



International Journal of Intellectual Disability

E-ISSN: 2710-3897

P-ISSN: 2710-3889

IJID 2022; 3(1): 01-02

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www.rehabilitationjournals.com

Received: 03-11-2021

Accepted: 07-12-2021

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Use of assistive devices for persons with sensory disabilities (Hearing impairment & visual impairment)

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Abstract

When children with disabilities are given opportunities to flourish as any other children, they have the potential to lead fulfilling lives and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic vitality of their communities. Yet surviving and thriving can be especially difficult for children with disabilities. All too often they are isolate and excluded, cut off from health, education and social services, and with limited opportunities to participate in family and community life. This frequently impacts on their future employment opportunities and participation in civic life.

One of the most important requirements for children with disabilities to flourish in their access to assistive technology. For many children, assistive technology represents the difference between enjoying their rights and being deprived of them. Assistive technology includes products and related services that improve the functioning of children with disabilities. It can be instrumental for children's development and health, as well as for participation in various facts of life. These include communication, mobility, self-care, household tasks, family relationships, education and engagement in play and recreation. Assistive technology can enhance the quality of life of both children and their families. Assistive technology supports children to access and enjoy their rights and participation in things they value and its bridges the disparities between children with and without disabilities.

Keywords: Assistive devices, hearing impairment, visual impairment

Introduction

All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents acc. to (John f Kennedy)

Assistive technology is used as an umbrella term for both assistive products and related services. Assistive products are also known as assistive devices.

There are various definitions of assistive technology. Two of them are presented here. The international classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF) defines assistive products and technology as any product, instrument, equipment or technology adapted or specially designed for improving the functioning of a person with a disability. The international organization for standardization- defines assistive products more broadly as any product, especially produced or generally available, that is used by or for persons with disability: for participation; to protect, support, train, measures or substitute for body functions/structures and activities; or to prevent impairments, activity limitations or participation restrictions. This includes devices, equipment, instruments and software by facilitating the participation and inclusion of children with disabilities in all aspects of life, assistive technology can impact on self-image, self-esteem, and sense of self-worth. In a study in Bangladesh, the use of assistive technology was associated with better attitudes from community members. Given opportunities to flourish as others might, children with disabilities have the potential to lead fulfilling lives and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic vitality of their communities.

Examples of assistive technology

- **Mobility:** Walking stick, crutch, walking frame, wheel chair, artificial leg or hand, supportive seat, standing frame.
- **Vision:** Eyeglasses, magnifier, magnifier software for computer white cane, GPS – based navigation device. Braille systems for reading and writing, screen reader for computer, talking book player, audio recorder and player braille chess, balls.

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- **Hearing:** Headphone, hearing aid amplified telephone, hearing loop. Hearing aids to help people hear or hear more clearly.
- **Communication:** Communication cards with texts, communication board with letters, symbols or pictures electronic communication devices with recorded or synthetic speech.
- **Mobility aids:** Such as wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, crutches, prosthetic devices and orthotic devices.
- **Cognitive aids:** Including computer or electrical assistive devices, to help people with memory, attention or other challenges in their thinking skills.
- **Tools:** Such as automatic page turners, book holders and adapted pencil grips to help learners with disabilities participate in education activities.
- **Physical modifications:** In the built environment, including ramps, grab bars, and wider doorways to enable access to buildings, businesses and workplaces.
- **Devices and features:** Of devices to help perform tasks such as cooking, dressing, and grooming; specialized handles and grips devices that extend reach, and lights on telephones and doorbells are a few examples.

Assistive, adaptive and rehabilitative devices for people with disabilities or the elderly population. People who have disabilities often have difficulty performing activities of daily living (ADLs) independently, or even with assistance. ADLs are self-care activities that include toileting, mobility, eating, bathing, dressing, ability to perform ADLs. Assistive technology and devices promotes greater independence by enabling people to perform tasks they were formerly unable to accomplish, or had great difficulty accomplishing, by providing enhancements to, or changing methods of interacting with, the technology needed to accomplish such tasks. For example, wheelchair provide independent mobility for those who cannot walk, while assistive eating devices can enable people who cannot feed themselves to do so. Due to assistive devices and technology, people with disabilities have an opportunities of a more positive and easygoing lifestyle, with an increase in “social participation”, “security and control”, and a greater chance to reduce institutional costs without significantly increasing household expenses.

Conclusions

Assistive products and technologies hold promise for partially or completely mitigating the impacts of impairments and enhancing work participation when appropriate products and technologies are available, when they are properly prescribed and fitted, when the user receives proper training in their use and appropriate follow-up, and when societal and environmental barriers and limited.

When matching individuals with appropriate assistive products and technologies, it is important to understand the complexity of factors that must be optimized to enhance function. selecting, designing, or modifying the correct devices for an individual and providing training in its use, as well as appropriate follow-up, are complex but necessary elements for maximizing function among users of assistive products and technologies.

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