



**Work is at Home and
Home is at Work:**
The Benefits and Challenges of Telework
for Individuals who use AAC

Tracy Rackensperger, Anthony Arnold,
David McNaughton,
Cory Baker, and Dana Dorn

www.aac-rerc.com

Challenges to Workplace Participation for Individuals who use AAC

- Transportation
- Technology access
- Personal care services

Telework

- The use of work activities that take place outside the normal work setting and are made possible by internet and telecommunication technologies

Participants (n = 9)

- Used AAC
- Worked at least 10 hrs per week in paid telework activities
- Employed at least 3 months
- Diagnosis of cerebral palsy(8), autism (1)

Employment activity

- Advocacy (2)
- Technical support (2)
- Database management (2)
- Teaching (2)
- Technical writing (1)

Wages

- All above minimum wage
 - Main source of income (7)
 - Supplement SSI (2)

Benefits

- Efficiency of working at home
- Flexibility of schedule
- Financial benefits
- Relationships with co-workers

www.aac-rerc.com



Benefits: Efficiency of working at home

- "My trip to the office is cut from from an hour and a half to 30 seconds"
- "I can present my knowledge to my students more precisely, it's better than teaching them face-to-face"

www.aac-rerc.com



Challenges

- Communication with co-workers
- Motivation
- Reduced social interaction
- Technical/equipment issues

www.aac-rerc.com



Challenges : Communication with co-workers

- "Communication by phone or email loses the face to face interactions that many people need to establish trust"

www.aac-rerc.com



Challenges: Motivation

- "It is much hard to stay focused at home than it is at work"
- My working space and living space total overlap and constantly interfere with each other"

www.aac-rerc.com



Reduced social interaction

- "I can't say to my co-workers, let's go for a beer - they are 150 miles away"

www.aac-rerc.com



RERC on Communication Enhancement

www.aac-rerc.com

Recommendations for Employers

- Promote interaction with teleworker
- Be flexible and consider need for accommodations
- Provide a positive inclusive environment

www.aac-rerc.com



Recommendations for Manufacturers

- Independent internet access
- Better ways to operate mouse
 - Shortcut keys?
- Natural sounding voices
- Better tech support and training
- Lower costs

www.aac-rerc.com



For additional information

- David McNaughton
227 CEDAR Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA, 16802
(814) 865-7159
DBM2@PSU.EDU
- Funded by NIDRR
AAC-RERC

www.aac-rerc.com

