Using Consumer Training to Enhance Community Participation

How It Works
The Consumer Training Program gives consumers with disabilities strategies for hiring/firing and managing/training personal attendants (PAs) along with other important information. (See topics on reverse.)

The four-hour training is being conducted at Paraquad, a center for independent living in St. Louis. Participants complete a survey about their relationship and satisfaction with their PA, then they are evaluated on their skills and knowledge before and after the training.

What We’ve Learned So Far
Fourteen participants have attended one of seven pilot training sessions and completed initial and follow-up surveys about their community participation four to six weeks after the training. The results have been positive.

Consumer satisfaction with their attendants has improved along with their management skills.

In terms of knowledge, all of the PAs improved their familiarity with the early indicators of health conditions. This was true for urinary tract infection, bowel impaction and pneumonia.

The Bottom Line
We expect that people with disabilities who use a personal assistant (PA) can enhance their participation in the community by learning managerial and communication skills. This research project measures the effectiveness of a new Consumer Training Program designed to fill this need.

Overall Consumer Satisfaction with Personal Attendant

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<tr>
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<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to training</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>After training</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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Improvement in Consumer-Attendant Relationship After Training

- Conflict resolution
- Work characteristics of PA
- Communication on tasks
- PA completes task as instructed
- Other
Information Sharing

In a social connectivity activity, participants in the training identify places in the community that they visit and discuss which places are accessible and receptive to people with disabilities. Information is also provided about local support groups and resources that could enhance community participation, such as Paraquad’s Assistive Technology Reutilization Program and its exercise program.

Consumers in the training learn about Paraquad’s exercise program and tour its Enabling Mobility Center, shown above.