

Project Summary

**Tools for Life Assistive Technology (AT)
Services for Georgia DBHDD**

April 2017 – June 2019

Origins of the Project

In June of 2016 Carolyn Phillips, Director of Tools for Life (TFL) and Nicki Wilson Cline, the Family Support Manager for the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) began to explore a potential collaboration to test the efficacy of assistive technology (AT) as a way to address specific needs of adults with developmental disabilities. Specifically, DBHDD manages a Planning list of Georgians with Developmental Disabilities who are waiting for access to the Medicaid Waiver Program. Tools for Life, as the Tech Act Agency for the state of Georgia, serves all Georgians, all ages and all disabilities with information and guidance with regard to AT that can help them live, learn, work and recreate in the community of their choice.

As the project was originally envisioned, DBHDD Plan List Administrators and Navigators would make referrals to TFL of individuals who might benefit from AT. TFL would provide training to assist the DBHDD staff as to how to identify and refer such individuals. The original plan anticipated 325 individuals being referred.

Person Centered Approach

The project was conceptualized as taking a person centered approach. Once an individual was referred, the team at TFL would then conduct an interview to learn more about the individual and then meet with the individual at least twice with the intent to focus upon a goal and skill that was very important to them. The first visit would be to conduct an AT consult and determine a skill or goal that they wanted to work upon that AT could address. The second session was to deliver and implement the AT that would help address this goal or skill. Visits with individuals were to be conducted in their homes to provide a natural setting that would be comfortable for the individual and instructive to the team.

It was decided that this project should incorporate a research component that would measure two elements: 1) the performance changes in the individual with regard to the skill or goal, and 2) the satisfaction of the individual and family/support person as reflected in the National Core Indicators (NCI). The research team developed a survey based upon the NCI which became known as the *Foundational Measures Survey*. The paper form of the survey was available in May of 2017. The iPad app version of the survey was released for use in August of 2017.

Georgia Tech and DBHDD approved the details of a contract in April of 2017. Shortly thereafter Tools for Life launched a “referral portal” through which PLAs could refer individuals to the program. The first referrals appeared in May of 2017.

National Core Indicators Survey App

The research team was charged with measuring the quality of life and satisfaction of individuals and their families in the context of the National Core Indicators (NCI). Finding no NCI-based instrument designed specifically for sampling the perceptions and responses of individuals with developmental disabilities, the team set about to design a survey that addressed the anticipated outcomes of the project via elements of the NCI. With the help of AbleLink Technologies, a survey consisting of 35 questions was framed and an app designed to present questions with auditory and visual support and

limited text. To differentiate this instrument from the original NCI we called it the “Foundational Measures Survey”. The contents of the survey are presented in appendix A.

The app was designed to accommodate the individual participants to the greatest degree possible. If the individual could complete the survey for themselves, we sought to facilitate their use of the app. If the individual was unable to complete the survey, a paper version was provided for the care provider to complete. The survey was presented at the outset of an individual’s participation in the project and again at the end, providing a pre- and post-intervention view of the individual’s perceptions on each of the relevant foundational measures.