

PADDC Outlooks

SPRING 2018



Generic Smart Home Technology *Improving Lives of People with Disabilities*

Smart Homes Made Simple is a project funded by the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council. It is designed to raise awareness and develop a greater understanding of how generic smart home technology devices can help individuals with developmental disabilities live more independently and safely in their own home by integrating these new devices into their everyday lives.

There are many types of products that fall into the category of smart home devices. Today, devices can:

- Control a home's temperature, fans, lights, faucets, etc.

- Work as an intercom, doorbell or security system, and even open or lock doors
- Serve as a virtual assistant – manage calendars, grocery lists and other tasks
- Provide entertainment – play music, read books, tell jokes, report the news, find recipes

This project is being implemented by Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF), with guidance from a 17-member advisory committee. The advisors include eight individuals with developmental disabilities, one family member, three occupational therapists, two assistive technology specialists, one housing designer, one home and community-based waiver provider, and one regional housing coordinator. Together, they're working on these objectives:

1. Pennsylvanians with developmental disabilities will have a better understanding of assistive technology and generic, smart home technology.
2. Pennsylvanians will know how smart home devices can be integrated into a home to enhance independence, safety and the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

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Success, Engagement, Education, Determination (SEED) Engaging Community Colleges

SEED: Plants the seed of success for students through college and community engagement in creating an inclusive culture, fostering growth.

The Success, Engagement, Education, Determination (SEED) program provides comprehensive, direct services for students with disabilities interested in a college experience. It helps them to master skills in transition, academic, and/or career areas. Michelle Mitchell, director of SEED at Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC) doesn't like to call it a *program*, but rather, a new approach to higher education.

Through the Engaging Community Colleges grant, PADDC asked schools to:

- Provide access for all interested people to attend community college
- Expose students to career options and provide training
- Ensure students have the same college experience as any other student
- Help graduates find employment in their chosen field
- Offer the support needed to provide an inclusive education

The SEED team responded by providing multiple degree/non-degree educational tracks along with a summer "bridge" program, support for independent living, socialization, and other soft skills. Through partnerships with Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living and LCCC faculty/staff, students receive mentoring, coaching, work experiences, instruction, and training in order to help them achieve their adult-related goals and maximize their employment potential – all while ensuring inclusion and person-centered choice. In addition, students are encouraged to make social connections and participate in campus-wide and community activities.

Between 2015 and 2017, more than 50 students enrolled in SEED and their completion rate is 72%. For every student there are challenges and successes. Following are three examples of student experiences.

JT "At the beginning of JT's time in SEED, he refused to participate in any on-campus activities, to communicate directly with professors regarding class

assignments, or seek assistance from Educational Support Services when necessary. JT associated each of these actions with personal failure. However, through continuous support, JT began communicating with his professors independently via e-mail and in person, and began using the tutoring and testing centers for classes in which he struggled. He has taken a huge step towards self-advocacy and independence! He also continues to mature and grow in the area of socialization. JT has become a peer leader and even advocated for the creation of a job opportunity for himself as SEED's first Peer Activity Facilitator. In this role he engages his peers in games, walks around the campus and is creating opportunities this summer's participants to come together to socialize."

DB "When I was inducted into yet another program, in yet another school, my first reaction was that I was less than excited to cycle through the cycle of remaking the wheel. That was before I learned what SEED was all about. I was able to find people who not only heard me, but listened to what I had to say. They knew when to step in for me to develop my skills, when to walk to the side so I could take the lead, and went out of their way in order to make sure everyone's needs were being seen. Without them, I may have never have gotten the momentum that I so needed for later in life."

EN EN started the semester very worried about entering LCCC's veterinary tech program. It was the math requirement in particular that she feared would keep her from being accepted. She had a history of struggling with math and was fearful that her performance would keep her out of the program. The math class was not easy and many tears were shed. EN used all of the resources at her disposal to get through this math class – the tutoring center, supplemental instruction, SEED coaches, personalized homework, and was a constant fixture in the study lounge. She even used the campus counseling services when the stress got to her. As a result, EN completed all of the course requirements three weeks ahead of schedule. At the beginning of the semester, EN was afraid she wouldn't pass the class. However as the semester progressed, her goal shifted and she wanted to earn an "A." She believed she could get that "A" and then, she found out that she did."

For more information about SEED, visit www.lccc.edu.

The SEED Experience – In the Students’ Words



Generic Smart Home Technology (continued from page 1)

3. Pennsylvanians will know possible funding resources for the acquisition of smart home technology devices.

Smart Home products are readily available at stores for reasonable costs. However, consumers should realize that there are additional costs to install and integrate the system into a person's home.

For people with disabilities, the installation sometimes requires a team of individuals who understand not only the technology, but also the specifics of a person's disability in order to personalize features in a way that will provide the best outcome. For example, a system may need to be reprogrammed to recognize the voice of a person whose breathing pattern is naturally different, or a person who has difficulty enunciating certain letters. There may also be costs

associated with training individuals to use the new system, including family members, roommates, attendants, etc.

Smart Home systems can enable greater independence for all people, but has tremendous potential for those with disabilities, and there are funding options available through:

- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (employment-related)
- Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs
- Community HealthChoices
- Disability-Specific Organizations (e.g., Achieva, ALS Association)
- Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF), which offers a 0% interest mini-loan program.

For more information, look for Smart Homes Made Simple on Facebook or visit www.smarthomesmadesimple.org.



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PA Developmental Disabilities Council

607 South Drive, Room 561, Forum Building
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