

**Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc.
Annual Performance Report 2011**



Sponsored by the Department of Education/Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation and the State of Florida

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Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration under the Assistive Technology
Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-364)

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organizations, human services providers, and the private sector through collaborative partnerships and efforts to help provide assistive technologies, assistive technology trainings, and support services for individuals with disabilities and their families in the community.

This direct provision of assistive services and technology has helped enable individuals with disabilities in Florida to seek and obtain employment as well as participate as a productive community member.

FAAST supports six Regional Demonstration Centers in Pensacola, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, and Miami where children and adults with disabilities in communities across the state receive individualized assistive technology instruction.

A partnership with the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Florida Legislature and federal funders make it possible for FAAST and the Regional Demonstration Centers to loan and refurbish assistive technology; provide assistive technology skills development trainings and assessments; and educate thousands of individuals with disabilities and their families about assistive services and technology.

The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST), Inc. is pleased to present our 2011 Annual Performance Report.

FAAST is proud of our important work, which helps facilitate cost-effective access to and acquisition of assistive services and technology for Floridians with disabilities and their families.

As documented in this annual report, the assistive services and technology FAAST provides have resulted in employment, independent living, and a better quality of life for those we serve. In addition, FAAST helps bridge the "digital divide" for individuals with disabilities and their families. Since FAAST's inception on October 20, 1994 as a not-for-profit organization,

FAAST's mission has been "to improve the quality of life for all Floridians with disabilities through advocacy and awareness activities that increase access to and acquisition of assistive services and technology."

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In 2011, FAAST has worked with thousands of individuals with disabilities and their families, state partners, not-for-profit

FAAST Core Services

- ◆ Statewide and Six Regional AT Device Loan Programs
- ◆ AT Device Reutilization/Refurbishing/Recycling Programs
- ◆ AT Skills Development Trainings and Assessments
- ◆ AT Device Demonstrations and Trainings
- ◆ IDEA and Rehabilitation Act Transition Trainings Leading to Employment
- ◆ Structured Presentations and AT Device Exhibits at Educational Conferences, Exhibit Fairs and Disability Specific Events
- ◆ Public Awareness Activities

FAAST programs and services, six Regional Demonstration Centers, and many other FAAST partners are dedicated to a broad array of services, including but not limited to:

State and regional device loan programs

FAAST statewide and regional device loan programs, in 2011, purchased 743 new assistive technology devices available to lend and provided assistive technology equipment loans to 2,327 individuals statewide.

Assistive technology device reutilization/recycling programs

FAAST was able to refurbish/reutilize 387 assistive technology devices distributed to individuals with disabilities and their families statewide including durable medical equipment and computers.

Assistive technology skills development trainings and assessments

In 2011, FAAST, in partnership with our six Regional Demonstration Centers, were able to conduct 918 assistive technology skills development trainings and assessments.

Assistive technology demonstrations and trainings

FAAST and our Regional Demonstration Centers were able to conduct 8,823 assistive technology device demonstrations and we provided assistive technology device specific training to 26,429 individuals.

**In compliance with Federal/State requirements
FAAST Baseline Data Performance Measures and
Satisfaction Surveys.**

Competitive, low-rate assistive technology financing for qualified applicants through FAAST's New Horizon Fund Program

In 2011, FAAST approved 27 low-interest loans for qualified borrowers (26 were Alternative Finance Program loans and one was a Telework Program loan in accordance with requirements of the federal Alternative Finance and Telework Programs.

Comprehensive trainings on the individualized education program (IEP) planning process focusing on transition services and assistive technology and support services leading to employment.

In 2011, FAAST organized and presented 19 transition trainings across the state related to employment expectations for transition-age individuals for students with disabilities, parents, professionals and other interested parties.

These comprehensive transition trainings included advocacy strategies to achieve individualized education plan (IEP) goals inclusive of assistive technology and support services in the public school system as well as effective transition planning.

Instruction was provided by civil rights professionals including a highly qualified paralegal on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

(IDEIA) process, reasonable accommodations under 504 plans and basics on ADA accommodations.

Parents and other participants all received copies of FAAST materials inclusive of the PowerPoint presentation, the *General Resource and Self-Help Guide: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), Reauthorized 2004*, the *General Resource and Self-Help Guide for Children with Disabilities and their Families*, the *Employment Resources and Self-Help Guide for Individuals with Disabilities*, and the *FAAST, Inc. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Site Survey Instrument: Building Accessibility Evaluation Survey on CD* and available in Spanish and access formats; as well as hands on assistive technology demonstrations.

A total of 25,721 informational magazines and self-help resource guides were distributed.

Educational publications, a FAAST Access magazine and various comprehensive self-help resource guides

In 2011, just in time for hurricane season, FAAST researched and produced a comprehensive *Got A Plan* emergency preparedness self-help resource guide with a list of web links, videos, articles and other helpful information.

In addition, to promote accessible, electronic and information technology accessibility, FAAST produced a comprehensive 20-page technical assistance self-help resource guide regarding accessible document preparation and website accessibility.

Public awareness and outreach through community partnerships

- In 2011, FAAST conducted 169 individual structured presentations at conferences, exhibit fairs, and special disability specific events across the state.
- National public radio spots reached 1,735,960 listeners statewide.
- FAAST offered 13 web based trainings to our Regional Demonstration Centers, partners and stakeholders on assistive technologies, supports, and services.

Assistive technology related information and referral

In 2011, FAAST provided public awareness activities, in coordination with our Regional Demonstration Centers, partners, and stakeholders, through

information and referrals to 13,890 individuals with disabilities and their families, state and local governments, grassroots disability organizations, not-for-profit agencies serving individuals with disabilities and elders with disabilities, workforce investment systems, State vocational rehabilitation centers, public and private employers, elementary, secondary and post-secondary public schools; and social, medical, educational, employment, and transportation services for individuals with disabilities.

FAAST hosts AT Bay where individuals can buy, sell or trade assistive technologies

In 2011, 61 new users signed up for accounts; 439 posted items received visitor hits; and 36 requests were made for contact information. The website is located at <http://atbay.faast.org/>.

New Horizon Fund Program

During the most recent federal fiscal year, FAAST staff updated our New Horizon Fund Program policies and procedures. The FAAST New Horizon Fund Program Director received and screened 84 applications for low-interest loans from individuals around the state.

Of those, 27 applications were approved, 34 applications were declined, 11 applications were pending, and 12 applications were voluntarily withdrawn. Of the 27 loans approved, 26 were Alternative Finance Program loans and one was a Telework Program loan in accordance with requirements of the federal Alternative Finance and Telework Programs. For more information, go to: <http://www.faast.org/New-Horizon-Fund>.

Public Policy Initiatives

During Legislative session 2011, FAAST successfully advocated for a statutory revision that established a timeframe in which schools must conduct the assistive technology assessments that are required by law for students with disabilities.

Thanks to the efforts of Legislative members and their staff, the Public Policy and Advocacy Committee of the FAAST Board of Directors, and FAAST partners and stakeholders, House Bill 1255 was passed by the House and the Senate and signed into law by Governor Scott.

The bill establishes a timeframe for required assistive technology assessments: "If an individual education plan team makes a recommendation in accordance with State Board of Education rule for a student with a disability, as defined in s. 1003.01 (3), to receive an assistive technology assessment, that assessment must be completed within 60 school days after the team's recommendation."

Thanks to the efforts of Legislative members and their staff, the Public Policy and Advocacy Committee of the FAAST Board of Directors successfully advocated for students to have greater access to assistive services and technology.

In addition to the establishment in statute of reasonable timeframes for assistive technology assessments, FAAST joined many voices in the disability community to urge protection for funding of Early Steps Part C.

Early Steps provides vital services for infants and toddlers at risk of developmental delays.

FAAST was also able to secure continued support from the Florida Legislature for ongoing General Revenue funds, which enable this organization to continue providing direct assistive technology services in six regions of the state.

Website

FAAST continues to offer a user-friendly ADA/ Section 508 accessible website at www.faastrg.org. The website provides a wealth of information about FAAST programs and services, including:

- **A searchable database to locate assistive technology devices to loan;**
- **ATBay, a device exchange forum that enables individuals to buy, sell or trade technology, which is hosted by FAAST; and**
- **The FAAST New Horizon Fund Program, offering low-interest rate loans for qualified borrowers.**

Also available on the website are ten easy to use self-help resource guides developed by FAAST. These guides provide hyperlinks to a wide-range of resources including websites, videos, articles, tutorials, and other useful information. These guides are housed in the FAAST resource library at: www.faastrg.org/resources/library.

The FAAST website also offers fact sheets, policy briefs, and a myriad of other informational documents on disability related matters. Including:

- **Individual pages for each of the six Regional Demonstration Centers with contact information and news;**
- **Information on FAAST meetings and events;**
- **Announcements and requests for proposals;**
- **Helpful links;**
- **A library of Self-Help Resource Guides; and**
- **Public Policy news**



Needs Assessment

In 2011, FAAST conducted a statewide assistive technology needs assessment survey to help ensure that the assistive technology our organization provides on short-term loans is as effective as possible.

The survey provided FAAST with the public's recommendations about the types of assistive technology devices FAAST should purchase to make available for short-term loans regionally and statewide.

The lending of this assistive technology continues to allow individuals with disabilities, their families, employers, and professionals to pilot assistive technology before they purchase it.

This trial period improves access to and acquisition of the most beneficial assistive services and technologies for individuals with disabilities. For more information, go to: <http://www.faast.org/programs/device-loans>.

Assistive Technology Mobile Unit

FAAST continues to work to bring access to assistive technology to individuals with disabilities and their families through the use of our mobile unit.



In the coming fiscal year, FAAST will continue our work to support less restrictive living environments and to help promote economic self-sufficiency through access to and acquisition of assistive services and technology.



A few examples of individuals with disabilities assisted to receive needed assistive technology and support services in 2011

Atlantic RDC

Challenge: A 24-year-old male with Down syndrome, dysarthria, and missing fingers needed access to an alternative communication device as his previous augmentative communication device was no longer functional.

The Successful Result: Officials with the FAAST Atlantic Regional Demonstration Center provided a comprehensive assistive technology assessment for a communication device.

Assessments revealed that he demonstrated the ability to effectively utilize several communication devices.

A *Maestro* communication device, featuring a large dynamic display screen, was determined to be the most effective device for him.

He and his family were also assisted with the successful submittal of documentation needed to secure funding for this communication device.

Central RDC

Challenge: An adult female with a spinal cord injury after an auto accident requested help with mobility.

The Successful Result: Officials with the FAAST Central Regional Demonstration Center provided assistive technology device demonstrations and assistive technology loans enabling her to operate both a power wheelchair and a computer significantly increasing her independence and quality of life.

South Florida RDC

Challenge: 14 children and adults with severe and multiple disabilities needed help to obtain assistive technology and support services.

The Successful Result: Officials with the FAAST South Florida Regional Demonstration Center provided 14 reutilized/refurbished Dell laptops and Apple iPads for the children with special needs and adults with disabilities.

The refurbished assistive technologies included accessible software applications and access to educational, communication, and special needs computer applications.

This recycled assistive technology was gratefully received and has already been shown to dramatically improve education, independent living and employment opportunities they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to receive.

Gulf Coast RDC

Challenge: A 79-year-old elder with Parkinson's Disease needs to use a computer, but for him a standard mouse became increasingly difficult to use.

The Successful Result: Officials with the FAAST Gulf Coast Regional Demonstration Center provided hands on assistive technology demonstrations including several ergonomically-friendly computer mouse products. This Okaloosa County senior chose to borrow a grip control device, the *Gold Read & Write* program and a large track ball mouse. After trying the mouse at home, he will be purchasing one of his own.

Northwest RDC

Challenge: Eight Big Bend high-school students with disabilities needed assistive technology to pursue their academic goals to enhance the potential to transition to post-secondary education.

The Successful Result: Officials with the FAAST Northwest Regional Demonstration Center, in partnership with The Able Trust's High School/High Tech Program, worked to identify and select highly deserving high-school students with disabilities with the goal to transition into post-secondary education and employment. Each student submitted an essay on how a FAAST accessible laptop could improve their ability to compete through information technology communications, to conduct research and complete assignments, as well as to prepare for college and employment. The eight refurbished Dell laptops provided by FAAST were programmed with accessible software, have wi-fi capability and come with a three year warranty.

Northeast RDC

Challenge: A 12-year-old child with Down syndrome needed assistive technology, support service, and a computer to help with her school work.

The Successful Result: Officials with the FAAST Northeast Regional Demonstration Center provided assistive technology skills development training and assessments resulting in the provision of a reutilized Dell computer. Her parents reported that the reutilized computer with assistive technology adaptations has helped her significantly advance in learning, writing, daily reading, language arts and science and she can much more actively participate and enjoy learning and participate in activities of daily living through social networking.

FAAST's Latest Independent Auditor's Findings by James Moore & Co., CPA

Ending June 30, 2010

Findings relating to the general purpose financial statements which are required to be reported in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*:

NONE

Findings and Questioned Costs – Related to Federal Awards:

NONE

Findings and Questioned Costs – Related to State Projects:

NONE

Independent Auditor's Management Letter Required by Chapter 10.650, Rules of the State of Florida Office of the Auditor General:

Nothing to report

FAAST Board of Directors

Message from the Chair of the FAAST Board of Directors July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 to the Board

“On behalf of the Board of Directors and FAAST staff, I want to take this opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation for your dedicated service as a FAAST Board member.

Your volunteer service, support, and commitment to the mission of FAAST has clearly helped enhance FAAST services for individuals with disabilities, family members and many others, and for this we are truly grateful.” - Gayle E. Miller, Esq.

FAAST Board of Directors July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

Ms. Jennifer Aubrey, South Florida

Ms. Deb Blizzard, Northwest

Ms. Kathy Burton, Northwest

Dr. Mark Cerasale, Atlantic

Mr. Enrique Escallon, South Florida

Mr. Adam Gaffney, Northwest

Ms. Mable Hicks, Northwest

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Ms. Gayle Miller, South Florida

Ms. Raquel Pancho, Central

Ms. Susan Redmon, Northwest

Ms. Sarah Sequenzia, Atlantic

Ms. Shelia Sims, Gulf Coast

Ms. Lisa Taylor, Northwest

Dr. Carole Zangari, South Florida

Contact A FAAST Regional Demonstration Center

FAAST Northeast RDC

4600 Beach Boulevard

Jacksonville, FL 32207

Voice: (904) 346-5100 TDD: (904) 346-5141

FAAST Gulf Coast RDC

3600 N Pace Blvd, Pensacola, FL 32505

Voice and TDD: (850) 595-5566 or (877) 245-2457

Bay

Escambia

Okaloosa

Santa Rosa

Walton

Nassau

Duval

Flagler

St. John's

Clay

Putnam

Marion

Baker

Union

Bradford

Alachua Hamilton

Columbia Gilchrist

Levy

Suwannee Lafayette

Dixie

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Charlotte

Collier

Glades

Hendry

Lee

Miami-Dade

Monroe

Palm Beach

FAAST Central Florida RDC

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Tampa, FL 33606

Voice: (813) 844-7591 TDD: (813) 844-7767

Hardee

Citrus

DeSoto

Hernando

Highlands

Hillsborough

Lake

Manatee

Pasco

Pinellas

Polk

Sarasota

Sumter

FAAST Atlantic RDC

University of Central Florida Communication Disorders Clinic

12424 Research Parkway, Suite 155
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Orlando, FL 32826

Voice: (407) 882-0468

Volusia

Seminole

Osceola

Orange

Brevard

Indian River

Okeechobee

St. Lucie

Martin

Palm Beach

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Gulf

Holmes Washington

Bay

Jackson

Calhoun Gadsden

Liberty

Franklin

Leon

Wakulla Jefferson

Madison

Taylor