- [Page] Hello everyone, we are joined today by Kim Karwal with the Rural Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Center at Easterseals here in Des Moines, and Kim is going to talk about assistive technology and common uses in American job centers.

- [Kim] Thank you very much. As Page said, I work with Easterseals Iowa with the Assistive Technology Program and the Rural Solutions Program. Today I'll be discussing the Assistive Technology Program specifically. The Assistive Technology Program serves state-wide, in all 99 counties of Iowa, with a variety of resources which we'll discuss in a little bit.

I would like to start by discussing assistive technology in general. The definition of assistive technology is any piece of equipment, product system or service used to increase, maintain and or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities or limitations. This is defined in ATIA in 2017. What this is meaning is assistive technology can be anything. It can be something like a Post-it note that helps an individual remember to turn around and check the oven before leaving their house. It can be a very high-tech communication system that's operated through a sip and puff feature attached to a power wheelchair.

When we talk about assistive technology, it can range from that low-tech, like the Post-it note example to that high-tech example, depending on the need and the implementation for that individual. The image on this slide is of an individual seated on a garden cart using a handheld hoe in a raised garden bed. Assistive technology can be items such as this garden cart and the handheld garden hoe that this individual is utilizing to tend the flowers. It could also be the substrate on which the individual's using the garden cart such as the cement in this specific image or the actual raised garden bed itself which in this image is raised about two feet from the ground.

When implementing assistive technology, it's important to understand that this webinar is an overview. It's not entirely inclusive. It's really an introduction to the assistive technology implementation. The reason we're introducing this is for the purpose of avoiding assistive technology abandonment, or AT abandonment by determining what is working and in what environment it's working before purchasing any devices. Assistive technology abandonment is when an individual utilizes a device for a short period of time or is introduced to a device and it is either not an appropriate device or they are not interested in continuing using that device and they set it aside or abandon it for future use. In this image, there is a picture of a large key keyboard, a QWERTY keyboard with very large keys. They are approximately an inch in width on this keyboard. The individual who is typing is also using a wrist rest located right in front of the keyboard and off to one side a mouse with a mouse wrist rest is visible as well.

This next slide discusses that no one device is a solution for everyone. Assistive technology is individualized and should be approached on a person-centered individual basis of need. When we approach this, some of the things we're going to look at with that individual are their abilities, the environment the device will be used in, and the task or goal. The solution when having this conversation is never a piece of equipment. The solution is supporting an individual to accomplish a specific task. In this image is an individual using a medication dispenser. The medication dispenser is a circular medication box with a plastic covering. At specific periods of time that are set by the user, the inside sections slide to reveal access to one slot in the medication box. This device is used for individuals that may forget that they took their medication or for individuals that need a reminder to come and approach and take their medication, as the box also has an alarm.

In the next slide and the following slides, we are going to begin to look at what it really means to talk about an individual's abilities, the task, and an environment. Abilities. What is it that this individual we are talking about or talking to can do independently? What specifically does the individual need support with? Some examples of why it's important to dig a little deeper when it comes to abilities is sometimes individuals will say that they are having difficulty eating. Now eating may sound specific, but there are many things that encompass eating. Is the individual having difficulty lifting a fork to their mouth? Are they having difficulty preparing food in advance? Are they having difficulty chewing or are they having difficulty swallowing?

So asking a lot of questions tell me more to that individual is going to be helpful to identify if it's an entire support or only cutting. The next example is communication. What task within that communication or what abilities within communication is that individual having difficulty with? Are they capable of communicating but shy in specific environments? Are they unable to communicate entirely or do they need support with specific appropriate prompts? Another example is reading. Is it a visual limitation? Is it a diagnosis such as dyslexia? Is it a specific reading level? These are just three examples of the many abilities that we'll want to talk about, and we'll want to be very individualized speaking to that person specifically asking them from their experience as they will be the expert in this section. We'll want to ask are there certain times that these abilities change? Are there certain days or weeks? Are there certain illnesses? Are there medications that this person takes that would change how the ability is performed from one day to the next?

And very importantly, does the individual actually desire to be independent with the tasks at hand? Is it their ability or is it an interest level that you're having a conversation about? And all of this is very important as it's really that person who's going to decide whether or not accomplishing the task at hand is going to be something that happens from one day to the next. Next is the environment. We'll want to talk about where the task is actually being performed. Now when we demonstrate a variety of devices, we may be demonstrating them in an office setting or another location. But it will be important to identify where that individual will use that device or where that individual will perform that specific task long-term. So some examples would be, is it at home? Is it in the park? Is it at work? What type of work? At school and what type of classroom setting? At camp? At Easterseals? Anywhere else? In this specific picture on this page, the task that these young ladies, there are three young ladies photographed sitting on a lawn, the task that they're working on is communication. And most specifically, they are discussing appropriate conversation starters. They are three young ladies trying to identify how they would start a conversation between the three of them. The tool that they are using is a conversation cube. So the young lady at the very front of the photograph is wearing a bright pink t-shirt and she is holding a pink block. On that pink block are appropriate conversation starters written out.

You'll also want to look into the task. How is the task being performed now? How has it been performed differently in the past? What has worked? What aspects are not working? Is it a physical barrier? A learning barrier? An attitudinal barrier? So one example is reading. Again, it's what are the specific barriers that that individual is experiencing? And what is the breakdown of those tasks, very specifically? In the photograph on this page is an individual using a scan pen across a brochure. This pen device will scan written text and then read it aloud. This is an appropriate device for someone who may experience a diagnosis like dyslexia where they can visually see the pen, they can see the page so that they can line up scanning the pen along the line of text. But it will help them so that the words are spoken clearly into their ear.

So I am now going to start speaking about some of the programs that Easterseals Iowa has that may offer some supports to you. The Easterseals Iowa mission is providing exceptional service to ensure that all people with disabilities or special needs and their families have equal opportunity to live, learn, work and play in their communities.

The Easterseals Assistive Technology Program again serves statewide, serving all ages, and is the state AT implementing entity. An overview of the programs we're about to discuss are information and referral, the Demonstration Center, the Durable Medical Equipment Loan Program, the Lending Library and the Assistive Technology Exchange. The photograph on this page is of two young men sitting on a lawn with a soccer ball sitting in front of them. This specific soccer ball has bells inside of it so that not only does it have that visual roll to it as a white ball, but also has an auditory stimulus for individuals that may rely more on hearing than their vision. It also adds the sensory aspect to any game played.

Number one is the information and referral services. Anyone across the state of Iowa is able to contact our Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program to ask any assistive technology related questions. This may include how do I ask more questions about the individual themselves, the environment they'll be working in or playing in or living in, or the tasks that they're specifically trying to perform. It may be questions related to funding. It may be questions related to a specific task or questions related to a specific device that an individual is aware of and wants to learn more about. The photographs on this page on the far left is a tablet of paper with an individual's hand holding a pen that has a blue support system around it. This blue support allows the individual to not need to pick up their hand, they can simply slowly drag it across the page and the pen itself is already angled in that holder so that it can write on the page. The second picture is of a tablet screen with an individual using their finger to manipulate the tablet itself. The tablet itself is being held in a Tab Grabber mounting system where elastic tabs extend out around the corners of the tablet and a long gooseneck material is used to position the tablet. At the base, which is not seen in this photograph, is a clamp that would hold that tablet holder, that gooseneck, to a device such as a table, a walker, even a wheelchair.

The next section is the Demonstration Center. The Demonstration Center includes a dropped countertop kitchen, and adaptive kitchen cupboards, adjustable height desk, and an Amazon Alexa and accessories. This center is located at Easterseals Iowa Camp Sunnyside and is available for individuals to tour, demonstrate devices, or learn more by appointment only. The photograph on this page is of the Demonstration Center. So the photograph includes a dropped countertop for the kitchen, a demonstration oven which is a non-working oven and a countertop extending the way around. Adaptive cupboards can also be seen in this photo, and then the adjustable height desk and a large screen TV are also visible.

The next program I would like to discuss is the Durable Medical Equipment Loan Program. This program runs solely off of donated durable medical equipment including wheelchairs, walkers, shower benches and more. Equipment is donated to Easterseals Iowa and is then sanitized and refurbished by staff. Application for loan for this equipment can be found at the Easterseals Iowa website at www.easterseals.com/ia/at. [Correction - Use slash and not back Slash] We do request that a healthcare provider fill out the second page or the back page of this application or provide a prescription approval so that individuals access the appropriate device. An example of how this may work for some individuals is if an individual uses a walker on a typical day but identify that having access to a manual wheelchair would provide them additional independence and allow them to engage in different environments that they may not be able to engage in with that walker, they could contact Easterseals Iowa and after communication with the healthcare provider be able to inform us on what size and type of manual wheelchair they may be interested in. We can then check our donation inventory to determine if we have a match or not. If we do have a match, that individual would then be able to access that manual wheelchair for a one time fee of 50 dollars for as long as that loan is needed. We do ask that when it is no longer in need, that that individual return the device that they borrowed to our inventory. The fee scale for these devices does range per device and does change from year to year. The photograph on this page is of an individual using a walker. This specific walker is a U-Step walker where the front is a horseshoe shape extending around the body. This device has a weighted front so that it is less likely to tip when an individual may use the handlebars further back. It also includes a light that shines across the floor so if an individual relies on an external support for knowing where to step when they're taking one step to the next, the U-Step is a useful tool.

The Lending Library. The Lending Library consists of nearly 900 devices. Up to five devices can be borrowed at a time for a 30 day trial period. In the photo on this page is the Tab Grabber again attached to a walker. Again the Tab Grabber is a gooseneck material with a bracket at the bottom to attach to the device and elastic tabs that extend up and around the corners of a tablet to hold it securely in place. In this photograph, you can see the back of the Tab Grabber that is shaped like an X with the elastic tabs extending up and around the corners of the tablet itself. The Tab Grabber is one of the 900 devices and one specific example of tablet holders that are available for loan through the Lending Library. Any Iowan with a disability, family member, or representative may borrow devices free of charge for 30 days. A paper application is available at www.easterseals.com/ia/at [Correction - Use slash and not back Slash] and the entire inventory is available to be reviewed at [www.eastersealsia.at4all.com](http://www.eastersealsia.at4all.com).

Iowa Assistive Technology Exchange is an online platform that was formerly known as UERS and was formerly held through Iowa Compass. This is a classified ads feature that connects Iowans who are interested in selling their durable medical equipment to Iowans who are in need of durable medical equipment. This website is free of charge to any user who chooses to login, create an account, and post a piece of equipment that they have that they are hoping to be able to sell or give away to another individual. The purpose of us hosting this website is so that individuals have one platform to go to to search through not only what we have in our Lending Library inventory, but also what other Iowans have posted for sale. This is the website that I stated on the previous slide and will state again at www.eastersealsia.at4all.com. The photograph on this page is a screenshot of the online Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Exchange page which has the Easterseals Iowa logo, it says Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Center, has the various tabs for searching including a Home, My Account, Items, Contact Us, and Help. It has a login section along the left-hand side where you can request a new account or work through forgetting your password, and also has within the central area a gray line that the Search Here feature is found. You can enter any keyword or phrase. Going back to that eating example, you could enter spoon and it would bring up any spoon that is available in the Easterseals Iowa Lending Library or that was posted by any Iowan on the Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Exchange.

I would like to now move on to some resources that exist for individuals when it comes to assistive technology. These are external resources from the Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program. The first one is JAN, the Job Accommodation Network found at www.askjan.org. The Job Accommodation Network is a source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues. It even includes a search feature for individuals to search for job description or specific disability, a variety of possible and explorable job accommodations.

The next resource is Iowa Compass. This can be found at www.iowacompass.org or by calling toll free 1-800-779-2001 or e-mailing iowa-compass@uiowa.edu. Iowa Compass is a resource database that connects people with disabilities and complex health related needs to services and supports in their communities throughout the state of Iowa. There's a search engine for services and resources and various tip sheets including Assistive Technology funding options, community resources, student rights, and frequently asked questions.

The last resource is the Iowa Able Foundation. This can be found at www.iowaable.org or by calling toll free 1-888-222-8943.

Contact information for Easterseals Iowa for any questions, comments, or concerns can be found on this final page. A toll free number to call the Assistive Technology Program is 1-866-866-8782 or TTY at 515-289-4069 or e-mail atinfo@eastersealsia.org. Thank you all very much.