

ARRM Position Paper on Technology and Disability Services

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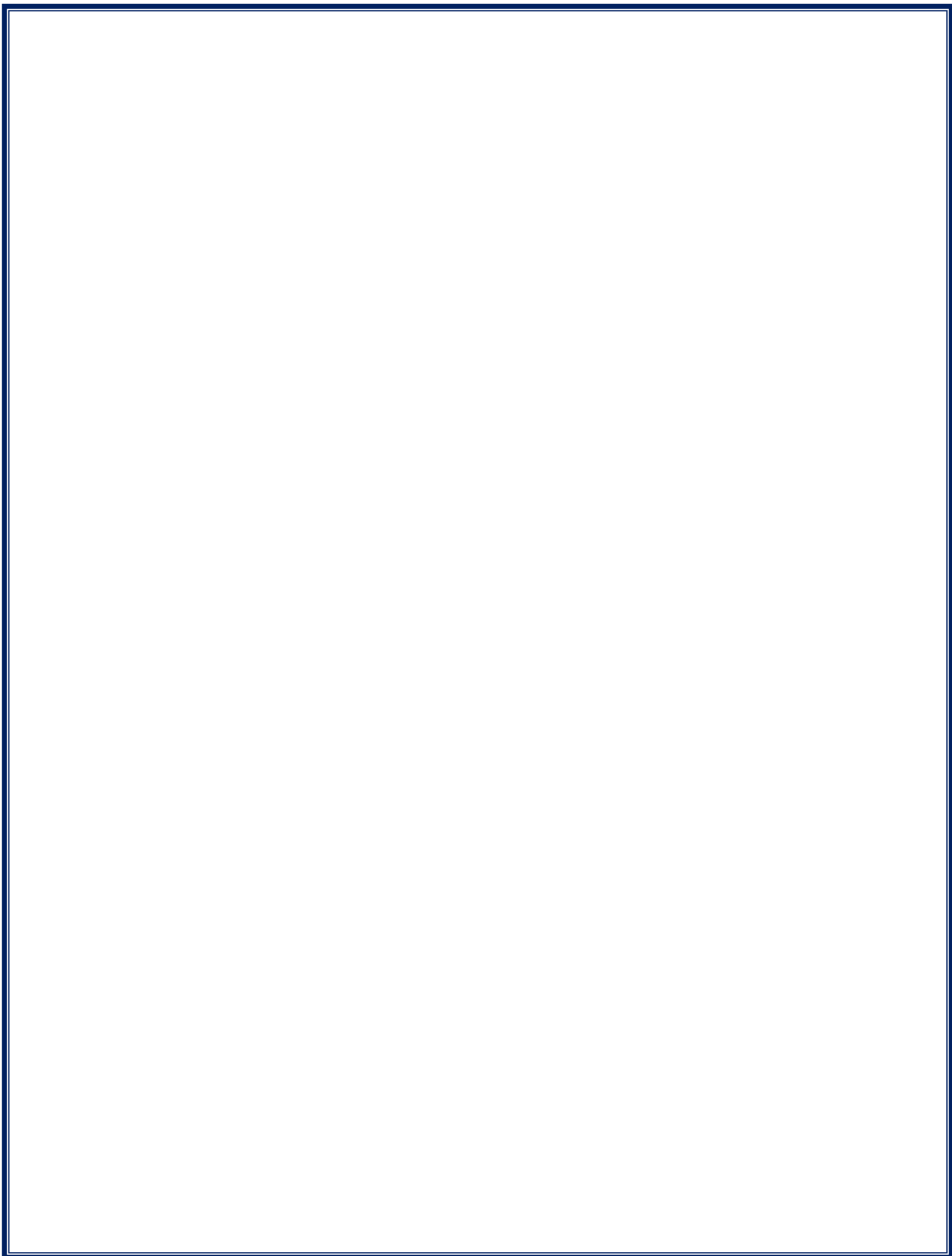
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TOPIC: Resolution for a Person-Centered Approach to the Use of Technology in Disability Services

SUBMITTED BY: ARRM

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WHEREAS, the *Olmstead Decision* guarantees a person’s right to receive services in the most integrated environment, and that technology often acts as a less intrusive alternative to on-site staffing; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Human Services (DHS) initiative *C.H.O.I.C.E.* resolves to improve service and administration; to increase access, consistency, transparency and accountability; to provide access to the right service at the right time; to provide accountability to/and improve quality; to strengthen partnerships and collaboration; to foster a shared vision and a culture of innovation; and to make person centered assessment and decision making the foundation of the service system; and

WHEREAS, the DHS initiative *Moving Home Minnesota* seeks to move people from outdated institutional settings to less restrictive environments more fully integrated into the community as a whole; and

WHEREAS, *The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access*¹, endorsed by disability advocacy groups from across the United States, calls for us to “affirm commitment to equal rights of people with cognitive disabilities to technology and information access” and for implementation of those rights with deliberate speed;” and

WHEREAS, technology is no longer a luxury promoting convenience, but, rather, has become integrated into our lives as an indispensable tool of daily living helping us, connect, find our way, organize our lives, and assist us in a multitude of essential tasks; and

WHEREAS, technology designed specifically for use by people with disabilities comes in a multitude of ever-changing forms from unobtrusive applications found on personal smart phones to educational tools to physically adaptive hardware to technologies that can assist live staff in providing a more robust layer of personal supervision; and

WHEREAS, the needs of individuals are unique and are best met with creative and equally unique solutions designed to enhance a person’s strengths and mitigate their deficiencies in the most inclusive and respectful manner as possible; and

WHEREAS, the State of Minnesota has become a leader in identifying and implementing the most innovative technologies adding value and quality of life to many Minnesotans; and

WHEREAS, in an environment of limited funding and diminishing workforce resources, technological supports allow for more effective utilization of those scarce resources to focus on those services that will have the greatest effect on a person’s quality of life; and

WHEREAS, there are geographic areas in the State of Minnesota without reliable access to broadband where people with disabilities are unable to access existing technologies dependent upon internet service that could greatly enhance their independence and quality of life and allow them to receive services in the least restrictive setting as stated in the *Olmstead Act*; therefore be it

RESOLVED, the State of Minnesota and the Department of Human Services (DHS) will encourage solutions that support people, not programs, by identifying and removing barriers that limit a person's access to all available resources that have a positive effect on their independence including current and developing technologies; and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, the State of Minnesota and the Department of Human Services will maximize and ensure the authority and rights of individuals and their support teams to decide what supervision, level of risk and amount of privacy is most appropriate through a comprehensive, person-centered informed consent process without being undermined by outside entities, rules, or oversight groups; and therefore be it further

RESOLVED, the State of Minnesota and the Department of Human Services will establish policies and processes that encourage and enable individual innovation and customization that will provide solutions that can adapt and evolve with the quickly changing pace of our lives and allows people with disabilities to use these supportive technologies in an expedient manner as these choices become available; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Department of Human Services officially endorses the policy recommendations of the Governor's Broadband Task Force to incent broadband providers to build in underserved areas, to provide mechanisms to coordinate rural broadband installation with state and federal programs assisting hospitals, schools, libraries, public safety, etc. in obtaining broadband, and to provide incentives for rural sites to collaborate together for broadband projects, telehealth, services, interoperability and information exchange.

- ¹. The Coleman Institute, *The Rights for People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access*, <http://colemaninstitute.org/declaration> (Oct. 10, 2013)

The following information is intended to support ARRM's position on the use of technology in disability services. The information is a compilation of examples of the use of technology by providers.

It is becoming more and more common to use technology to help people with a disability and/or seniors be more independent, while maintaining or improving their safety and saving money. This can involve the use of a call pendant the person can push to alert someone outside their home they need help; multiple types of technology that can identify where a person is in the home; how long they've been in bed; whether they have been eating normally and what their blood sugar level is. It can even involve the use of two way audio-video providing eyes-on supervision and availability of guidance, as needed. Most of the time we measure the success of such services by the months and/or years a person is able to live independently (i.e., alone or reduced need for on-site caregiver) without an incident or injury and preserving money, privacy and dignity.

An example of this is a gentleman whose support team was progressively more concerned about his declining mobility and possible increased seizure activity. The team decided they needed to increase his supervision. However, no one wanted him to move back to a group setting and he did not want staff in his house all the time. Sensors were installed to gather data on length of time in bed or chair, motion or lack of motion in bedroom and bath for fall detection, and a camera in the living room with two way video-audio provided during the overnight, early morning, afternoon and evening. A combination of staff in his home along with remote monitoring maximized his sense of independence and allowed him to remain in his home. By utilizing the technology the social services agency coordinating his care, estimated saving over \$25,000/year in Medical Assistance Waiver payments. It also provided better data on his activity and behavior 24 hours a day.

A provider in southwestern Minnesota currently utilizes remote monitoring in place of overnight supervision in 4 of its 18 residential homes. The remote monitoring system uses sensors, call-for-help devices, intercoms, and video conferencing to provide support to individuals from an off-site location. This technology also insures a fail-safe notification sent to a caretaker, and provides an opportunity for staff support in a remote location to help if necessary. On-call staff are just minutes away if an emergency occurs, and the remote attendant has the capability to immediately get help from the community emergency response system if needed.

Individuals living in these programs have stated that they like it, they have more independence and like when they can be alone without staff on-site. One individual has stated that he now gets to be like everyone else.

In another example, the traditional option of putting a staff person in the home for overnights was not an option for a number of reasons, including the person not wanting someone staying overnight all of the time. Options were researched and a remote monitoring system seemed to be the answer. Using remote monitoring technology has provided the opportunity for this young person to be able to have the maximum level of independence, while family and team members are assured by the very reliable safety net that is in place.

Throughout the metro area, provider's residential programs technology creates greater efficiencies, enhances security, and provides a safety net for residents who have medical concerns.

This provider serves someone who is quite independent and very active, but he suffers from occasional digestive issues that can turn serious quickly if he does not get medical attention.

About a year ago, electronic monitors were added to the home he shares with two roommates. A monitor alerts staff if he is in and out of bed frequently during the night, which could indicate a medical issue. Twice in the last several months, he was having trouble and the system notified staff who were able to come to the home and assist him to seek medical care. Although his sister was initially skeptical, now that she has seen it work she feels it has ramped up her confidence and security regarding the ability of the provider to provide quick medical attention to her brother.

At an apartment program, a sensor provides a safeguard for an individual who is at risk for falling. If the individual gets up during the night and doesn't return to bed in a reasonable amount of time, the sensor will send an alert that initiates response protocols. These devices allow people to age in place and combined with staff who monitor from off-site, create greater efficiencies.

An individual receiving services relies on a communication device as her link to the world. Because she has very limited speech, a "talker" is her primary mode of communication. Unfortunately, the communication device she used to express herself was also very heavy and cumbersome, and it made her feel self-conscious about her disability. She was able to obtain an iPad and with simple applications it could serve as her "talker". She no longer feels like she sticks out as being different from everyone else.

Recently, the Kinect system, a Microsoft gaming technology, has been used to help adults with disabilities in the Twin Cities community. Using the Kinect system, a provider has provided motion-activated training for light production at its work facility, freeing up supervisors to help other workers. This technology has the potential to help people to move from group homes into their own homes by applying Kinect for cooking tutorials, remote monitoring and, one day soon, fall/seizure detection. Right here in Minnesota, these non-profit and technology companies are collaborating on an amazing step toward providing independence that contributes to self-esteem for these individuals with disabilities.

A Wayzata-based technology firm developed new software using the Microsoft Kinect motion sensor technology along with a computer and a projector to train workers to assemble a product. The training program is interactive and repetitive.

In Minnesota, technology is being used to help people exercise their right to live more inclusively and create a support choice that fits the life they want to live.