

Needs, Knowledge, Barriers and Uses of AT by Persons with Cognitive Disabilities

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To ensure that persons with cognitive disabilities and their support persons use the technology, it is necessary to understand not only their needs, but also the barriers that impede their use. Ongoing input from these constituencies is crucial. The R1/R3 project is designed to: 1) assess the need for technology, current knowledge of available technology, use of technology, and barriers to its use from the perspective of people with cognitive disabilities and from their support persons; and 2) compare specific differences across the three groups (Alzheimer's disease, Developmental Disabilities, and Traumatic Brain Injury).

Approximately 36-60 individuals with developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's, and traumatic brain injury and their caregivers are participating in focus groups (two focus groups for each of these groups). In the focus groups the research participants are asked to identify needs for technology, uses of technology, and barriers to use of technology through the use of demonstrations of various technologies and the use of hypothetical scenarios. On-line surveys have also been developed for persons with cognitive disabilities and also for caregivers. These surveys will identify which technologies are being used by the different groups, how helpful these technologies are perceived to be, and what barriers exist in using them. The survey will be disseminated nationally. Preliminary results will be presented that compare the needs, use, and barriers across the three groups.