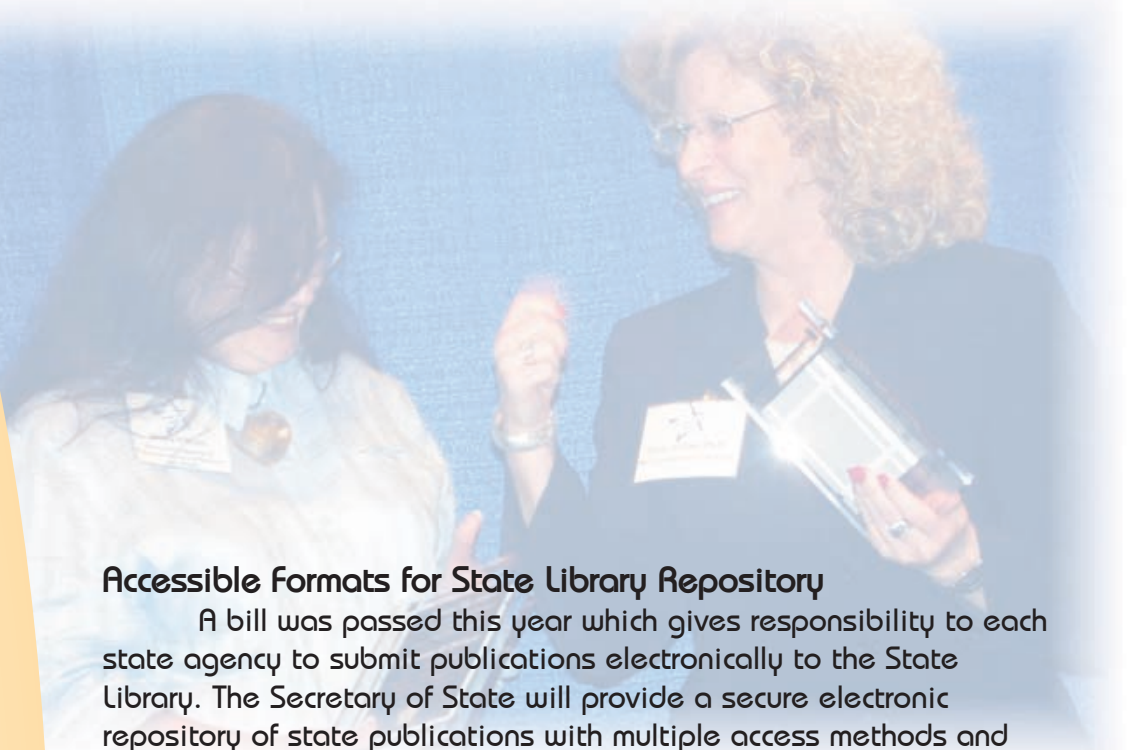
2002

2003

Legislative Listserv
began

Show Me Loans
for AT established

Show Me Loans for
telework established



Accessible Formats for State Library Repository

A bill was passed this year which gives responsibility to each state agency to submit publications electronically to the State Library. The Secretary of State will provide a secure electronic repository of state publications with multiple access methods and will establish rules for the electronic formats acceptable for publications in the repository. The bill references existing Missouri state statute requiring information technology accessibility (RSMo 191.863). The State Library has committed to work with MoAT to adopt access standards for submission of electronic text to be placed in the repository.

Special Education Funding for Assistive Technology

The Blindness Task Force in the Division of Special Education allocated a little over \$60,000 in funding to the MoAT short term equipment loan program (ETC) this year to increase the availability of vision related adaptive devices in the loan pool. Also this year, the Division of Special Education provided funding to MoAT to reimburse school districts on an application basis for assistive technology required in student IEP's. The minimum cost per student supported was \$1,000 and the maximum was \$5,000. More information about this year's AT reimbursement program and ETC, can be found in later sections of the annual report.

Information Technology Accessibility Standards

Missouri implemented new procurement procedures this year associated with the information technology (IT) access standards that were adopted in January 2003. Missouri was the first state to undertake comprehensive IT accessibility standards development and adoption to specifically address unique state needs and resources. The procedures are still evolving and include a review procedure for evaluating conformance to the IT accessibility technical standards.

Disabled Parking Laws

Legislation passed this year which clarifies provisions in the state's disabled parking laws. The bill increases the penalty for fraudulent use of a disabled parking license plate or placard from a class C to a class B misdemeanor. The bill also expands the types of medical practitioners who can certify disabling conditions for persons to obtain a plate/placard to include physicians, chiropractors, podiatrists, and optometrists within their scope of practice. The bill also increases the penalty from a class C to a class B misdemeanor for any medical practitioner who fraudulently issues or signs a statement for a disabled plate/placard.

Accessible Housing

Missourians with disabilities often have difficulty finding accessible housing or being able to afford making their current homes accessible. Bills were introduced this year to help ease the expense of making homes accessible. One bill would have provided a tax credit for individuals who incurred expenses for a variety of home access improvements and another was designed to increase the state's stock of accessible housing by providing a grant for individuals who built homes with certain accessibility features. Neither bill passed during the 2004 session, but efforts to increase accessible housing will be made again in future sessions.

Hearing Aid Insurance Coverage for Children

Again in 2004, a bi-partisan effort was made in the General Assembly to require health insurance coverage of hearing aids for children. The bill would have required coverage up to \$1,250 per ear for children up to age 20. Hearings on the legislation were held in both the House and Senate, but the bill did not pass during the session. It is anticipated that similar legislation is likely to be pursued in the future.

Telecommunication Access Program Expansion

Missouri expanded the Telecommunication Access Program for Telephone this year by adding equipment needed for video relay interpreting and for captioned telephone voice-carry-over. Both of these are new relay services and MoAT, through TAP for Telephone, provides the adaptive equipment needed to utilize the new relay services.



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Individual Assistance

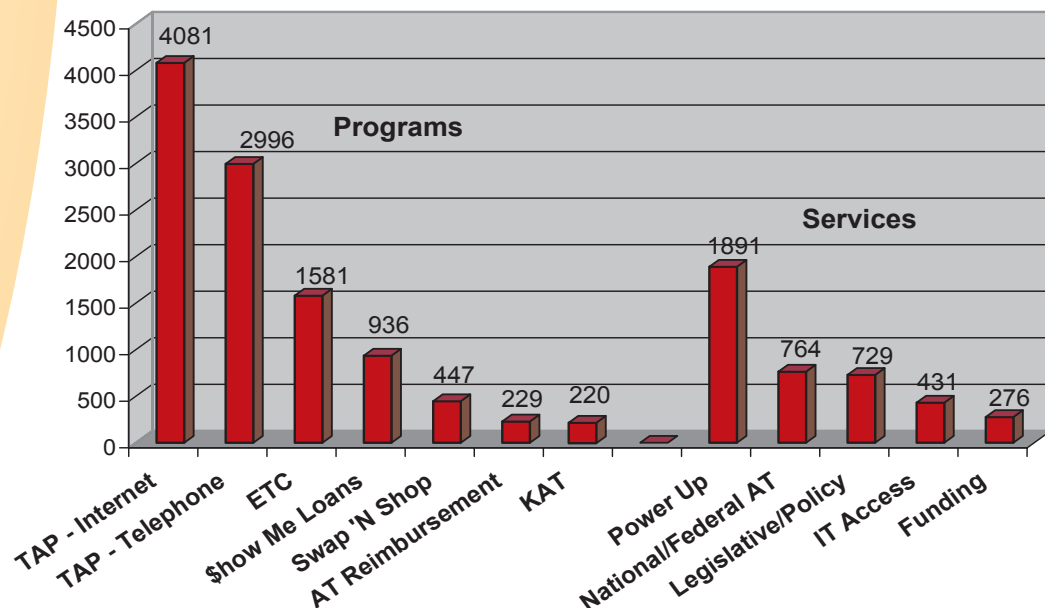
Persons with disabilities and service providers contact Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) seeking assistance in obtaining assistive technology, securing device funding, accessing MoAT programs, and gaining disability policy knowledge. During this fiscal year, MoAT staff handled 16,931 inquiries and requests for assistance by telephone and e-mail.

People success

In late 2003, a 47-year old Stoddard County resident contacted Missouri Assistive Technology about exploring possibilities to help her improve her standard of living and concerns about not having full-time medical assistance coverage. Her disability payments totaled \$754 per month and of that amount she was required to "spend down" \$145 in medical expenses in order to keep her Medicaid eligibility. She did not feel comfortable knowing she could have breaks in her medical coverage to meet the needs of her disability.

MoAT staff talked with her about Missouri's Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities Program (MA-WD), a Medicaid program for employed persons with disabilities that enables them to continue being eligible for Medicaid while simultaneously working. She had never been told about the program by any caseworkers. Armed with this new information, she quickly found a part-time job at a business close to her, got signed up for the MA-WD program and saved \$145 a month since she no longer had to spend down to be Medicaid eligible. She now feels much more secure knowing that she has the medical coverage she needs.

Major Contact Topics



Power Up 2004 Conference & Expo

"The Power Up Conference was fabulous!"

"Thank you for all the new resources!"

"Accessible textbook strand was excellent!"

"I loved the sessions and keynotes!"



Assistive Technology has advanced and progressed over the past decade. The annual Power Up Conference and Expo is just the place to keep up to date on all the latest and greatest technology, policies, and most cost effective best practices. Power Up provides a venue for novice and advanced training in general disability assistive technology as well as very specialized areas such as the hot topic of accessible textbooks this year. **Over 500 Power Up participants were able to choose from 37 sessions. Forty product vendors and service providers** from around the world showcased everything from accessible vehicles to compact CCTV's to the new stair-climbing wheelchair. They shared a wealth of resources with attendees in demonstrations and hands-on exhibits. Learning outcomes achieved included new AT resources to utilize and share, new techniques to facilitate independent living, and new educational and therapeutic activities to implement in the home, classroom, and workplace.

Congratulations to the individuals receiving special awards for their efforts in improving access to assistive technology in Missouri:
**Linda Green, Candace Hawkins,
Jim Jordan, Deana O'Brien,
Jackie O'Dell, and Ilene Rauzi!**

Other Training

In addition to the 506 participants involved in Power Up, 1,115 Missourians received training on assistive technology by MoAT staff at 23 other training events.



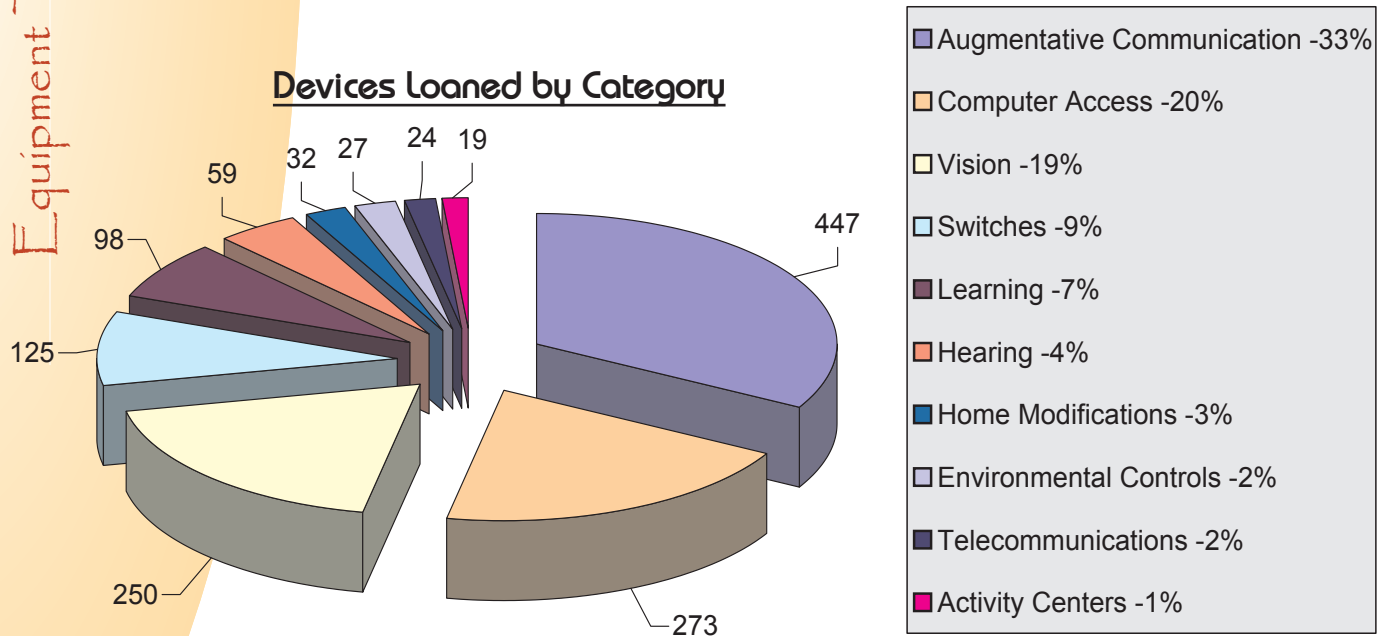
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Program Success

Five years after it started, the ETC Program continues to experience yearly growth in the number of devices it loans and in the number of school districts and agencies who borrow from its inventory of over 1,000 assistive devices. For FY '04, ETC loaned 1,354 devices throughout the state and saw the number of entities signed up for the program top the 400 mark. Augmentative communication devices were again the devices most often borrowed, but a fairly substantial increase in borrowing of devices for low vision and blindness is of note this past year. Strong consumer satisfaction continues to be a hallmark of the ETC Program with 98% of borrowers giving the program and its level of service strong marks.

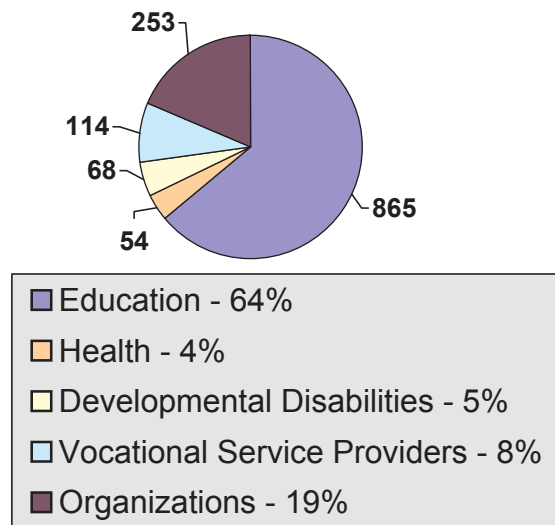
There are three primary reasons that people borrow from the ETC Program. The first, and most common, is to provide the chance to borrow multiple items in order to compare them prior to purchase. The second reason is to enable individuals to borrow a loaner device when their personal device is being repaired. A third, and increasingly important role is borrowing by schools, colleges, universities and organizations in their efforts to increase staff and student knowledge.

Devices Loaned by Category



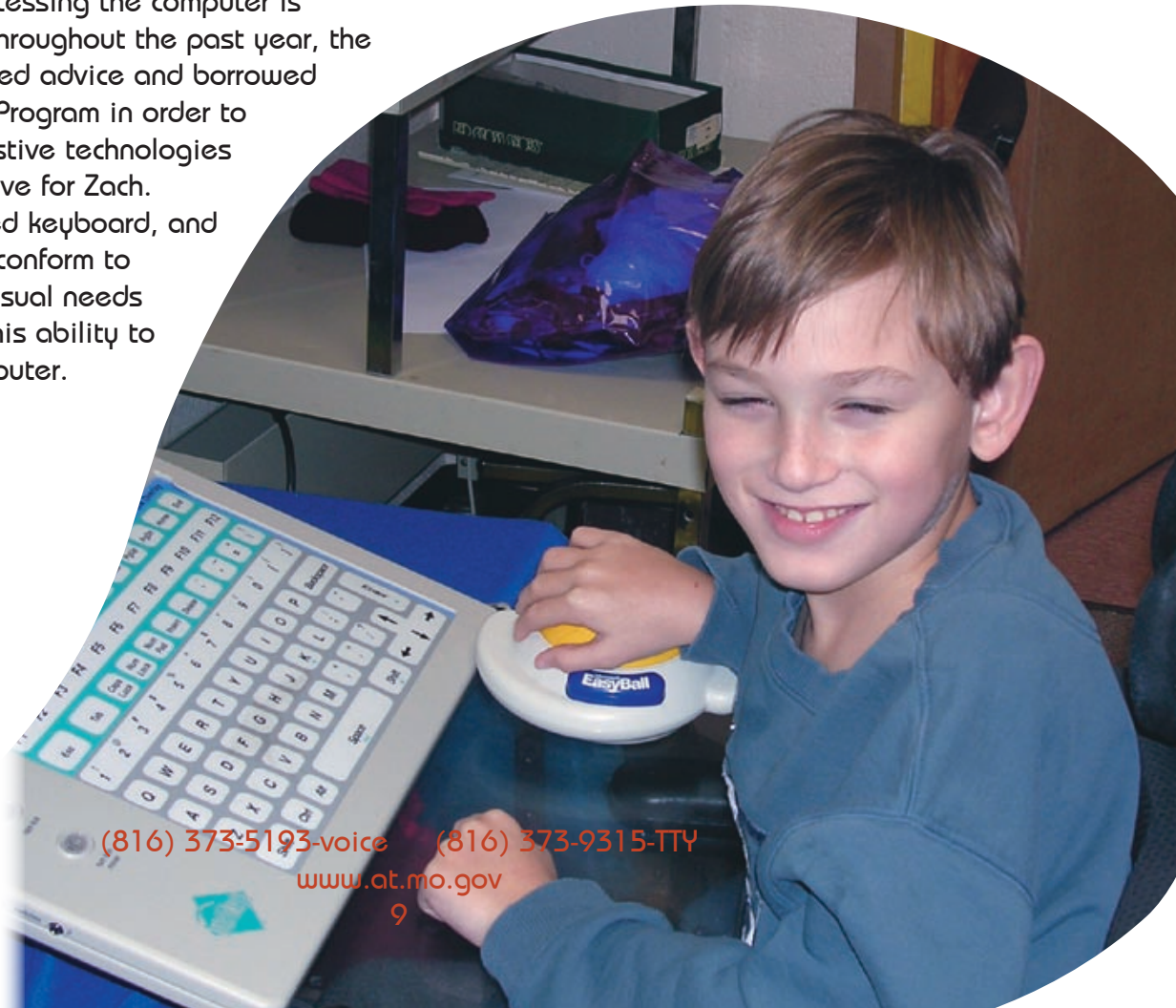
As more students with disabilities attend regular schools, today's educators need to know about the various devices they may encounter in their classrooms. A solid understanding of assistive technology is also a necessary skill for tomorrow's teachers, occupational, speech and physical therapists. By tapping into ETC's inventory, local schools can conduct in-services with an array of devices present for staff to see, try and learn about. And higher education faculty can include devices in their classes helping students to understand assistive technology and its specific applications for various types of disabilities. What is learned today will be applied tomorrow, exponentially increasing Missouri's assistive technology knowledge.

ETC - # Loans by Agency



People Success

In order to take full advantage of all that school has to offer, Zachary, who attends school in Mexico, Missouri, benefits from using assistive technology. Due to a combination of physical and visual disabilities, accessing the computer is particularly difficult. Throughout the past year, the Mexico schools received advice and borrowed devices from the ETC Program in order to determine which assistive technologies would be most effective for Zach. Intellikeys, an adapted keyboard, and an EasyBall trackball conform to Zach's physical and visual needs and greatly improve his ability to interact with the computer.



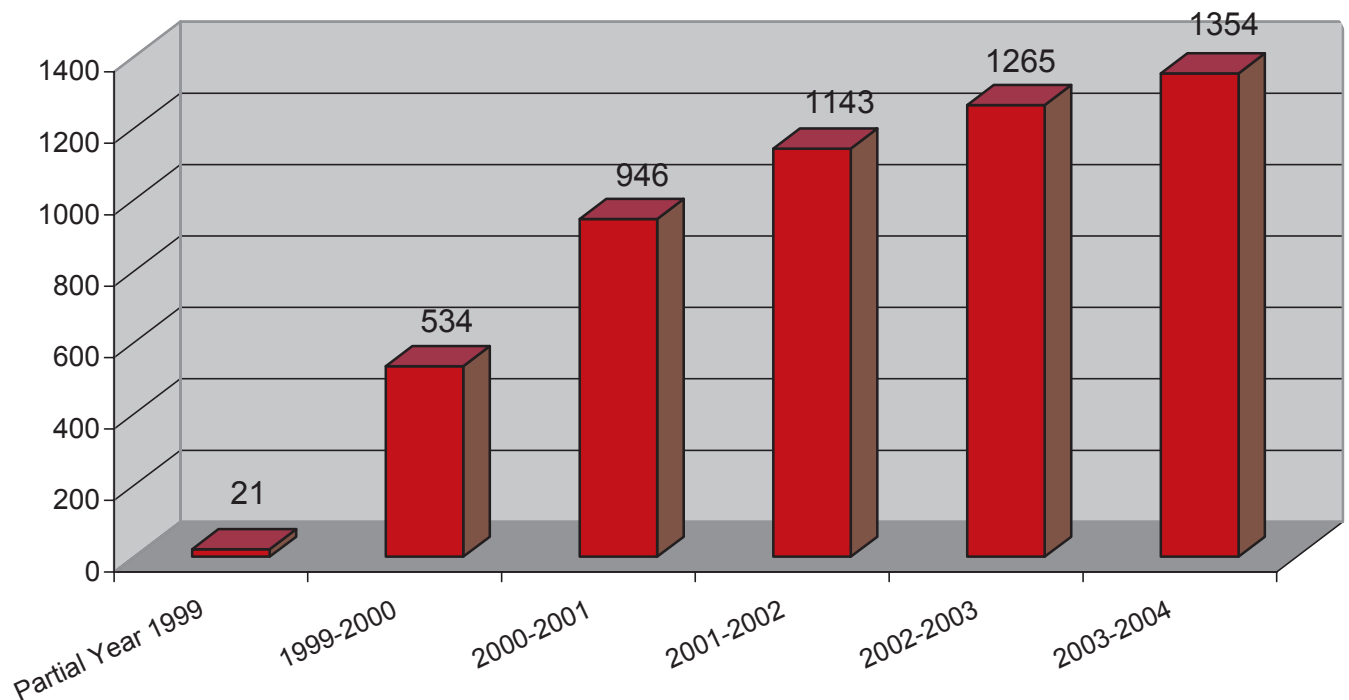
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People Success



For much of her time in school, Hannah struggled with reading and writing print due to her vision impairment. After exploring several types of electronic enlargers through the ETC Program, Hannah and staff from the Republic school district decided that the Jordy was best suited to her needs. Upon submitting an application for consideration under the AT Reimbursement Program and having it approved, the Jordy was purchased for Hannah. Since the Jordy can function both as a portable and a desktop electronic enlarger, Hannah is able to utilize the goggles for reading or looking at the chalkboard and when writing is necessary she can place the goggles in a special stand connected to a computer monitor where she can see her written work appear on the screen. With the acquisition of the Jordy, Hannah is able to easily access print and it has been reported that she **"is so very happy to be using it."**

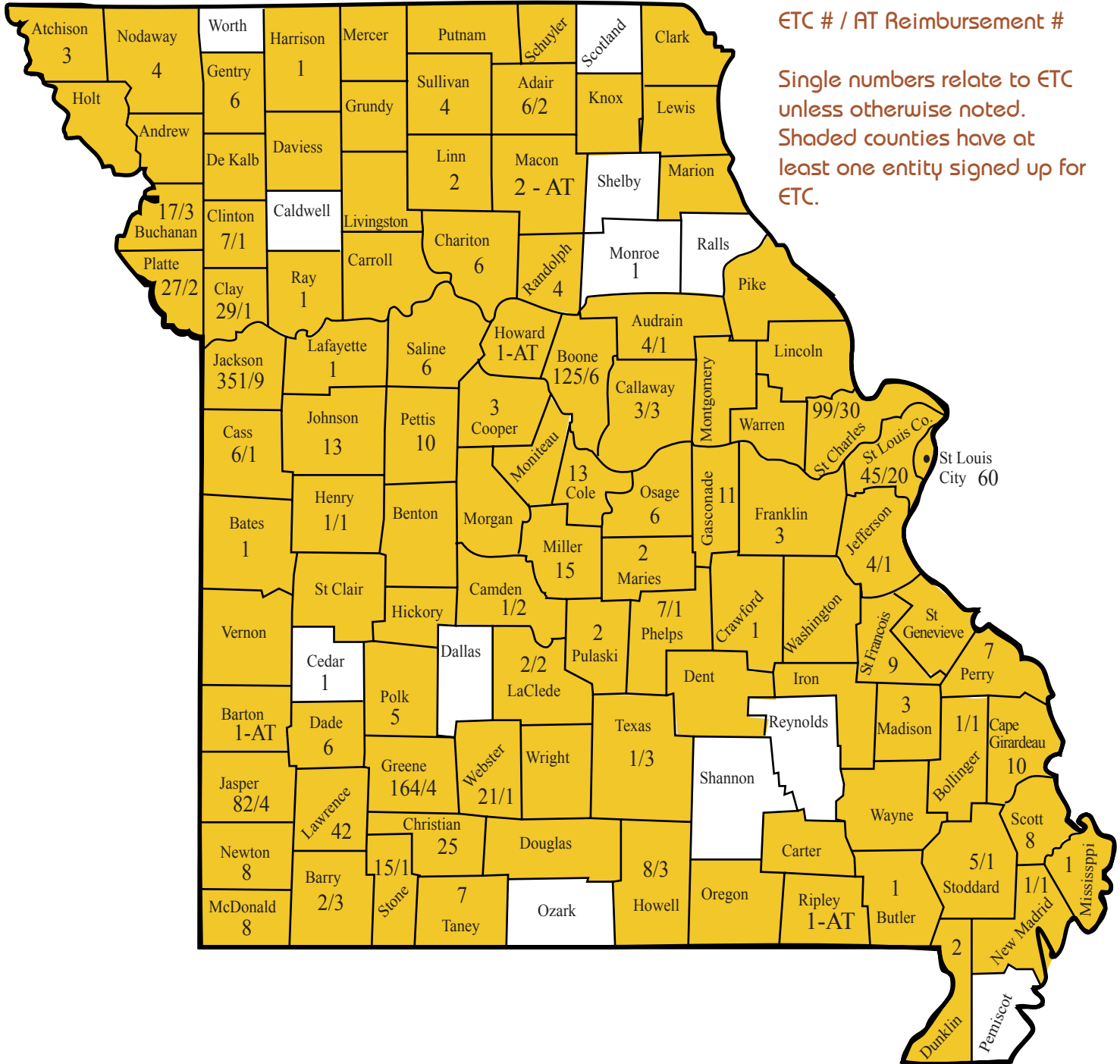
ETC - Devices Loaned



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ETC & AT Reimbursement
 Presence and Distribution by County
 7/1/03 - 6/30/04

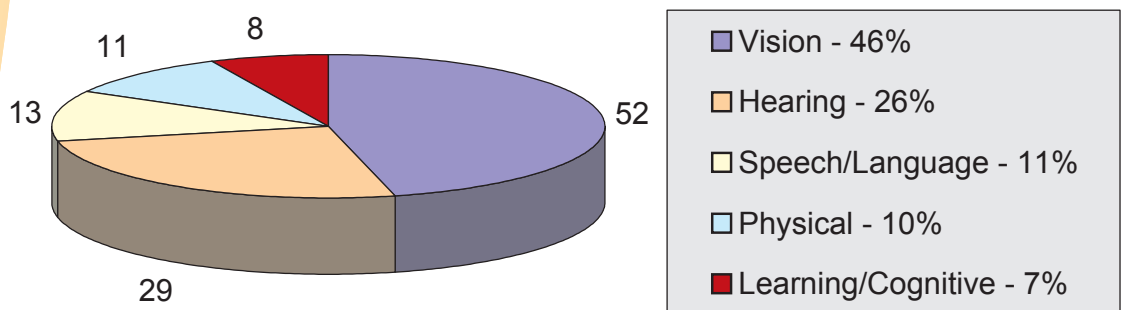


Program Success

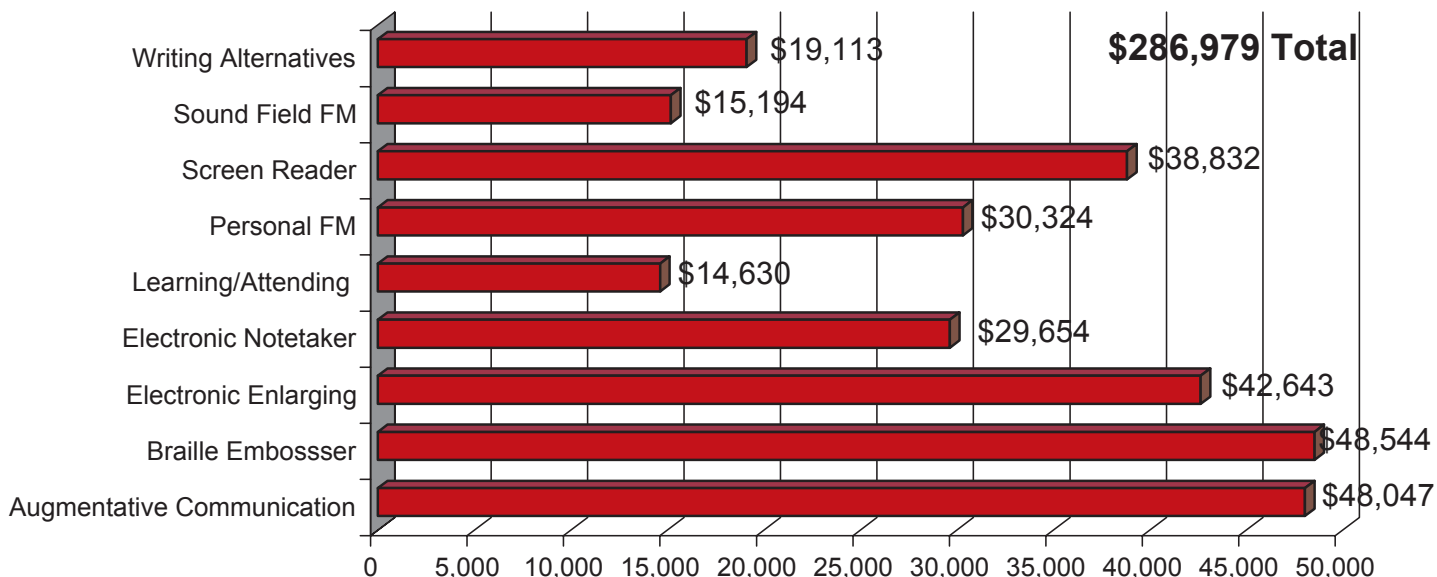
For the second year, MoAT has been pleased to operate the AT Reimbursement Program. Funded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education, the AT Reimbursement Program helps school districts offset the cost of purchasing assistive technology for students with assistive technology needs written into their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This year, the program received 167 applications from 53 school districts throughout the state. MoAT was able to fund 113 applications, an increase over the previous year, divided among 48 different districts, also an increase. The program aims to fund those forms of assistive technology between \$1,000 and \$5,000, items such as braille embossers, augmentative communication devices, computer access systems and electronic enlarging.

Missouri's school districts have taken favorably to the program. Many districts have indicated how pleased they are that this funding source is available and what an impact it has had on the students for whom they have applied. Follow-up surveying of students funded through the program showed that nearly all students assisted achieved better academic performance, increased classroom participation, attained more IEP goals and objectives and decreased demand on school personnel to perform tasks that are now accomplished by either the student or the use of the assistive technology.

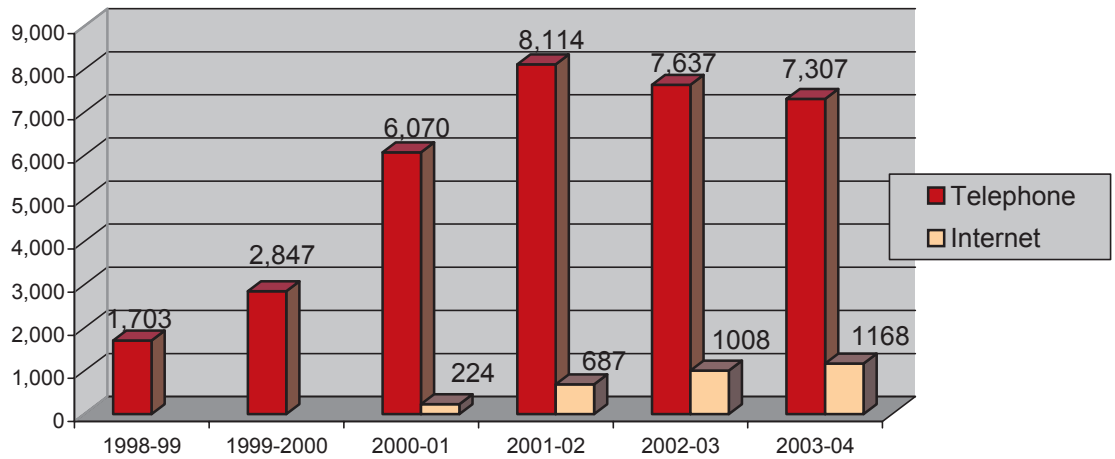
Applications by Disability Type



AT Reimbursement: Dollars by Device Type



TAP - # Devices Provided

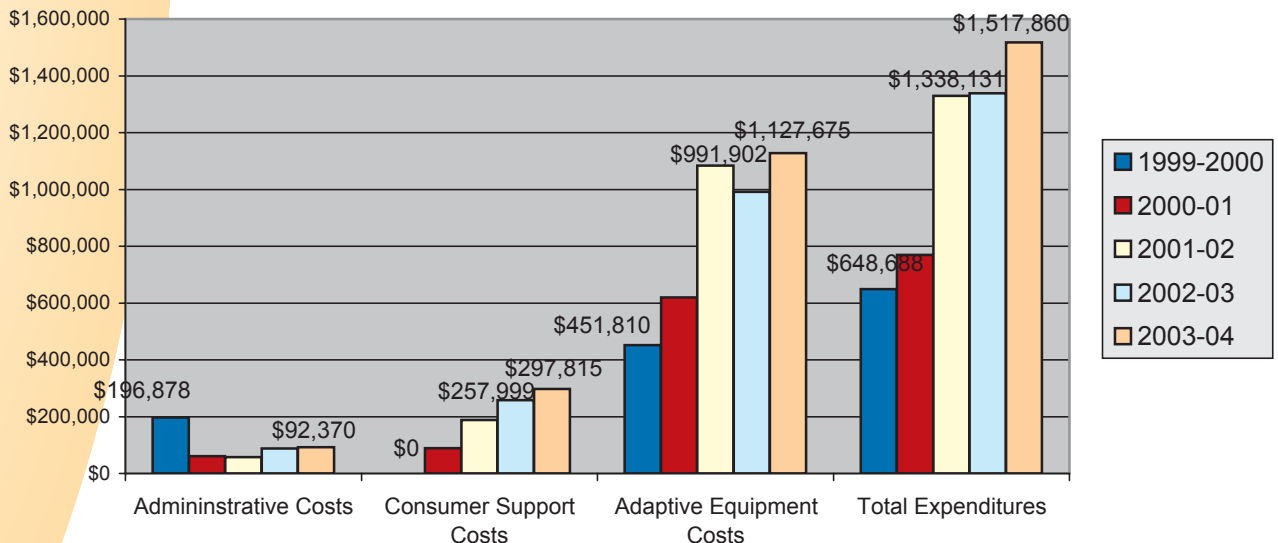


Program Success

Using the telephone and internet to communicate, make purchases, apply for services and even search for jobs has become commonplace for Missourians with disabilities, thanks to the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP). TAP provides adaptive telephone and computer equipment needed for basic access to telephone and internet telecommunication for Missourians with hearing, vision, mobility and other disabilities. MoAT assumed operation of TAP for Telephone and initiated TAP for Internet in 2000-01.

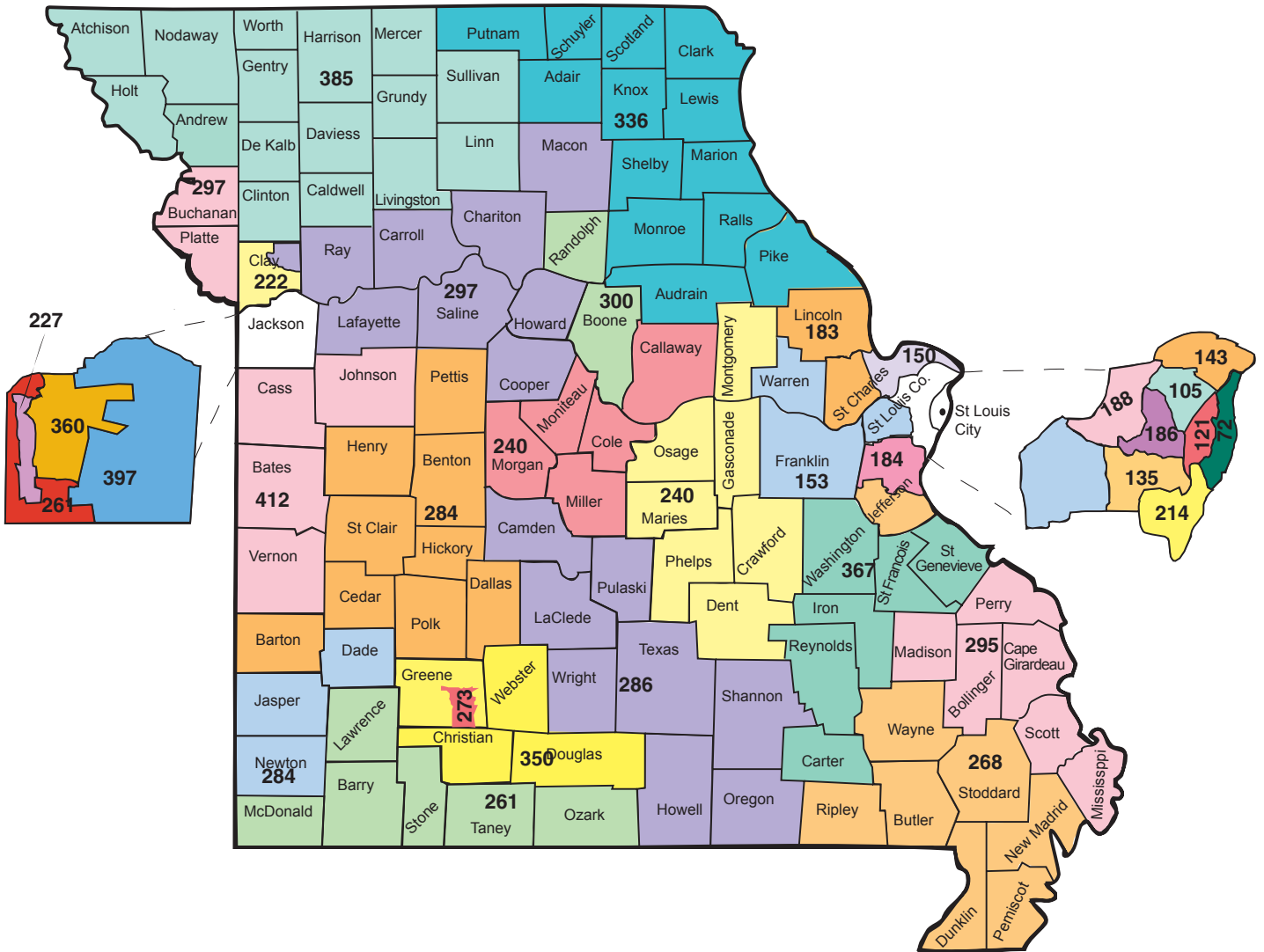
The number of TAP for Internet devices provided increased this year while the number of devices provided by TAP for Telephone was comparable to last year. A critical component of TAP is the delivery of consumer support to help individuals with disabilities select the most appropriate adaptive equipment and to assist them with installation and use of the equipment. Administration costs for TAP continue to be very low at 6%.

TAP Yearly Expenditures



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TAP Equipment Distributed by Senatorial District



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People Success

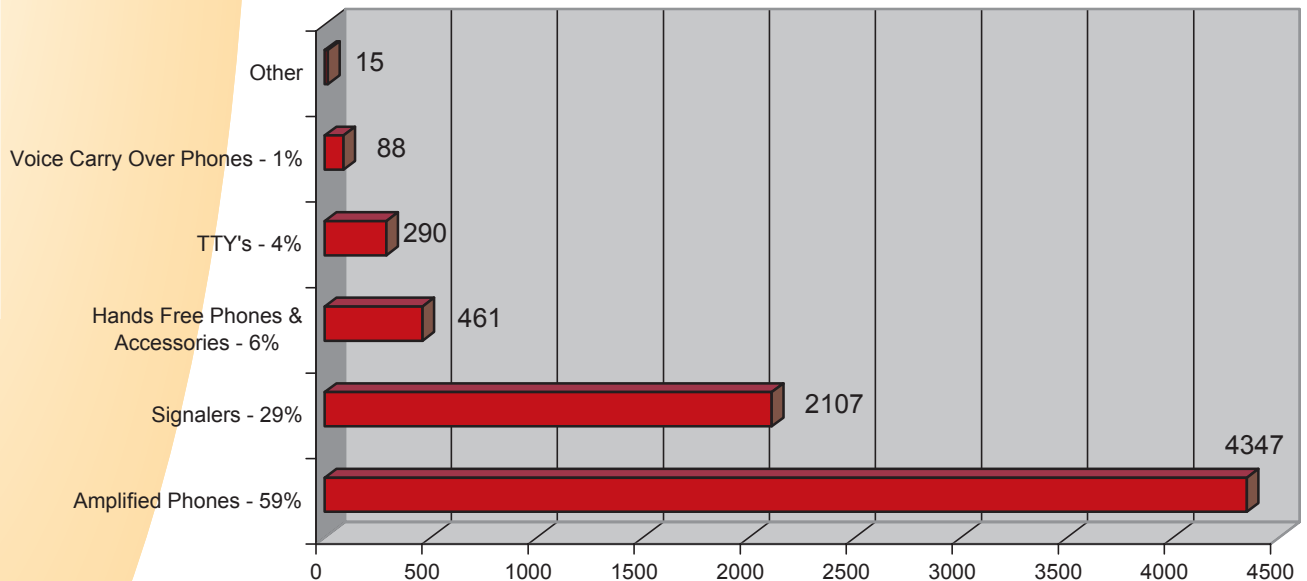
Cody, age 16

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Telecommunications Access Program for my telephone system. Being able to spend time on the phone has brought more of the outside world to me. Also, the phone system has provided me with a more secure frame of mind.

I have really enjoyed the privilege of having the phone system. The phone system has allowed me to communicate with many interesting people. Also, now having a remote and a speaker phone has made my life so much easier.

Providing me with the phone system has been great! Thank you very much for this enjoyable, and worthwhile activity."

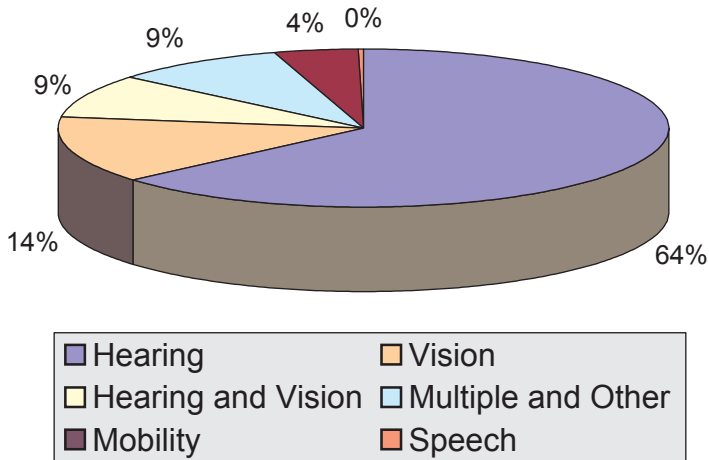
TAP for Telephone Equipment



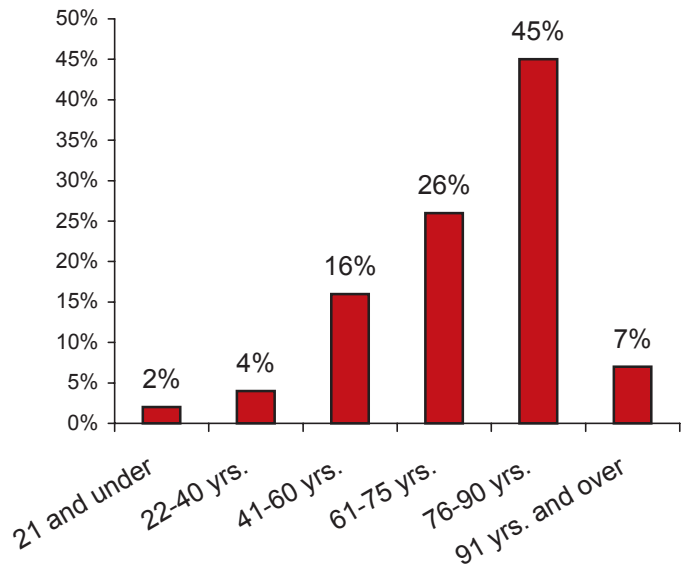
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TAP - T - Disability of Recipients



TAP - T - Age of Recipients



Program Success

This year, 7,307 adaptive telephone devices were provided by TAP for Telephone. A network of Independent Living Centers provides consumer support ensuring appropriate matching of equipment through the use of demonstration devices. Forty percent of equipment recipients had not been able to use the phone for 6 years or more. Follow-up data from program beneficiaries indicates an overall satisfaction rating of 98%, with over half reporting they used the equipment to make emergency calls and live independently.

People Success

Ericka has used a traditional TTY for many years. She had never used voice carry over services which would allow her to utilize her voice in talking to others while reading text of the other party. Ericka tried the new CapTel phone with captioned telephone voice-carry-over relay services with success. She is now able to talk directly to her husband and friends on the phone.



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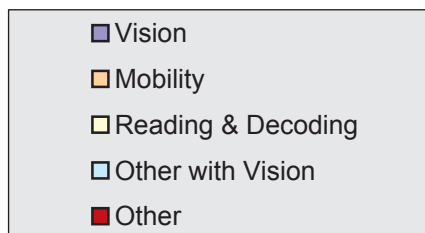
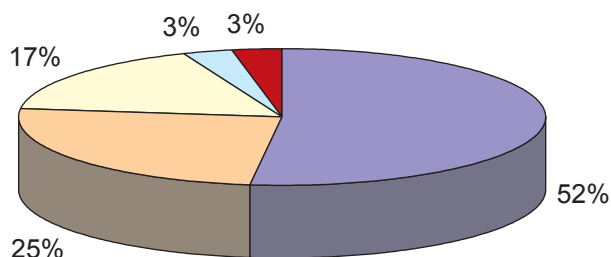
People Success

As most young men his age, Joey has an interest in all sports, bowling, T-ball, and tennis, but his favorite is golf. As a ninth-grader, Joey already plans to attend college and is interested in becoming a radio sports announcer. Whatever career he chooses the adaptive computer equipment he received will help him along the way.

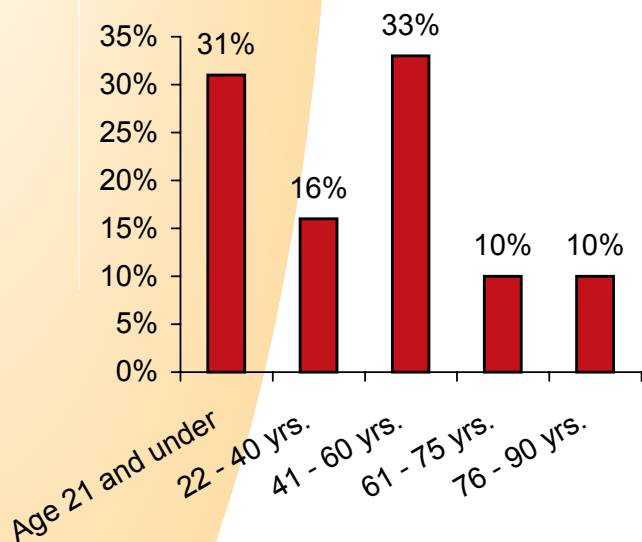
Due to a physical disability and a vision loss, Joey uses the REACH onscreen keyboard with a jelly bean switch and a large monitor to access his computer. Joey can independently and successfully search the internet, keep in touch with friends, (Joey is home-schooled so this is particularly important) and advance academic skills like practicing spelling words and taking his science and American history tests on the computer.

"My son can now work the computer almost on his own. It has been a god send to him! Thank you so much!"

TAP for Internet - Disability of Recipients



TAP for Internet - Age of Recipients



Program Success

Missouri continues to be the only state in the nation whose telecommunications equipment distribution program includes the adaptive devices needed for internet access. Consumers range in age from two to 90 years of age and include a wide range of disabilities.

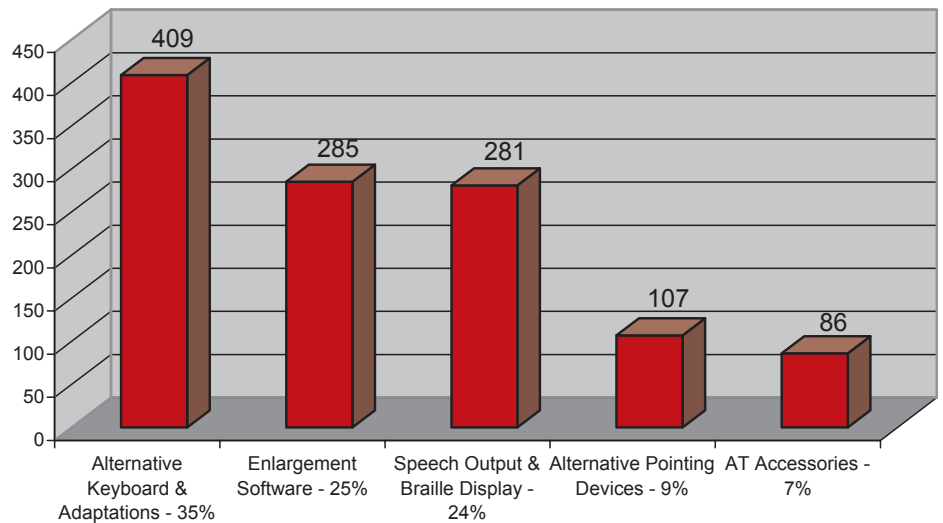
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TAP for Internet Equipment

This year, TAP for Internet provided 1168 adaptive computer devices representing over 160 different individual items including alternative keyboards and pointing devices, software adaptations, speech and braille output and enlargement software.

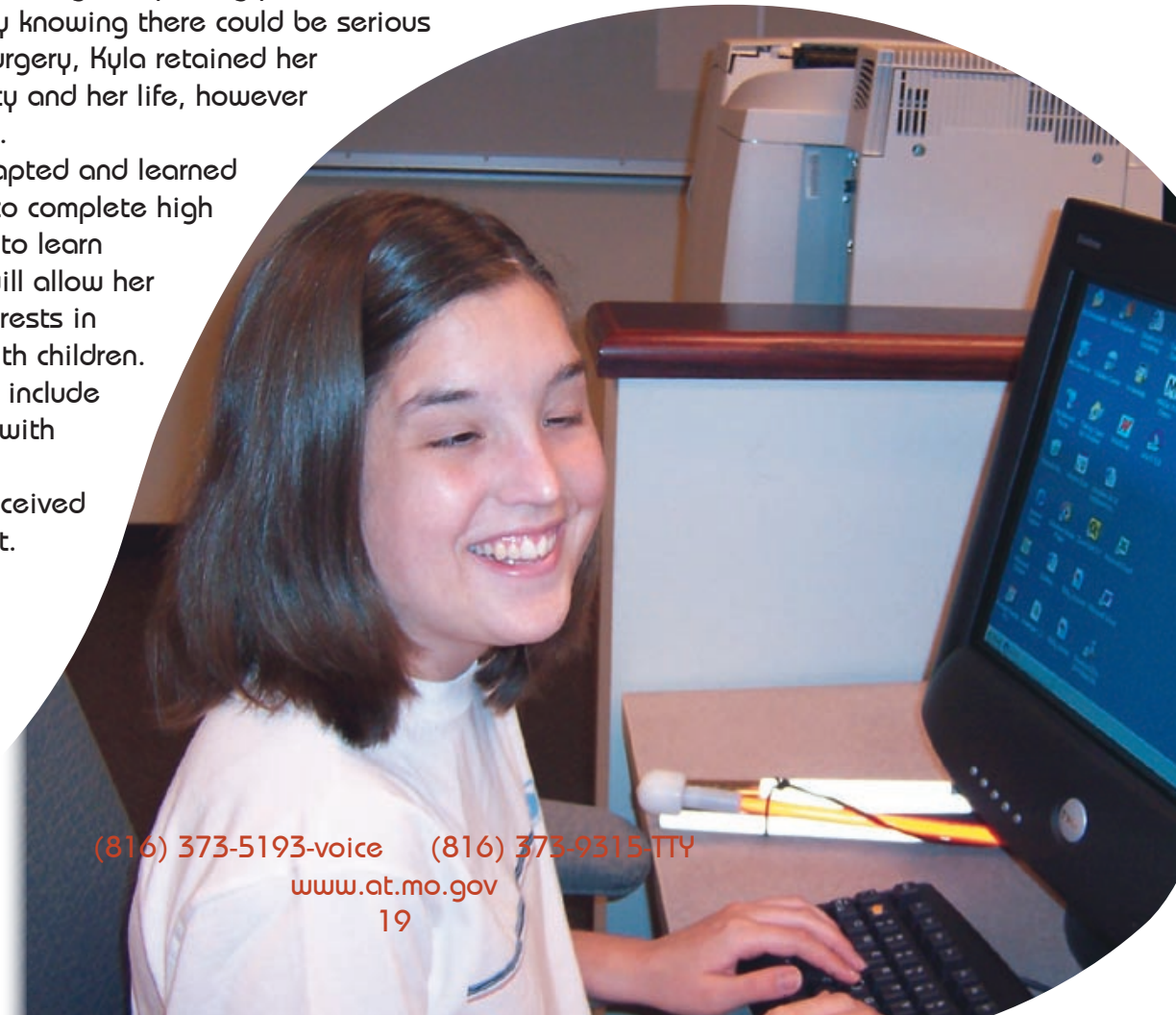
A majority of applicants (73%) received assistance with selecting their equipment and (46%) received training on their equipment. Consumers report that they use email to keep in touch with friends and family (53%), use the equipment to make contacts with business (34%) and do business with the government (33%).



People Success

Almost 2 years ago, Kyla complained of a severe migraine and starry vision to the school nurse. Her father came and took her to the hospital where it was discovered that an optic nerve tumor was bleeding, swelling and putting pressure on her brain. Kyla underwent surgery knowing there could be serious complications. After surgery, Kyla retained her memory, her personality and her life, however she did lose her vision.

Kyla quickly adapted and learned the skills she needed to complete high school. She continues to learn additional skills that will allow her to pursue life-long interests in writing and working with children. Skills she has acquired include the use of a computer with JAWS, a screen reader program, which Kyla received through TAP for Internet.



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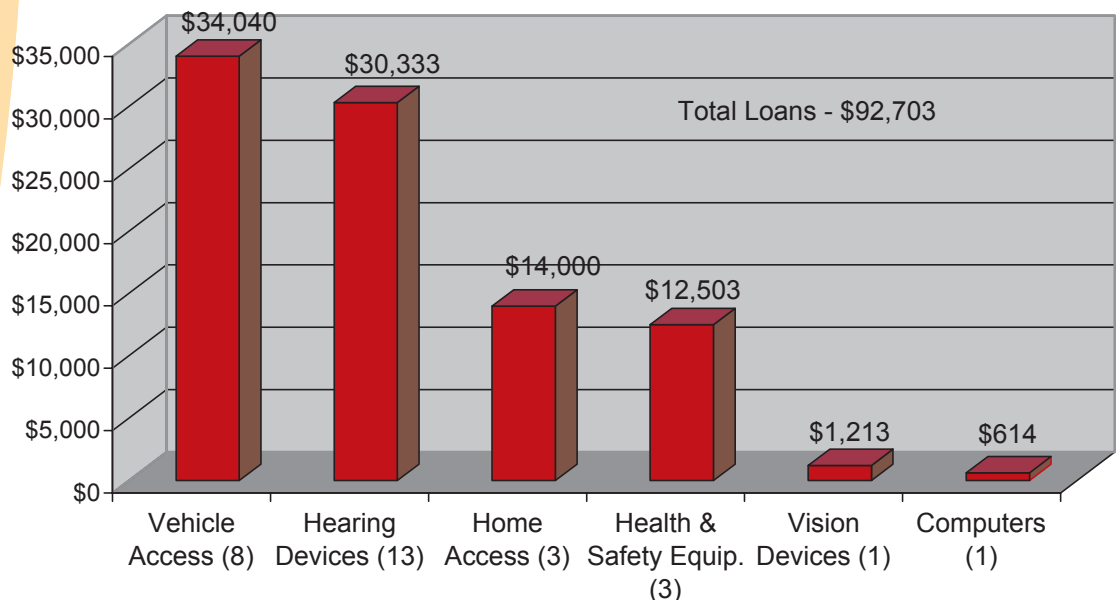
Program Success

In only its second full year of operation, **How-Me Loans** provided **\$92,703** in very low interest loans for Missourians with disabilities. Nationally, the interest rates were among the lowest of any similar program, averaging only 3.25%. **How-Me Loans** provides loans for all types of assistive technology devices or equipment, or for making access improvements to homes or vehicles. The average amount borrowed was \$3,197 with loans ranging from \$614 to \$7,717. Terms ranged from 12 to 60 months with an average re-payment term of 37 months. The average time needed to process and review applications decreased to 20 days, down from 23 days last year.

How-Me Loans approved 73% of applications received in 2003-04, even though most applicants were of low and moderate income. Almost one-third of approved applicants had incomes below \$15,000 annually, while 73% of persons who received loans had annual incomes below \$30,000. Applications were received from every region of Missouri.

During the year, borrowers repaid a total of \$43,299 in principal and interest. The program has had no loan defaults.

How me Loans - AT by Dollars Loaned



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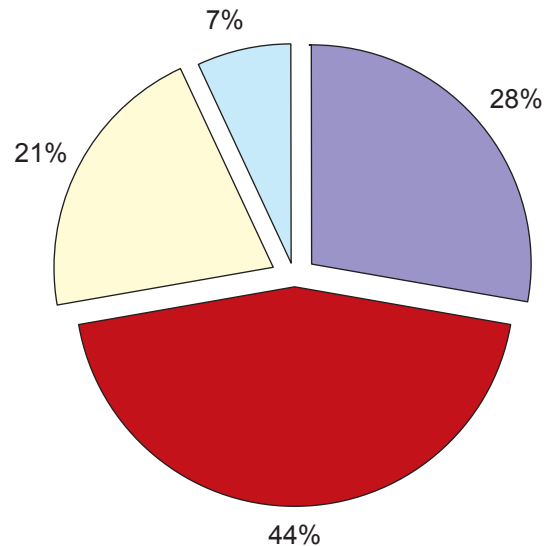
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People Success

Erayna lives in Kansas City with her 27 year-old son Phillip, who uses a wheelchair. Phillip is not able to help transfer or lift himself. It was very difficult for Erayna to lift or carry her son from his bed to his chair, or to help him with baths or other activities. She was very concerned about his safety and health as well as her own. Erayna's goal is for her son to always live at home and not be institutionalized. She was approved for a Show-Me Loan to obtain an overhead portable lifting system costing about \$6,000 (pictured at left). The low interest rate of 4% with a 48-month term allowed her to purchase the lift making it possible for Phillip to remain in his home. Erayna says,

"The lift was a life saver for me and without Show-Me Loans, I wouldn't have been able to get it!"

Annual Income of Approved Borrowers



Under \$15,000	(8)
\$15,001 to \$30,000	(13)
\$30,001 to \$60,000	(6)
Over \$60,000	(2)

Robert and Rila live in Jasper County in Southwest Missouri. Rila's ability to walk had been limited by her health conditions. The couple wanted to purchase a wheelchair for Rila and also a lift so they could transport the chair in their truck. The cost to buy both was just not affordable, so they applied and were approved for a low-interest Show-Me Loan. Rila now gets around her house much better and gets out and enjoys life more often. She says her wheelchair and lift allow her to do things like go out to eat, visit her sister in Neosho, and go with Bob to auction. Rila says she is much more independent and doesn't know what she would do without her new wheelchair and lift.



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Program Success

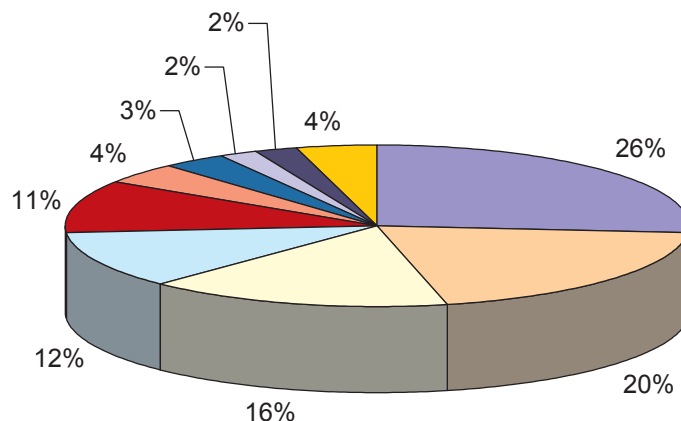
The Swap n' Shop program is an equipment exchange program that allows people with disabilities to buy, sell or trade devices that they no longer use with other individuals who can put this used equipment to good use. The Swap n' Shop program saved consumers \$331,615 while transferring 95 items this year. In addition, the program had 206 new pieces of equipment listed. The types of assistive technologies that were transferred include everything from full size accessible vans and CCTVs, to power wheelchairs and augmentative communication devices.

People Success

“We are tickled about the response to the program and are grateful for the advertisement,” said one person who had listed 7 items in the program, selling six within 5 months of listing, while saving buyers more than \$25,000 over purchasing new.

Another transfer occurred between a person in St. Louis and a person who lived near Branson. They met halfway so that the consumer could look over a scooter. As the seller put it, “The woman wanted it on the spot. It looked good for her and was cheap.” The seller was very happy to sell her scooter to this woman who needed it.

Transferred Equipment by Category



Wheelchairs Etc. - 25	Accessible Vehicles - 19	Personal Management - 15
Communication Access - 11	Environmental Controls - 10	Therapeutic Aids - 4
Vehicle Modifications - 3	Architectural Access - 2	Hearing/Vision Technology - 2
Other - 4		

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There were a number of issues during Missouri's 2004 legislative session that were pivotal for Missourians with disabilities. Budget issues again held center stage as funding for Medicaid, independent living, and other critical services were the focus of attention. MoAT's Disability Legislative Listserv kept persons with disabilities and advocates informed with up-to-date information on the status of important bills and appropriations. Over 360 organizations and Missourians subscribed to the free Listserv, and passed the postings on to hundreds of other persons with disabilities and their families.

Comments about the Missouri Disability Legislative Listserv:

"Without your Listserv, it would be just impossible for our Center to follow so many important issues and contact legislators when needed on an issue. We can't tell you how much we appreciate this service."

– Staff of a center for independent living.

"I like that the information from your Listserv is to the point. It gives me the main points of a bill in an easy-to-understand format so I don't have to stumble my way through confusing bill language trying to figure out what it means."

–Parent of a child with a disability.

For more information on Missouri Assistive Technology, please contact any of the following staff:

Diane Golden, Ph.D., Director
Roselie Backer-Thompson, TAP for Internet Coordinator
David Baker, Program Coordinator
Marty Exline, Policy Coordinator
Gay Jones, TAP for Telephone Coordinator
Tracy LaFollette, Administrative Assistant
Mike Parker, Operations Manager
Brenda Whitlock, Training Coordinator

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