THE GOLISANO CENTER FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

The Arc Chemung-Schuyler New York

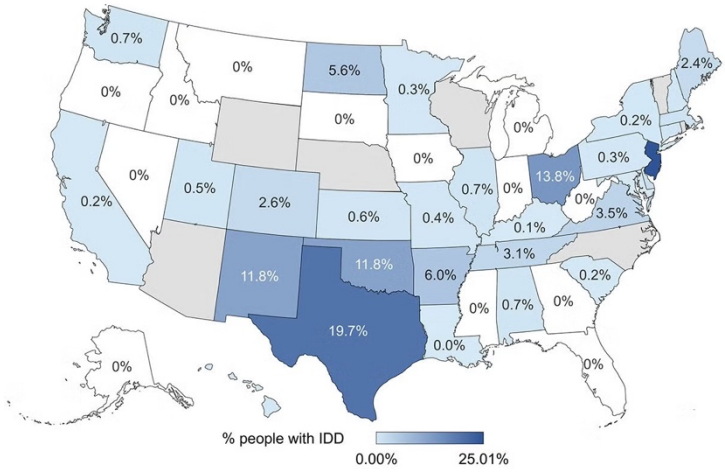
A Case for Assistive Technology Services for People with Developmental Disabilities in Western New York and the Finger Lakes Region



The need for Assistive Technology for people with intellectual disabilities

"The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access" was written by The University of Colorado Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities in 2013.[1] This declaration became known as the Technology Bill of Rights for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Its arguments hold true today that in this age of equity, access, and inclusion, persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are not given adequate treatment in their ability to access and be supported by technology. This issue has been so prevalent in the field of developmental disabilities that a report by the Commission on Quality Leadership (CQL), which issues long-standing certification benchmarks of quality developmental disability services, projected that in FY2021 less than 3% of people with an intellectual disability with a Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid waiver would receive assistive technology (AT). This study found that in New York State, which has one of the more robust HCBS service areas in the country, access to assistive technology services that year was projected to be a far lower 0.2%.[2]



Limited access to AT for people with IDD in NY

New York is one of the more robust HCBS service areas in the country, access to AT services for people with IDD was projected to be just 0.2%.

Apart from equal access and quality services, states across the country using technology have reported benefits beyond equal access. For instance, in Ohio, where access exceeds 13% usage, members of The Ohio State University's Nisonger Center, including Dr. Marc Tassé and Jordan Wagner, collaborated with other developmental disability and technology experts to highlight that remote support technology (also called Home Enabling Support Technology) can be used to address the growing workforce crisis for adequate caregivers in the field. The collaborative Nisonger paper[3] reported that in 2011, 12 million people needed IDD services, and projected that by 2050 the number would climb by 125% to 27 million people.

If the field of IDD does not undertake a dramatic shift in the way it delivers services, the workforce shortage could easily grow greater with each passing year. The consequences would result in longer waiting lists for services, increased instances of unreported abuse and neglect, and persons with intellectual disabilities and behavioral support needs, such as persons with Level III Autism, being abandoned in hospitals and other institutions.

The systemic issues that result from slow adoption of remote support technology for persons with intellectual disabilities include:

1. Lack of caregiver competency in the use of technology
2. Confusion around funding sources
3. Dignity of risk issues that reduce opportunities for self-determination
4. Lack of family education on existing circles of support
5. Lack of awareness about how assistive technology can support individuals; and AT tools that are available to help.

The Arc Chemung-Schuyler's response — the new Golisano Center for Assistive Technology

The Arc Chemung-Schuyler (Arc CS) will address these issues through its Golisano Center for Assistive Technology. The new Center builds on The Arc's 10-year history in the AT field, and takes a proactive and systemic approach to advancing the use of technology for people with intellectual disabilities. Assistive technology complements The Arc's service delivery model of self-directed programming. Both are designed to increase functionality, independence, employment and community living for people with disabilities. The Golisano Center for Assistive Technology supports this vision and implements the vision of its major benefactor, entrepreneur, philanthropist and civic leader Mr. Tom Golisano, by creating a program that improves quality services and seeks to make services more sustainable for persons with developmental disabilities.



AT complements self-direction
AT combined with self-directed programming increases functionality, independence, employment and community living for people with disabilities.

This center is unique to the IDD field in many ways

The Golisano Assistive Technology Center is specialized for persons with developmental disabilities, which will assist key technology advocates, the state of New York and academic institutions to:

- Advance the number of people with IDD using technology
- Expand the body of knowledge designed to improve independence, employment, and address the workforce crisis, an issue which has long been neglected.

What sets this Center apart from others, is that our model is offered within the context of an entire agency seeking to align with two vital state initiatives:

- **New York's Employment First:** makes competitive, integrated employment the first and preferred outcome for persons in NY with disabilities, prioritizing real jobs at fair wages in community workplaces.[4]

- **New York's newly proposed Assistive Technology Innovation Center:** that will advance research and development of assistive technologies that support people with disabilities to live and work more independently.[5]

Other benefits of the Golisano Center include:

- Integration of Remote Support Technology, known also as Home Enabling Supports, into all aspects of the service delivery system providing much needed digital literacy to caregivers and Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)
- Offering technology assessments, education and training to the person served
- Providing an AT Lending Library that allows individuals to "try technology before they buy it" to ensure the right tools are being utilized
- Navigating funding streams for families
- Working with state and legislative partners to reduce policy barriers which impede technology usage
- Working within the structure of the existing circle of support which covers aspects of rights and risk management activities

A new way to deliver service — coordinates the delivery of Home Enabling Support Technology (also known as Remote Support Technology)

In 2025, The Arc Chemung-Schuyler became the first Home Enabling Support Provider in the OPWDD Region 1 section of New York State. This means that The Arc will be the first to introduce this type of technology to persons with developmental disabilities in our region, through the HCBS waiver.

This type of service needs to be defined for what it is and what it is not. Remote Support Technology is a tailored solution of systems which are guided by the user and can be off the shelf devices, such as personal assistance devices like Alexa, Siri, Gemini, etc. to more sophisticated, sensor-driven technology connected to remote staff, such as Simply Home Devices. It is not a one-way camera surveillance monitoring system, which would infringe on the rights and dignity of persons with developmental disabilities.

The Nisonger Center Paper suggests the use of remote support to reduce the need for in-home caregiving. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a **34% increase in demand for home-based services**, which far exceeds the capacity of the caregiving pool. Remote Support Technology will help to address the workforce crisis.



A 34% increase in demand for home-based services
This projected increase will far exceed the capacity of the caregiving pool. Remote Support Technology will address this workforce crisis.

Referrals to the Center for remote support services will come from the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and be coordinated with the person's care coordinator. In New York State, funding for this service will most likely be approved by HCBS waiver or self-directed services. Once authorized, The Center's Nationally Certified Enabling Technology Integration Specialist will perform an assessment and use the Center to introduce the person with IDD to one of several remote support providers/vendors eligible to offer services. These vendors will implement devices in the specified location. The Golisano Center will ensure quality and utilization of the services through satisfaction surveys and follow-up meetings with the person's circle of support.

Provider-driven remote support center
While The Arc is currently leading the implementation of remote support technology in Region 1, the current delivery system suggests that a provider-driven remote support option can supplement more challenging situations, which may not be supported by firms outside of NY. The Center seeks to work with OPWDD to consider this option in the future. This can be particularly beneficial when individualized care plans include comprehensive medical and behavioral health support needs.

A practical solution to the workforce crisis — the shortage of caregivers in the state
The Center's Home Enabling Support Services offers a critical and practical solution to the lack of caregivers. As the facilitators for the state in the use of remote support technology from companies across the country, the Arc CS acts as a workforce resource allocation center to easily implement assistive technology, simply by setting up these tools. The business solution for the workforce crisis is to establish remote support centers located outside of the state of New York, that can be deployed to our region with the support of The Arc.

Reduce the waitlist experienced by families in New York state
Remote support systems are highly regulated devices to ensure two-way communication between the person served and the remote support staff using technology to safeguard protected health information. This promotes the self-determination of the user by making it their choice to use the system or not. Most importantly, this type of service reduces the waitlist experienced by families in New York who will no longer have to wait for the supporting agency to hire additional staff to deliver services.

Cost savings
Many businesses report that the use of remote workers has a direct cost savings to their bottom line. This is a result of many factors, including reduced travel time and a reduction in office space. Additionally, telehealth services help avoid unnecessary emergency room visits. At the Arc of Chemung-Schuyler, telehealth supports are integrated into all the group homes throughout the counties we serve. These examples point to real-life solutions and the cost benefits of using remote support technology to better allocate staff resources in all types of communities, especially in rural areas.



Cost savings by reducing the:
- Wait list
- Number of caregivers
- Travel time & office space
- Unnecessary ER visits

In the IDD field as a whole, the cost-benefit analysis of using technology to reduce overall expenses in the delivery of services is much larger and more complex. The state of the state report authored by Dr. Emily Tannis along with the Administration of Community Living reports that NY spends over $12 billion dollars each year on IDD services.[6] Yet, despite being one of the largest and most expensive service delivery systems in the country, the state's use of technology lags behind other states. Direct cost-benefit analysis is challenged because there is no current technology use policy which requires accurate reporting and the analysis of data on the cost-benefit use of technology. The Golisano Center for Assistive Technology will assist with this issue by supporting research and policy analysis for this remote support delivery system.

The Center will work with the state, academia, and the provider community to help gather programmatic and financial data, once technology policies are developed. This way, advancing technology will be viewed from a dual perspective — self-direction, as well as finding solutions to better allocate resources in one of the largest IDD systems in the country.

Technology-based solutions: Focus areas

1. **Independent Living:** Remote support technology can be offered to include access to Simply Home, SafeinHome, Rest Assured and similar AT devices. The Center offers access to smart living devices such as OME smart knobs that remotely turn off stoves left on, ring doorbells for outdoor security, Medacube for medication dispensing, and off-the-shelf personal assistant devices for reminders of appointments and activities.



Independent Living

2. **Employment Access:** Devices that enhance employment is a key value that comes from the Center's ability to align with the state's Employment First initiative. These types of AT tools will immediately benefit persons with disabilities currently working within the seven business units, that the Arc CS owns and manages. Training on virtual reality for career options, cognitive support software to prompt effective learning like Able Link systems, travel training devices and software like AbleLink Navigator are just some examples of devices to support employment. Educational assistive devices can include Live Scribe Pens, pens that record lectures for later studying, Grammarly software to promote language learning and literacy such as Kurzweil technology.



Employment Access

3. **Aging-in-place:** With the number of adults 65+ projected to rise, technology such as remote support offers specific benefits to enable aging in place for persons with IDD. Wearable fall detection devices support wellness. Technology exists to identify pressure sores in persons who are wheelchair users or bedbound. Geotracking devices can be used for persons who wander.



Aging-in-place

Benefits of Assistive Technology

Creating technology for persons with IDD under the SHIFT certification, a national training and accreditation platform, promotes the principle of self-determination. This supports the mission of The Arc Chemung-Schuyler, "To empower people with different abilities to live a life of their choice." Satisfaction and experience research on remote support conducted by The Ohio State University Nisonger Center finds that the lives of people using assistive technology are enhanced in multiple ways.

Top benefits of remote support identified by adults with disabilities and parents/guardians: [7]

- Safety was the #1 benefit cited by users of remote support
- Independence
- Access to staff upon demand
- Improved health outcomes

Safety first

"Having remote support technology is like having my own personal bodyguard." *– Adult who uses remote support, Nisonger Center survey respondent*



Benefits of remote support usage to the state:

- Reduces caregiver/DSP shortages
- Reaches all areas of the state
- Lowers the need for on-site caregivers, reducing costs

The Center offers training

The Arc Chemung-Schuyler designed the Golisano Center for Assistive Technology to address the need to improve the technology competency of the caregivers and DSPs. Technology trainings will come in the form of virtual online training (Tech Tuesdays), video libraries, mobile demonstration series, and individualized consultations. As a coordinator of various remote support providers, the center educates the entire circle of support on the nuances of technology systems, types of technology individualized to the needs of persons with developmental disabilities, and offers ongoing support to boost technology use in both traditional services like Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA), Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), Day Programs, and Vocational Services as well as self-directed services. This places the Center in a unique position to both educate the community and also be the place that monitors the cost of the service.

The Center's technology plans for each person served becomes a part of the Life Plan for that person. This gives regulatory entities such as OPWDD oversight into the impact on the person's outcome and allows ongoing education and training to occur within the person's circle of support.

The Golisano Center also plans to offer Assistive Technology and technical training to other agencies in New York. This "**Train the Trainer**" approach expands reach by turning a small group of AT experts into multipliers. New trainers then embed AT expertise into their own organization and networks over time.



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This will address one of the biggest barriers identified in policy and capacity reports — low AT awareness among frontline staff, which prevents individuals from ever hearing about the tools that could help them.

The Golisano AT Center is uniquely positioned to offer data for academic, private, and policy-making institutions

As a member of The Arc New York (NY) system, the affiliation gives the Center access to 60,000 of the 135,000 persons receiving IDD services in the state. This relationship uniquely positions the Center to offer large-scale training to make a significant impact on the data collection for research, innovation, improvements and satisfaction of services.

About The Arc Chemung-Schuyler:
Our Deep Experience in disability regulations and quality management

The Golisano Center for Assistive Technology was established by The Arc CS – a caregiving system with over 75 years of experience of delivering service to persons with disabilities. Our experience has shown that if technology is not supported by professional caregivers from the disability field, the funding system, as well as persons with IDD, it will fail and the technology will be abandoned.

The Arc CS is a self-directed agency, offering the highest levels of choice for the people we serve. This means both traditional and non-traditional services are offered through the lens of how technology can promote self-direction and independence.

The Arc CS serves many clients with both IDD and mental health issues. Technology-driven solutions and a personalized care plan that promotes independence can significantly reduce the risks that result in frequent crisis and hospital visits, lowering traumatic events as well as the high cost of hospitalizations through telehealth and the growing use of health/emotional support software such as Care Coach.

All of the technological advances at the Center are offered under the umbrella of a system that monitors risks and rights. Plans are reviewed by the agency's human rights committee to ensure the person's choice, privacy, and safety are managed.

Our Experts and Staff Certification
Several members of the Arc CS's team are nationally accredited in-Home Enabling Support and the entire agency is pursuing national SHIFT Technology certification to support this initiative. In addition, three of our leaders — Sal Garozzo, CEO; Nicole Brown, COO; and Lindsey Baranyk — have achieved Enabling Technology Leadership Certification. Raelynn Hooks, Assistive Technology Coordinator, is certified as an Enabling Technology Integration Specialist. The Arc's clinical staff, which includes Speech, Occupational, and Physical Therapists, will be offering advanced clinical AT assessments through the Center. This includes devices to enhance speech, mobility, and general healthcare.



AT Experts & Staff Certification

- Several members of the Arc CS's team are nationally accredited in-Home Enabling
- The Arc is pursuing national SHIFT Technology certification, agency-wide
- Arc leaders have achieved Enabling Technology Leadership Certification.

Our Partners
The Golisano Center is a focal point for collaboration. For several years, our team has been working closely with the following partners to research and develop our Assistive Technology Programs.

- The Ohio Technology First leaders, including The Ohio State University's Nisonger Center
- New York State's Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) Program
- The Arc New York
- Arc NY Collaborative, a group of Arc Chapters formed in the Western and Finger Lakes region
- Our Center also collaborates with private vendors who help set-up technology solutions that persons with IDD can "try out" to select devices tailored to meet their specific needs**.**

Past achievements in the AT arena in Massachusetts
Sal Garozzo MBA, MS, CRC is currently the CEO of The Arc Chemung-Schuyler. Mr. Garozzo has over 13 years of experience developing assistive technology and durable medical equipment programs for thousands of people with disabilities in Massachusetts. Mr. Garozzo is a master's level Nationally Certified Rehabilitation Counselor as well as a Nationally Certified Enabling Technology Leader. He demonstrated wide success in the AT arena in his former position as CEO of UCP of Western MA, both as a professional presenter on the uses of assistive technology as well as a social entrepreneur developing Assistive Technology programs and initiatives.

With state funding, Mr. Garozzo expanded AT programs and initiatives, which included the following programs and developments:

AT Evaluation and Training Center:
Developed a professional Evaluation and Training Center where individualized AT evaluations were provided by clinically trained staff on cognitive support, mobility, speech, and vocational solutions.

AT Center/Durable Medical Equipment (DME) with 6 Distribution Centers Statewide:
Mr. Garozzo led the Assistive Technology Regional Center for western Massachusetts as well as six (6) statewide Durable Medical Equipment Centers covering the entire State of Massachusetts.

AT Road Show:
The above Assistive Technology Regional Centers also included a unique mobile demonstration and training initiative known as the AT Roadshow. This mobile unit offered demonstrations and training on-site at various locations throughout Massachusetts including schools, office for the Aging, hospitals and various other non-profit agencies.

Remote Support Center:
Mr. Garozzo spearheaded the development of a provider-driven Remote Support Technology Center using a GrandCare system

IT Center for special care:
Garozzo developed the funding for a specialized IT Center for persons with disabilities to support the above initiatives during the COVID pandemic.

Next steps and funding
The next steps for further development of the Golisano Center for Assistive Technology include seeking partnerships with the policy groups promoting the state's use of technology. This will help the number of people with intellectual disabilities gain more access to vital assistive technology.

The Golisano Center seeks funding to set up systems for data gathering to monitor progress and track the benefits of assistive technology like health outcomes, cost savings, and waitlist reductions for the state.

Future funding will also enable the center to develop a Lending Library to offer technology loans. The library will offer free technology and equipment loans to help people determine which tools and devices best suit their needs, before purchasing the equipment. The onsite **AT Lending Library** would include a wide array of technology choices for people of all ages, with all types of conditions, to access free loans in order to "try technology before they buy it."

Funding for a new mobile demonstration, will enable The Golisano Center to bring its technology tools into the community. This includes onsite demonstrations at hospitals, residential settings, schools and workplaces. A traveling demonstration will educate key stakeholders in the region about how this technology works to help people with disabilities gain higher functionality and independence at home, in school, and at work.



Funding for an AT Lending Library
An onsite AT Lending Library would include a wide array of technology choices for people of all ages, with all types of conditions, to access free loans in order to "try technology before they buy it."

End Notes

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