

Research Highlights

Topic: Technology Use

Wehmeyer, M. (1998). National survey of the use of assistive technology by adults with mental retardation. *Mental Retardation*, 36, 44-51.

BOTTOM LINE

A survey completed by 1,218 family members of people with mental retardation from 47 states and the District of Columbia concluded that availability and cost were the primary barriers to the use of assistive technology for this population. Assistive technology offers a promising means to accommodate people with intellectual disabilities to overcome barriers to independence and self-determination. However, such devices are underutilized by people with intellectual disabilities.

TIPS

- Explore the use of assistive technology for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Request information from services coordinators and local, state, and national agencies.
- Think about what type of technology may be helpful for an individual's work, living, or recreational settings.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Assistive Technology Use Survey, developed by project staff and piloted by 250 members of The Arc, addressed five functional areas of assistive technology: Mobility, hearing and vision, communication, home adaptation and access, environmental control, and independent living. The issue of personal computer usage was also addressed.
- The wheelchair was the most frequently identified mobility device; hearing aids were identified most often for hearing and vision.

KEY FINDINGS cont.

- Computers were owned by 33% of the sample, with 56 people buying these specifically for the family member with disabilities.
- In four of the five areas of investigation (see method for listing), less than 10% of the sample used a device. For mobility, 13% used assistive devices.

METHOD

- The sample of 1,218 family members or other adults replied with a specific person with mental retardation in mind. These people with intellectual disabilities were between the ages of 20 to 80 years, with a mean age of 35.65 years.
- The targeted people with disabilities lived at home (686 people) or elsewhere (518 people, with 287 of these people lived in a group home).

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Datillo, J. (1987). Computerized assessment of leisure preferences: A replication. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 22, 128-133.
- Ralon, R.E., Favell, J.E., & Philips, J.F. (1989). Adapted leisure materials vs. standard leisure materials: Evaluating several aspects of programming for persons who are profoundly handicapped. *Education and Training Mental Retardation*, 24, 168-177.
- Parette, H.P. (1991). The importance of technology in the education and training of persons with mental retardation. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 26, 165-178.
- Wehmeyer, M. (1995). The use of assistive technology by people with mental retardation and barriers to this outcome: A pilot study. *Technology and Disability*, 4, 195-204.

This research was funded by a grant awarded to Dr. Michael Wehmeyer from The Arc's National Research Committee, Mary Ann Romski, Chair. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: Beachcenter@ku.edu. Website: www.beachcenter.org.

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