

## Transition Academy: Where opportunities arise and self-determination is encouraged

By Tammy Aumiller, Transition Academy Teacher

How is the Transition Academy different than a high school experience? Imagine a classroom that is a “home base” where students are encouraged to create their own schedule each week to include our four core areas: living/learning, vocational, transportation, and recreation/leisure. The combination of the four areas provide a well-rounded transition plan for students. The classroom is not in a typical school building; it is located in a public building where spaces are rented to a variety of businesses. There are no bells ringing to signal “what comes next;” students must rely on telling time to know when to catch the bus for work or use their cell phone reminder to indicate it is time for an appointment. There is no school nurse on site so students must learn what to do if they do not feel well or get hurt.

The Transition Academy in Laramie, Wyoming is a community-based transition program for young adults (18–21) who are working on a certificate of completion in Albany County Schools. It is intended to be the bridge between the dependency of high school programs and the independence of adulthood. The program is individualized based on student ability, needs, interests, and skills. The Transition Academy, established in 2009, was created for students to have a more realistic transition to post high school life.

To create meaningful experiences for students, transition planning must focus on skill building and be linked to necessary adult services. Families, adult service providers, and community members must participate in meaningful partnerships to provide a network of appropriate services. The Transition Academy collaborates with community agencies to provide classes and vocational experiences.



Transition Academy students Luke Stimson and Faith Hall use technology in the classroom to organize their assignments, schedules, and their job sites.

Our vocational component consists of a variety of opportunities including tours, job shadowing, mock interviews, volunteering, and competitive employment. Vocational Rehabilitation also assists with student work experience and employment possibilities.

Along the transition planning journey I have learned that if there is a need, ask a community agency. Every time the agencies have been willing to collaborate and to create opportunities to work with the students. When the Transition Academy was started the community focus was employment and vocational opportunities. At the end of

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# Letter from the director



I am often struck by how quickly we are issuing the next edition of WATR Waves and impressed with the WATR program accomplishments in

between editions. WATR helps you open doors to employment, general education, independent living, and rehabilitation.

The Assistive Technology Act, the legislation that provides for the WATR program, states that assistive technology can help people with disabilities *to have greater control over their lives; participate in and contribute to activities in their homes, schools and work environments; interact to a greater extent with people who do not have disabilities; and otherwise benefit from opportunities that are taken for granted by people without disabilities.* It also requires us to address transitions (P.L. 102-218, 29 USC 2201).

Based upon the guidance from our advisory council members, WATR is focusing many of our 2015 efforts on transition. This means that you will see transitions for education, employment, and independence featured in our public awareness, training, and device demonstration activities.

I am proud of our accomplishments. I am especially proud of the relationships we have built with you and people with disabilities throughout the state. I encourage you to read through this edition of *Waves* and take advantage of the tremendous resources offered to you by the WATR program.

—Sandy Root-Elledge

## Transition Academy Continued from page 1

the first year I could see my students needed to be safe with strangers and relationships. My staff and I contemplated how to meet this need and decided to ask our local Public Health staff. That fall we piloted a curriculum titled HEARTS (Health Education About Relationships, Trust, and Sexuality.) Other community partnerships include: public transportation, Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation, Cent\$ible Nutrition, and the University of Wyoming Art Museum (to name a few, as we have had a great number of community resources available). As the program has grown and evolved I have seen the need to expand our community involvement and partnerships. I hope to continue to add new community opportunities each year and would like to add a music component for my students.

The students need guidance in their opportunities to become independent and contributing members to the community. Developing self-determination and advocacy skills among youth creates a more positive quality of life. To encourage independence, students work on problem solving and decision-making skills. They learn about their IEP and lead their IEP meetings. Students are responsible for assessing their goals on a weekly basis and reviewing goals with their teacher each quarter. Students grow and are proud when they are taught about their rights and encouraged to use self-determination.

In order for students to be prepared and independent they must be familiar and comfortable with assistive technology. Technology is a part of our ever changing, fast-paced life, and utilizing assistive technology can provide an increase in opportunities for students' communication, education, and meaningful employment. Technology is embedded throughout the learning environment. Some students use technology at their job sites while others use technology for communication. When using technology and choosing something to fit the needs of my students I often ask, "is this something the student would/could use independently when they complete school?" If the answer is yes then it is an appropriate device to teach in order for the student to be successful in their post school life. Some examples of the assistive technology I have used with my students include: Kurzweil (a speech to text software program), Writing with Symbols, and iPad apps for communication (Proloquo2go). I try to use devices that my students would naturally have and be able to use with little to no support. Since almost everyone has a cell phone, it is one of my favorite technology tools. One can use it for reminders, creating a schedule, or utilizing the calendar for important events. Technology can really enhance the educational experience for a student and help them to be a part of their transition planning process.

Too often when we hear the word transition many feel panicked, overwhelmed, and scared. If the right transition program is embraced and individualized, then students and families will have a meaningful experience. The key to transitioning students with different abilities is to provide them with knowledge and skills that can be used to live as independently as possible.



## Success spotlight

### WATR helps Torrington student communicate with AAC

By Darcy Regan, M.A., CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist, Wyoming Institute for Disabilities

Amelia Winter, 5-years old, from Torrington, Wyoming was the recent recipient of the *Small Steps in Speech Awards Foundation's* \$5,000 grant to purchase a Nova Chat 8 speech-generating device (SGD). Nova Chat 8 is by Saltillo Corporation, a leading manufacturer of augmentative alternative communication (AAC) devices.

Amelia is a student at Torrington Learning Center Preschool in Torrington, Wyoming who has Prader-Willi Syndrome, which makes speaking extremely difficult. Amelia and her family, along with her speech-language pathologist (SLP), Joyce Evans, traveled to Laramie for an AAC assessment by WATR SLP Darcy Regan. As a result of the assessment, Regan recommended the Nova Chat 8 communication device to best fit Amelia's needs. However, Amelia's family insurance would not cover the funding for the device. Then Regan came across the program called *Small Steps in Speech*.

*Small Steps in Speech* is a non-profit foundation created in memory and in honor of Staff Sargent Marc J. Small who was killed in action in February of 2009 while serving his country in Afghanistan. *Small Steps in Speech* supports individual children with speech and language disorders by providing funding for therapies and treatments, as well as grants to charitable organizations who serve children with communicative disorders.

Amelia's mother, Ashley Winter, has been overwhelmed by the generosity of *Small Steps in Speech* and the assistance of WATR in acquiring the AAC device. "Oh my gosh!" Winter said, "I am so excited because I want to be able to understand Amelia so much more! We haven't had something like this happen to our family before!"

The Nova Chat 8 communication device contains a robust language vocabulary that will grow with Amelia as her speech/language skills develop. The device will be used to teach Amelia pre-reading and writing skills that will better prepare her for entering Kindergarten in 2016. Amelia's SLP, Evans, attended a Saltillo training to learn more about Nova Chat 8 to support Amelia.

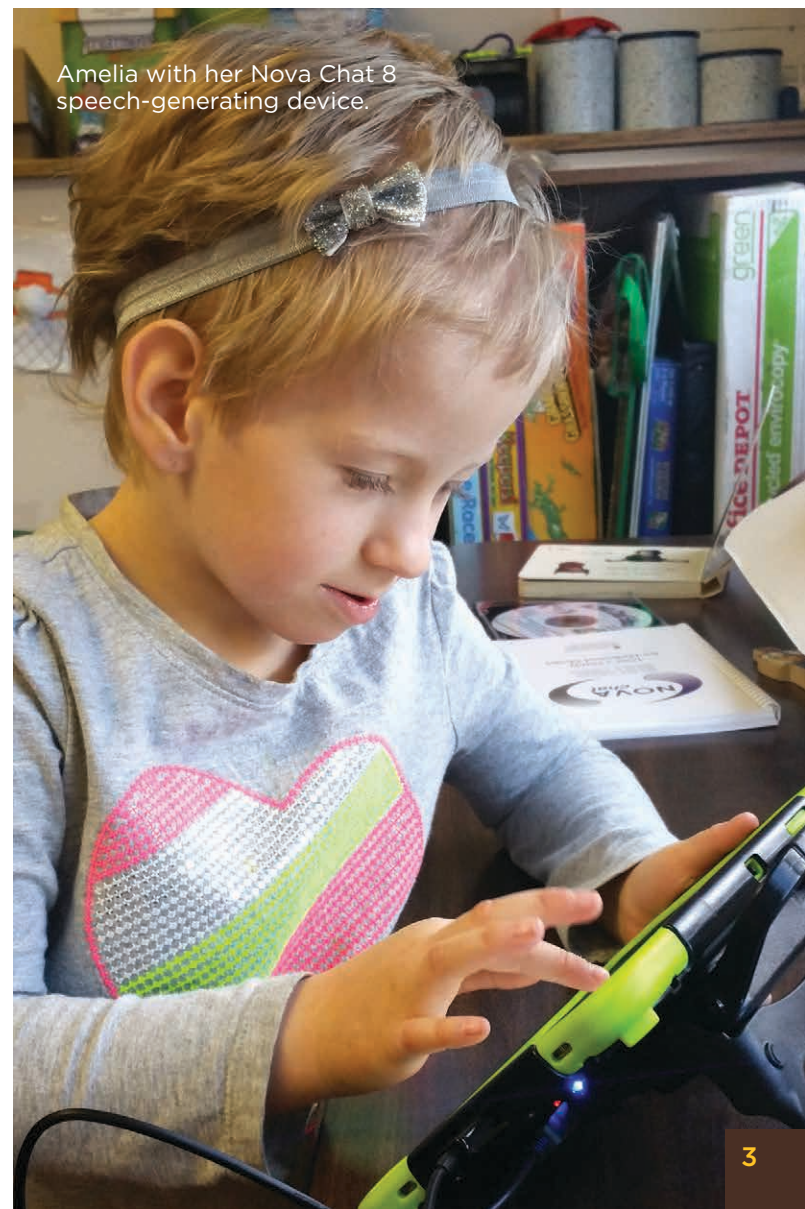
After attending a training by Jean Walsh, Saltillo Consultant, during WATR's Open Lab, Evans stated: "Thanks for the training—it really got me excited for this experience."

Since receiving the Nova Chat 8 communication device, Evans commented, "Amelia is already able to say words and answer questions using her device, and she only

started today! She was also able to relate information about the curricular topic in her classroom using her new device. The great thing is that she is verbalizing with the device, which is giving her good speech practice.

Our future goals are to allow her to independently communicate just like her peers. While we have a long way to go, we are sure that being understood by her classmates will encourage good social development. The literacy component on the device is going to give her a head start on reading and relating the written word to verbal communication."

For more information about the *Small Steps in Speech* grant visit [www.smallstepsinspeech.org](http://www.smallstepsinspeech.org). For more information on Saltillo visit: [www.salttillo.com/products](http://www.salttillo.com/products).



Amelia with her Nova Chat 8 speech-generating device.



## Book review

### ***Inclusive Technologies: Tools for Helping Diverse Learners Achieve Academic Success***

By Barbara Locke, WATR Assistive Technology Professional

*Inclusive Technologies: Tools for Helping Diverse Learners Achieve Academic Success* (2013) by Dave L. Edyburn is an e-textbook that discusses how technology, including specialized technology for “struggling learners,” can move all students successfully through the education system. The author argues that the current state of the education system, one that waits for a student to fail before “performance supports” are introduced, is the initial recipe for continued academic failure.

The e-textbook format was a fascinating AND engaging medium to present this research-based information. The book provided many topic enhancements such as direct links to YouTube videos and hot links to examples of tools that are discussed in each of the book’s ten chapters. One of the nicest examples of the interactive features is the use of pre- and post-quizzes for each chapter that are scored immediately and includes feedback about where to find information related to each question within the text of the chapter! Talk about reading for a purpose and immediate feedback loops!

*Inclusive Technologies* is such a wonderful example of universal design for learning. The book provides options for differential highlighting; the highlighted notes are automatically transferred to a “notes” sidebar that can

be viewed from any page. The notes in the sidebar are organized by chapter, to keep the reader’s reference right on track. PLUS, one touch of the arrow next to each notation takes the reader right to the text found in the body of the book. AWESOME! Text can be zoomed using the simple pinch motion on the iPad surface. Word definitions are immediately available by holding a finger on the word for a second, so comprehension of the topic being presented is not a mystery to a reader who may otherwise have had to leave the textbook and try to open another app. Although the textbook is not voice-over ready, that feature is available to any reader using the accessibility features of the iPad itself. Finally, the book opens directly to the page that the reader was last on, but if for some reason the reader mistakenly navigates away from that page, a simple touch of the “list” icon at the bottom left of each page will take the reader to the Table of Contents, where the section last read is highlighted.

*Inclusive Technologies* not only provides current information about the types and uses of technology for all learners, it offers an abundance of useful resources for all readers. Individuals who are looking for a one-stop resource of how specialized technology can be implemented for people with whom they work or teach, this book is WELL worth the read!

## WATR reading list recommendations

By Felicia Arce, Assistive Technology Program Specialist

### **Academic/non-fiction**

***The Practical (and fun) Guide to Assistive Technology in Public Schools* by Christopher R. Bugaj and Sally Norton-Darr**

The book focuses on establishing procedures, improving, and expanding your assistive technology team. Both educators and administrators new to AT will find this book’s step-by-step layout and strategies very handy.

***A Disability History of the United States* by Kim E. Nielsen**

This book uses primary-source documents and social histories to tell pre-1492 to present American history with people with disabilities at the center. Nielsen

shows how concepts of disability shaped the American experience of immigration, laws, and discrimination.

### **Fiction novels**

***The Story of Beautiful Girl* by Rachel Simon**

A story about Linnie, a young pregnant woman with a developmental disability, and Homan, a deaf man, who are in love and run away from the School for the Incurable and Feeble-minded. The couple seeks refuge with Martha, a retired schoolteacher.

***Good Kings Bad Kings* by Susan Nussbaum**

This novel tells a story through the eyes of seven characters, either patients or employees of an institution for juvenile adolescents with disabilities in Chicago’s South Side.



# Featured Staff: Felicia Arce

By Brittany Mohler, WIND Information Services Intern

Felicia Arce, M.Ed., recently joined the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) team as an assistive technology program specialist for Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) and Wyoming Educational



Materials Clearinghouse (WY AEM). In this role Felicia demonstrates, trains, and provides recommendations to individuals with disabilities and educators about assistive technology. Her favorite parts about working with WATR are the inclusive co-workers and the opportunity to learn more about assistive technology in classes and from her colleagues.

In the past, Felicia worked in leadership development and access to education in cultural centers to help prepare at-risk high school students for college.

In Felicia's spare time she loves to travel, going to Europe at least twice a year. She travels most often to Poland and Prague. Felicia is also an accomplished leatherworker and bead worker. Additionally, she likes technology and does some coding. One of the coolest things Felicia has done is give a presentation at the University of Poland, in Warsaw, about how college students' use of social media correlates to their participation in school.

Felicia recently moved to Laramie from Portland, Oregon. She really loves living in Laramie, declaring, "Any day that it isn't raining, is a beautiful day."

## WATR reutilization (gently-used)

### Franklin Language Master Special Edition, \$100

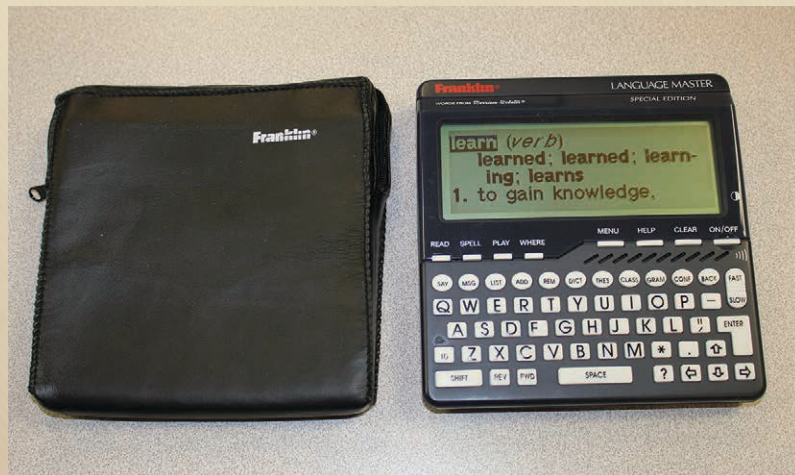
The speaking Franklin Language Master is a solution for individuals who are blind or have visual or speech impairments, learning disabilities, or dyslexia to use at school or work as a dictionary. It offers full speech controls for reading screens or speaking individual words at the speed you choose. The speaking dictionary phonetically spell corrects over 130,000 words and includes aural cues to guide you through every screen. This device comes with a black protection case.

WATR originally purchased the Franklin Language Master for use in the device loan program. All sale profits from device reutilization allow WATR to buy, update, and maintain new devices.

For any additional information regarding this device, contact WATR Project Coordinator Wendy Alameda by calling (307) 766-6187 or by E-mail via [watr@uwyo.edu](mailto:watr@uwyo.edu).

Check out what other assistive technology devices are available for loan or reutilization on Wyoming AT4ALL [www.wy.at4all.com](http://www.wy.at4all.com).

*All sales are final. Any future device repair or replacement costs are the sole responsibility of the buyer and will need to correspond directly with the manufacturer.*





# Selecting an app to foster school, employment, or life transitions.

By Felicia Arce, Assistive Technology Program Specialist

With the growing amount of apps, it has become more and more difficult to select the apps for an iPad or other devices. From organizational apps to support daily living, to educational apps to support reading comprehension, apps can be a great way to prepare and support the transition for students entering different levels of education, people entering the workforce, or someone exploring assistive technology to support their daily living. The following is research-based practices on selecting an appropriate app to help support people with disabilities. Within each step are both references from articles and questions you may find helpful in selecting an app.

## STEP 1

### Identify learning objective

- What does the app need to do?
- Is the app compatible with the individuals' assistive technology?
- Is it important for the app to be included in the individual's daily routine?

## STEP 2

### Starting the search

Start the search with main words or key words centered on what you want the app to do. For example, to look for a text-to-speech app, search "text-to-speech" or "screen reader."

## STEP 3

### Establishing standards for the app

- Is the main function of the app addressing the individuals need(s)?
- What do the reviews say?
- When was the app last updated?
- Does the features and quality match the price of the app?

## STEP 4

### Identify both pros and cons

When purchasing an app for individuals, address what you want the app to do.

- Can individuals with a range of preferences and interests use the app?
- Does the app encourage the individual to be interactive?
- Are there multiple options for individuals to explore?
- Is the content of the app challenging, but not frustrating for the individual?

- Is there corrective feedback in a positive way?

## STEP 5

### Choosing an app

The final step in app selection is making the final choice. From the preceding steps, you will be able to find an app that best suits your needs by looking at its value and resources. These steps are important, but you also should consider that apps are only one form of support to an individual's education or daily living. It is also important to consider features for an individual's need for reinforcement, fine-motor ability, or reading ability (Powell, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

If you are interested in an app or a device, Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) may be able to support you through our loan and reutilization program. For more information please contact the WATR Lab at [watr@uwyo.edu](mailto:watr@uwyo.edu) or go to the website [www.wy.at4all.com](http://www.wy.at4all.com) to see the devices that are available to check out or purchase.

## LITERATURE/ REFERENCES:

More, C., & Travers, J. (2012). What's app with that? Selecting Education apps for young children with disabilities. *Young Exceptional Children*. Retrieved from <http://yec.sagepub.com/content/16/2/15.full.pdf>.

Powell, S. (2014). Choosing iPad Apps With a Purpose: Aligning Skills and Standards. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 47(1), 20-26. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1560258319?pq-origsite=summon>.

## Archived webinars

WATR has several archived webinars to support app selection such as:

- The App Factor Series: Seasons 1, 2, and 3
- APPtitude: Take the Mystery Out and Put the App In!
- Communication Apps: What's all the talk about?

View by visiting: <http://www.uwyo.edu/wind/watr/webinar/recorded.html>

# The WATR Website—For all your assistive technology needs

By Brittany Mohler, WIND Information Intern

The Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) website is a great tool to access information about assistive technology (AT). Whether you are an assistive technology guru or new to the idea all together, there is information for you on the WATR website ([www.uwyo.edu/wind/watr/](http://www.uwyo.edu/wind/watr/)).

WATR provides a variety of services, all of which can be found on the **WATR Services** navigational link. There you will find a video about the WATR Loan Center and a link to AT4ALL. There is also information on demonstrations through the WATR Lab or at Casper College. You will also find links about assessments, training, or technical assistance, as well as the Wyoming Technology Assistance Program (WYTAP), an assistive technology financial assistance program. Each section includes a direct link to the corresponding information.

One of the best features about the WATR website is the portal on the **Home** page leading to the **Wyoming AT4ALL site** ([www.wy.at4all.com/](http://www.wy.at4all.com/)). The AT4ALL portal allows you to look at all the AT devices that WATR has to offer on loan, for reutilization, or for individuals to list

items to sell. On the site you can search for items by key word or category; there is even a video tutorial about how to search for items. It is completely user friendly and a great tool to find out more about the possibility of loaning out a piece of AT before deciding if it something you are interested in purchasing for yourself or a loved one.

The WATR website is also host to a variety of publications and webinars. On the **Publication** page you will find the annual report, previous and current issues of *WATR Waves*, and *DispaTch*, WATR brochures, research publications, books, and links to WATR's *Pointing the Way* series. At the bottom of page is a form to fill out if you are interested in receiving WATR publications. All of these publications are also available in alternative formats upon request by contacting [watr@uwyo.edu](mailto:watr@uwyo.edu).

Webinars are a useful training resource for keeping up with current AT information. On the **Webinar** page is a list of instructions on how to join a webinar through Blackboard Collaborate, including information on joining using a screen reader or closed captioning. This is also where you will find information on upcoming webinars.

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## Donating to the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities Assistive Technology Program

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

### Please accept my/our gift to the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities Assistive Technology Program:

- ☐ \$100 will pay for communication device app
- ☐ \$100 will pay for one hour of assistive technology intervention for a person with a disability
- ☐ \$325 will pay for one scholarship for WIND's Foundations in Assistive Technology course
- ☐ \$750 will pay for an i-device, customized with apps for individuals' needs
- ☐ \$750 will pay for an individual with a disability to have an assistive technology assessment
- ☐ \$1,250 will pay for a full day of professional training for at least twelve professionals
- ☐ \$10,000 will pay for the purchase of a category of assistive technology devices
- ☐ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### I/we would like to make my/our gift in the form of:

**Online:** Make a payment using our secure server: [www.uwyo.edu/giveonline](http://www.uwyo.edu/giveonline)

**Phone:** Please call the UW Foundation during normal business hours: (307) 766-6300 or (888) 831-7795

**Mail:** Return this card with your donation in an envelope to the address below. Please make check payable to the University of Wyoming Foundation

Your gift is tax deductible as provided by law.

Please mail form to: University of Wyoming Foundation, 1200 E. Iverson Street, Laramie, WY 82070

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### Wyoming Institute for Disabilities

Wyoming Accessibility Center  
Dept. 4298  
1000 E. University Avenue  
Laramie, WY 82071

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## The WATR Website Continued from page 7

On the **Recorded Webinars** tab you will find an extensive list of webinars available to watch. This includes sessions on applications for tablets and computers, assistive technology for transitioning and success in college, and communication apps.

WATR is continually providing training and events for the public to learn more about reutilization and AT assessments. The **Training and Events** page is updated regularly with upcoming dates. This includes WATR Open Lab, Assistive Technology and Augmentative Alternative Communication regional assessments around

Wyoming, and many other dates you should mark on your calendar. Make sure you check the page regularly to find out about any upcoming events that may be useful to you.

The WATR website is very in depth with all its information. Please feel free to contact any of the WATR staff with any questions or come to open lab on Thursdays, 1–4:30 p.m., (located at the intersection of 9th and Clark Streets in the University of Wyoming's Health Sciences building, room 151) to find out more about services and resources.

### Wyoming Institute for Disabilities Wyoming Accessibility Center

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1000 E. University Avenue  
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Toll free: (888) 989-9463  
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