

Improving the access to assistive technology in Latino communities: A community-based intervention

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Despite significant evidence about the benefits of Assistive Technology (AT) in the lives of people with disabilities (PWDs), there are significant disparities in access to and receipt of AT services, especially people in underserved communities such as Latinos (descendants of Latin American countries like Mexico and Panama). One of the most significant barriers to Latinos seeking and obtaining AT services is a lack of awareness of the importance of AT services and knowledge about available AT services and supports. This project focuses on improving the knowledge of AT services and supports among Latino families of PWD in Chicago IL USA by providing culturally relevant educational seminars. We partnered with community-based organizations that serve the Latino population. The presentation on AT covered who can benefit from AT, details on how to access AT and how to utilize AT in multiple settings, and where to access services in the community. The

presentations were conducted in Spanish or English, as determined by the organization, and given by native or proficient speakers. Attendees completed a pre- and post-questionnaire about knowledge about AT. Our pre-survey analysis (n=47) indicated that 64% of our participants have heard of AT. Also, 88% of the participants reported that AT would greatly improve the lives of PWD while 92% indicated that AT would greatly improve the lives of the support networks. Nevertheless, 80% of our participants reported that their primary care physician (PCP) did not inform them about AT services. Lastly, in our post-survey 60% reported that the educational sessions greatly improved their knowledge of AT. There is little research documenting access and usage of AT in the Latino community. However, the research available highlights the importance of providing this community with culturally and linguistically relevant information about AT.

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