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# RT/AT Impact

A quarterly newsletter of the Center on Effective Rehabilitation Technology service delivery

Winter 2013

## FEATURED NEWS

### Welcome to our first Newsletter

The *Center on Effective Rehabilitation Technology (CERT) service delivery* is **identifying, documenting, and analyzing models of rehabilitation and assistive technology (RT/AT) service delivery shown to be effective in promoting successful employment outcomes**. CERT is led by the [Burton Blatt Institute \(BBI\)](#) at Syracuse University and the [Institute for Matching Person and Technology \(IMPT\)](#), in collaboration with the [Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation \(CSAVR\)](#), the [Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America \(RESNA\)](#), the [National Council for Independent Living \(NCIL\)](#), and [Rehabilitation Technology Associates](#). Funded by the [National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research \(NIDRR\)](#) at the U.S. Department of Education, CERT is conducting a wide array of research activities to:

- Identify and disseminate model policies and procedures for effective RT/AT service delivery.
- Develop a quality indicators self-assessment check list for service delivery programs.
- Create a new RT/AT assessment tool and measures designed to create a better match between consumers and technology to advance employment outcomes.
- Provide technical assistance and training opportunities based on research findings.

RT/AT Impact will share information on CERT's latest activities and findings, current policy issues, related events, and notifications for all upcoming dissemination and knowledge translation events. We hope this helps in your work to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to the technology that best matches their needs, desires, and environments!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

June 20 - 24, 2013.

### RESNA 2013 General Conference

Hyatt Regency Bellevue, Bellevue, WA

[More information and registration](#)

July 23 - 27, 2013

### NCIL 2013 Annual Conference

Grand Hyatt Hotel Washington, DC

[More information and registration](#)

## LEARN MORE ABOUT CERT

[Introduction to CERT \[PowerPoint\]](#)

## TECHNOLOGY ACCESS IN THE NEWS

[Southeast ADA Technology Access Highlights](#)

## FOLLOW OUR PARTNERS

[RESNA Newsletter](#)

[NCIL Newsletter](#)

## Research Snapshots!

CERT's research activities are spread across two primary, interconnected projects. **Project 1** combines multiple methods of inquiry to identify effective service delivery policies, procedures, and practices across service providers. CERT is conducting twelve in-depth case studies of state VR agencies, non-VR based service delivery programs such as State AT Act programs and Centers for Independent Living (CILs), and employer-based programs. Crucial to this process is the identification and development of quality indicators of service delivery, including systemic supports, policies and procedures, information management, and quality assurance mechanisms. Current research is guided by extensive baseline surveys of VR agencies, State AT Act Programs, and Centers for Independent Living as well as findings from the RSA-911 dataset.

**Project 2** focuses on the development of a new validated consumer-focused expert system to improve AT decision making and reduce RT/AT non-use and poor employment outcomes. The tool will be accompanied by an interactive training program for VR counselors and an improved assessment process for VR agencies and other programs to improve RT/AT service delivery.

[Learn more details about our research activities >>](#)

## State of Practice in RT/AT service delivery through State VR Agencies

CERT conducted a survey of the current state of practice in RT/AT service delivery by State VR agencies. The survey helped to establish a baseline of current practice (services, systems, policies, practices, and outcomes as well as barriers and facilitators).

After a rigorous development process, the survey included 63 items across 11 categories: Organizational Governing Structure, Personnel, Service Delivery Policies and Practices, Assessment and Informational services, Follow-Up, Funding, Role and Degree of Consumer Involvement, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Other to tap into Innovative or Unique programs. The survey achieved an 80% response rate across the universe of 80 State VR agencies.

A major objective of the survey was to identify the important aspects of service delivery for detailed assessment and analysis through VR case studies. Key findings from the baseline survey that will be further explored through in-depth mixed methods case studies involved VR partnerships with other providers, nature and degree of consumer involvement, the process of Matching Person and Technology, service delivery to underserved populations, and VR procurement processes.

[Learn more about these findings>>](#)

## RT/AT Policy Initiatives and Updates

### SHARE YOUR NEWS

RT/AT Impact aims to promote and cultivate knowledge sharing on the current trends and best practices in improving access to and acquisition of technology that best matches a person's needs, desires, and environment. We are happy to disseminate your news and recent research findings, upcoming events, or archived dissemination products!

Send an email to

[dsraja@law.syr.edu](mailto:dsraja@law.syr.edu).

## **Assistive Technology Act Reauthorization and Funding for Alternative Financing Programs**

In 2011 NCIL lead the policy discussions with Congressional Appropriation's staff on the FY2012 Budget. NCIL worked closely with them to garner \$2.5M in new funds for the Alternative Finance Programs (AFP) across this nation. The language in the legislation states clearly that the funds go towards financing, no match required and consumer control and direction are important and allows nonprofits to apply for funds.

Eight years after the 2004 amendments, many of the state AT Programs, not including the territories, have yet to receive the \$410,000 minimum grant award authorized in the Assistive Technology Act. Many states have no AFP or have a limited program. Congress showed its support to AFP with this initial funding. In late 2012 the grant process was implemented and funds will be distributed in 2013 to multiple award recipients.

In late 2012 NCIL continued its work with Congress on the FY2013 budget through coalitions and partnerships requesting an increase in funding for the allocations of the AT Act and funding to AFP. Our proposal will not result in any reduction in the current allocation to states, but rather will allow for the full continuum of services so that people with disabilities in all 56 states and territories will have access to low-interest loans for the purchase of much-needed assistive technology devices and services. NCIL envisions a world in which people with disabilities are valued equally and participate fully.

For more information on the committee or this work, please contact Dara Baldwin, Policy Analyst at [dara@ncil.org](mailto:dara@ncil.org) or 202-207-0334.

### ***Under the Spotlight:* Showcasing a member of the CERT consortium**

#### **The National Council on Independent Living**

[The National Council on Independent Living](#) (NCIL) is the longest-running national, cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. Founded in 1982, NCIL represents thousands of organizations and individuals including: Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), individuals with disabilities, and other organizations that advocate for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States. There are currently over 700 physical locations across America actively providing Independent Living services to people with disabilities.

In our advocacy work NCIL has an Assistive Technology Committee chaired by John Nousaine of WI. The committee is actively involved in creating policy to increase the AT outreach and services for our members. The committee meets monthly and members have served in multiple ways to advance AT policy by working with members of Congress and the Administration to advance AT. You can follow the committees work through our website.

Each year NCIL holds an annual conference in the nation's capitol. The 2013 Annual Conference on Independent Living is an opportunity for new leadership, new ideas, and growth! The theme of the entire event will be regeneration, from the perspectives of all of the generations, communities, populations, and people that make the Independent Living Movement vibrant and powerful! One of the hallmarks of our Movement and organizations is peer support. We must share and learn from each other if we are to continue to organize and succeed.

The conference will be held July 23 – 27, 2013 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, DC. This is the week of the 23rd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and we will celebrate this momentous occasion. There will be meetings, the annual March on the Capitol, visits by advocates on the Hill and multiple workshops that seek to improve the skills and resources of staff to carry out the four core services of Centers for Independent Living and operate strong Statewide Independent Living Councils. For information on this contact Thea Ervin, Development Coordinator at [thea@ncil.org](mailto:thea@ncil.org). Please find all information about the conference at our website [www.ncil.org](http://www.ncil.org)

NCIL continues to be a leader in AT outreach and implementation. We look forward to our 2013 work with the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University's Center on Effective Delivery of Rehabilitation Technology (RT) by VR Agencies (CERT) program. The next year will give us an opportunity to bring some of the personal stories and passionate work done around the country to the case study work of the project. We are especially excited that the project continues to be inclusive and encompassed in the ideas and values of people with disabilities.

For more information about NCIL and our work on this program please contact Kelly Buckland, Executive Director of NCIL at [kelly@ncil.org](mailto:kelly@ncil.org) or visit our website at [www.ncil.org](http://www.ncil.org)

## Get to Know our Principal Investigators



**Peter Blanck, Ph.D., J.D.**  
**Principal Investigator**  
**University Professor, BBI**  
**Chairman**

[Learn More about Peter](#)

### **For you, what are the most exciting ways in which CERT will advance the evidence base in RT/AT service delivery?**

CERT's research activities focus on understanding how rehabilitation and assistive technology (RT/AT) service delivery can be made more effective, more person centered, and more responsive to changing needs to support the entire life cycle of employment (i.e. hiring, retention, and advancement) for a person with a disability. In addition

to core AT service providers, CERT is also studying the role of employer and corporate practices, and changing needs for RT/AT in the workplace as the employee goes through hiring, retention, and advancement.

**What critical gaps or current challenges can CERT impact through its research and dissemination activities?**

Persons with cognitive disabilities (including many subgroups of disabilities such as people with autism, TBI, intellectual and developmental disabilities, Alzheimer's disease) and psychiatric disabilities are lowest served when it comes to traditional RT/AT service delivery. CERT is working with its partners and relevant stakeholders to identify the reasons for these gaps and develop effective and innovative practices and solutions to ensure that persons with cognitive and psychosocial disabilities can fully realize and utilize the potential of RT/AT in gaining and maintaining successful employment.



**Marcia Scherer, Ph.D., M.P.H.,  
F.A.C.R.M.  
Co-Principal Investigator  
BBI Project Director**

[Learn More about Marcia](#)

**For you, what are the most exciting ways in which CERT will advance the evidence base in RT/AT service delivery?**

Abledata.com lists almost 40,000 different RT/AT products in 20 categories. With this variety, and the vast number of options available within a category, it is crucial that a system and process exist to help providers, consumers and caregivers in their selection of the personally most appropriate RT/AT. Right now, if a systematic process is used at all, it is not a standardized one. We are assessing what works best in RT/AT service delivery across three models: state VR agencies, independent living centers, and state tech act projects. We hope to identify key elements of what works to disseminate this information to all relevant stakeholders.

**What critical gaps or current challenges can CERT impact through its research and dissemination activities?**

RT/AT research has lagged behind others in proving its value. In the future, we must be able to prove RT/AT services and devices add value to the lives of its consumers in order to remain a key and viable member of the healthcare and rehabilitation teams. Our goal is to provide research evidence for what works in getting the most appropriate RT/AT to consumers.

**Michael Morris, J.D.**



**Co-Principal Investigator  
BBI Executive Director**

[Learn More about Michael](#)

**For you, what are the most exciting ways in which CERT will advance the evidence base in RT/AT service delivery?**

Beyond advancing the research knowledge base, CERT's findings and evidence could influence systemic policy and practice improvements and further policy developments in RT/AT service delivery. Policymakers at national, state and local levels are a key target audience for CERT and our research activities will help illuminate effective and innovative practices, and capacity building measures that can inform policy improvements to yield cost effective results.

**What critical gaps or current challenges can CERT impact through its research and dissemination activities?**

Funding remains an ongoing challenge for most service providers in balancing their resources with the demand for RT/AT services that can help persons with disabilities in becoming and remaining successfully employed. CERT is exploring how service providers are optimizing services for their consumers with limited resources and the use of alternative financing schemes in broadening the reach of their services. These findings can have an impact on immediate service delivery while informing policy makers in addressing fiscal challenges and developing solutions to fund RT/AT services.

**A project of the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University**

**NIDRR Grant No. H133A090004**



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