

Remote Support Services: Helping People Live More Independently

Summary of a research study about remote support services

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People with developmental disabilities often need help to live safely and happily in their communities. When care is good, life gets better. But when care is poor or inconsistent, it can make life unsafe. Many caregivers, called Direct Support Professionals, leave their jobs quickly. In some states, almost half of them quit each year. This makes it hard for people with disabilities to get the help they need. Technology, like remote support services, can help. Remote support means using technology, such as cameras that turn on when someone enters the kitchen, or sensors that help to check in and help people without always being in the same room.

Families and people with disabilities have mixed feelings about remote support. In a 2019 study, we learned that some people worry about safety, privacy, and loneliness when staff are not physically present. People in the study said they like remote support because it makes them feel safer and more independent. It also gives them private time with friends or partners. Almost everyone who tried remote support said they would recommend it to others. While some worried about privacy, most said they felt they had at least some privacy at home.

In this 2025 Remote Support study, researchers studied two groups of people. One group used regular services PLUS remote support. The other group used only regular services. They looked at things like independence, friendships, loneliness, privacy, and overall quality of life. 214 adults in Ohio took part. The results showed that in most areas, people using remote support had outcomes similar to those without it. Remote support did not make life worse. In fact, people with remote support often had more friends, were more likely to have a best friend, and joined more groups and activities. However, they also reported feeling lonely more often and sometimes had more rules about visitors in their homes.

Remote support costs less per hour than in-person staff. But overall, annual costs were sometimes higher, especially when people used both remote and in-person support. Even so, remote support may help fill gaps when there are not enough caregivers available. It can make sure that people who need in-person help the most can still get it.

In the end, remote support can help people with disabilities live more independently and safely. It may save money in some cases, but overall it may not save the state money, especially when combined with direct support services. Some problems, like loneliness and visitor rules, need more study. Families and people with disabilities should have choices, and remote support is one option that can work well for many.

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