

Summaries of Completed Research and Outcome Studies



Barriers to Voting Accessibility

In a survey of 144 voters with disabilities in Minnesota, about two thirds of voters knew that accessible voting machines were available and that they could use absentee ballots. There was a preference in this group to vote at the polls, rather than by absentee ballot, even though there were many barriers reported in voting at the polls. The biggest problems for voters are transportation to and parking at the polling site for more than a quarter of the respondents, physical barriers at the polling site for slightly less than a quarter of the respondents, and providing identification at the polling site was a problem for about a fifth of respondents. For a smaller number of respondents, election judges presented a barrier to voting for the respondents to this survey.



The effects of cessation of exercise for individuals with disabilities

In January of 2007, individuals who had previously received fitness services from Courage Center through county waiver programs started to be denied services, and they were terminated from services throughout the year of 2007. This provided a unique opportunity to examine the outcomes created by the cessation of exercise in a group of individuals with disabilities and complex health conditions who had been exercising regularly. Those 30 clients that we were able to contact reported a statistically significant increase in secondary conditions, and a statistically significant increase in severity of those conditions. The consequences of exercise cessation were more serious for older clients than younger clients, more serious for women than men, and more serious for individuals using aquatics exercise than land based exercise.

Effectiveness of Biofeedback in Chronic Pain Management

In the first year of implementation in the Chronic Pain Program at Courage Center, biofeedback was used with 58 clients. Clients found that biofeedback was helpful in managing their chronic pain and they were able to apply the techniques when they were not in therapy. When applied to outpatients, biofeedback was used with 20 clients, who also found that biofeedback was helpful in managing their chronic pain and they were able to apply the techniques when they were not in therapy.



Fast Friends: Young Adult AAC Camp Increases Social Communication

The YAAAC camp was an effective intervention for increasing social skills as evidenced by increased use of complex communication exchanges, as well as caregiver report of increased communication exchanges in a natural communication environment. The curriculum was provided at an intensity not available in outpatient or school treatment for these skills. Campers reported strong desires to communicate with camp counselors near their age. Peer interaction is not typically available in traditional therapy settings. Some social interactions were more successful at facilitating increased communication; these will need to be further studied and modified to maximize the effectiveness of all camp activities. A delicate balance must be achieved between pleasurable social activities and social communication goals. Campers suggested changes to camp to increase success. These included decrease the number of topics during curriculum, maintain a small camp (<12 campers), and increase pure, unstructured social time. The camp will be repeated this summer with the changes suggested, and the outcomes will be measured again.