

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Self-Determination

Wehmeyer, M. L., & Metzler, C. (1995). How self-determined are people with mental retardation? The National Consumer Survey. *Mental Retardation*, 33, 111-119.

### BOTTOM LINE

Results from a nationwide survey of almost 5,000 individuals with mental retardation show that individuals with mental retardation face significant limitations in their ability to exercise self-determination. Individuals with mental retardation are restricted in their opportunities to make choices about where and with whom they live. They also have little control over what activities they participate in and how often they participate in them. Individuals with mental retardation feel that being independent, integrated, and productive are important, but they see themselves as having little opportunity to engage in behaviors that lead to these outcomes.

### TIPS

- Think of the choices that might be available in anyone's home, place of work, or recreational setting. Enable and empower a person with intellectual disabilities to make a new choice each week, if possible.
- If you are a self-advocate, try making more choices and remember to consider the consequences of these choices and decisions.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Individuals with mental retardation have little opportunity to experience self-determination.
- Individuals with disabilities were more likely to be involved in choices with relatively lower importance.

## KEY FINDINGS

cont.

- Individuals with mental retardation had some opportunities to make choices or exhibit control over their lives regarding
  - ◆ what clothing they wear
  - ◆ how their room is decorated
  - ◆ how often they go shopping how often they go out to eat
- Individuals with mental retardation were least likely to have control over important areas of their life, such as
  - ◆ where they lived
  - ◆ who their roommate was
  - ◆ what kind of job they held
  - ◆ how their bills were paid
  - ◆ what medical treatment they received
  - ◆ how their bills were paid
  - ◆ what medical treatment they received
- When individuals with mental retardation are offered choices, their options are often limited.
- Individuals with mental retardation rated being independent, integrated and productive as very important, but they felt limited in their ability to engage in behaviors that led to these outcomes.

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## METHOD

- The researchers analyzed data from a survey conducted by the National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils in 1990.
- 4,544 individuals with mental retardation, or a surrogate responder, were interviewed. A surrogate responder, such as a family member, provided responses to questions when individuals with mental retardation themselves were unable to do so.

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## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Wehmeyer, M.L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). *Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Wehmeyer, M. L., & Bolding, N. (1999). Self-determination across living and working environments: A matched-samples study of adults with mental retardation. *Mental Retardation*, 37, 353-363.

Wehmeyer, M. L., & Bolding, N. (2001). Enhanced self-determination of adults with mental retardation as an outcome of moving to community-based work or living environments. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 45, 1-13.

Wehmeyer, M. L., Kelchner, K., & Richards, S. (1996). Essential characteristics of self-determined behavior of individuals with mental retardation. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 100, 632-642.

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