

Remote Support Grant

Final Report

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The Ohio State University Nisonger Center

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Background

Within the developmental disabilities and home health care industry there are significant challenges in hiring, training, and retaining qualified individuals to work as direct support professionals (DSP). This is due, in part, to historically low wages. Nationally, the annual staff turnover rates for DSPs have ranged from 38% to approximately 50% (Hetzler, 2016). The organization *Disability Matters* estimates, for example, that even at a 40% turnover rate an adult with an intellectual disability participating in both residential and day services will receive care from as many as 164 different staff over a 10-year period. From age 18 to age 65, that translates into more than 770 different staff (<https://www.dmvote.ca/priority-issues/fair-wages>).

Furthermore, the number of people in America who are likely to need long-term services and supports is projected to more than double from 12 million in 2010 to 27 million by 2050 (ANCOR, 2014; p. 1). The result is that there will not be enough qualified staff to support all these individuals needing supports. With the help of remote support technologies, staffing may be distributed to those in need of hands-on or in-person supports. People will always be a necessary resource for in-home health care. However, in addition to person-based resources, remote support services can meet a wide range of support needs, including those of people with significant health care needs. Adoption of remote support services enables provider agencies to serve more individuals without dramatically increasing staff.

Governors like Ohio's previous Governor, John Kasich, have signaled the importance of technology in the lives of people with developmental disabilities through executive orders declaring their state as "Technology First" states for people with developmental disabilities. These "technology first" executive orders establish the expectation that all stakeholders consider technology supports as a first option to supporting people with developmental disabilities towards attaining their life goals.

“For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible” (IBM, 1991; p. 2). That statement made almost 30 years ago is ever so true today. Increasingly, technology is used to support people with disabilities, specifically people with developmental disabilities (DD), in their homes and in the community.

Between the 88 Counties and their associated Boards of Developmental Disabilities or Councils of Governments (COGs) remote support is and has been approached from many different angles. In June of 2018, we released a Request for Proposals for County Boards of Developmental Disabilities (CBDD) and COGs to receive funding for projects that sought to expand remote support in local regions throughout the state. Proposed activities varied based on what would be helpful within their county or counties within Ohio. Some proposals included a deliverable to create a demonstration area and others included paying people to be remote support ambassadors and taking interested parties on tours of their homes.

In all, 17 applications were submitted but the available grant funds only permitted the funding of the top eight applications. The grant proposals were each reviewed and scored by a committee of three people who evaluated each application using the scoring rubric that was detailed in the Request for Proposals (RFP).

Introduction

The goals of the 2018 Remote Support Grant was to fund proposals that would extend remote support technologies and services to a greater number of Ohioans with DD. Proposals were accepted from County Boards of Developmental Disabilities that were interested in making a commitment to expand the availability of remote support services in their county. Through a previous grant with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, Nisonger Center provided funding for CBDDs or COGs to grow the use of remote support in their county and identify and develop a CBDD technology expert to assist individuals, SSAs, and provider agencies in setting up Remote Support services.

By partnering with Ohio DD Council, this project was able to support five additional \$20,000 mini-grants that aimed to increase the use of remote support services in counties across Ohio by supporting the next five highest rated grant proposals. The grants were awarded to CBDDs and/or COGs. Each grantee hired a “technology expert” to help Service and Support

Administrators enroll individuals and family members onto remote support. Each grantee implemented a plan to grow the use of remote support services in their county and in the counties with which they collaborated. Grantees included the following CBDDs and COGs:

1. Ashland and Wayne CBDD
2. Knox and Coshocton CBDD
3. Medina CBDD
4. Richland CBDD
5. Southern Ohio COG, Fayette, Highland, Jackson, Pickaway, and Ross CBDD

Remote Support Grant Questionnaire

As a part of the grant application process, grantees agreed to collect information throughout the process of their grant. The Remote Support Grant Questionnaire captured the following information/outcomes:

1. Total number of individuals using remote support services since the start of the grant (Be clear: how many additional people were enrolled on remote support as a waiver service during the grant period?)
2. What were problems that arose during the process of starting remote support?
3. Why did individuals *reject* remote support?
4. Why did individuals *adopt* remote support?
5. What questions arose?
6. Total number of outreach sessions completed
7. Total number of trainings completed

Each questionnaire is included with this final report as an attachment in DD Suite. This report uses responses from the questionnaire to answer the questions: “What worked well and what did not work well?” and “why did people adopt or reject remote support?” Commentary and analysis are based on questionnaire responses from the five grantees listed above. An abridged list of non-duplicative responses is included in the below sections. Some responses were endorsed by multiple respondents.

Responses to the Remote Support Grant Questionnaire: What worked well and what did not work well?

Approaches to remote support varies from county to county. Similarly, each grantee’s approach to remote support *expansion* varied from grantee to grantee. Below is a catalog of activities that either worked well or were barriers to program success.

- Worked well:
 - Educating staff helped them to feel confident in their knowledge and become a resource for individuals and their family members.
 - Designating someone as a county board “go-to-person” to answer questions and assist in the process of signing someone onto remote support.
 - Educating families and answering their questions:
 - Smart homes were identified as furthering this education.
 - Case examples/personal testimonies were identified as useful educational tools.
- Did not work well:
 - Remote support uptake takes time. Some grantees reported that 6 months-time was not enough to see the use of remote support increase in their county.

Responses to the Remote Support Grant Questionnaire: Analysis of why people did or did not select to enroll in remote support

When asked about what problems arose, two grantees identified both time constraints and limited interest from remote support provider agencies. One grantee was so adamant about time constraints that the respondent endorsed time/exposure to remote support services as the only reason people in their county rejected remote support services. Three grantees brought attention to safety when considering reasons why their individuals rejected the use of remote support services and two brought attention to privacy. Initial start-up time appears to be important for individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members to feel reassured about the use of technology to support themselves or a loved one. During this time a county representatives can create awareness, answer people’s questions, ease their safety and privacy concerns, and develop a vision for the benefits of remote support services.

When asked about why individuals enrolled in remote support, 100% of respondents endorsed independence as a reason why remote support services were selected. Two respondents identified increased privacy as well as more sustainability in their staffing needs – noting that

difficulty finding reliable providers played a part in individuals enrolling in remote support services.

This grant afforded counties the opportunity to start the conversation about remote support services and gain success stories in their own county. Although some grantees added a greater number of participants to remote support services than others, the most being 7 additional enrollees, each of the grantees added at least one person to remote support services.

A non-duplicative list of responses is included below. These responses were abridged from the completed Remote Support Questionnaires, which are attached in DD Suite:

1. *What were problems that arose during the process of starting remote supports?*
 - a. Adoption of remote support required more time to get started than anticipated.
 - b. Combatting stigmas about remote support:
 - i. Remote support is meant to “replace” support providers.
 - ii. Cost savings are the primary motivation for remote support promotion.
 - iii. Cameras are always used.
 - c. Rural counties needed some basic education about technology.
 - d. Ensuring that all appropriate accessories met the need.
 - e. Training was sometimes inadequate.
 - f. Newer Remote Support Vendor did not understand Assistive Technology spending limits.
 - g. Remote Support provider were unavailable to provide backup services.
 - h. Disinterest from individuals and their family members.
 - i. Getting appropriate funding for remote support.
2. *Why did individuals reject remote support?*
 - a. Some individuals and guardians were not receptive to the idea of remote support because they feared the individual’s safety would be at risk without a DSP.
 - b. Some who did not adopt remote support need more time for exposure to the service and its benefits.
 - c. Privacy concerns.
 - d. Unanswered questions/concerns.

- e. Some were more comfortable with the constant physical presence of staff.
 - f. Difficulties affording remote support.
3. *Why did individuals adopt remote support?*
- a. Greater independence/increased time without the physical presence of staffing.
 - b. Sustainable staffing needs (Due to provider shortages or changes in provider).
 - c. Interest in and comfort with technology use.
 - d. Increased privacy.
 - e. Better quality of life.

Grantee Comments

Remote support grantees provided the following comments as a part of their final report or questionnaire.

Coshocton and Knox CBDD

“Overall the Remote Support and Assistive Technology grant has been a great success in both Coshocton and Knox Counties. We are appreciative to the Nisonger Center/DD Council for the funding that allowed us to establish a Technology Navigator, employ several Remote Support Ambassadors, create several marketing videos highlighting Remote Supports/AT (which included individuals receiving services both in front of the camera and in the behind-camera production), have more than 18 various educational presentations, take almost 30 individuals/family members to the Disability Cacocon Tech Festival in Columbus for first hand experiences, establish a technology model home and creating technology lending libraries in both Coshocton and Knox Counties. All of these events have helped our staff concentrate and learn about Remote Supports and Assistive Technologies in ways not previously possible. We have been able to partner with multiple Remote Support Vendors and the ARC for presentations, information and work on our model home. We have had individuals who had never heard of remote supports 6 months ago, learn about them, research them and are now utilizing remote supports with success... Even though it has been a busy six months working on this grant, it has successfully made remote support and assistive technologies a part of our ongoing service delivery culture. More providers and teams are having genuine "technology first" conversations on a regular basis. We are seeing individuals be more independent than ever before and are more in control of their own services

and outcomes. Thank you for the experiences, education, conversations and resources that were made possible by this grant.”

Medina CBDD

“In a six month time period, MCBDD has five individuals who receive Remote Support services. In April, MCBDD hosted a multi-county seminar on Remote Supports. Training and demonstrations are now in place, and it is highly probable that the number of individuals receiving Remote Supports will continue to increase. The Smart Home will continue to operate after the conclusion of the grant, offering training and informational sessions to families, community members, and professionals.”

Richland CBDD

We had “0” individuals using Remote Support at the start of the grant period in January 2019. We have “1” individual using Remote Support Services at the end of the grant period... She is our first success and is now receiving remote support in her home.

References

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