

RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON  
**Independent Living**

4089 Dole, 1000 Sunnyside Ave.  
The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045  
785.864.4095 Voice, 785.864.0706 TTY  
[RTCIL@ku.edu](mailto:RTCIL@ku.edu)

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### **Emerging Disabilities More Understood But Still Far From Being Identified**

LAWRENCE, KS — Personal satisfaction, choices, and number of hours of personal assistance care go up when people with disabilities have the opportunity to manage their own personal assistants rather than relying on agency care, found a study by The Research and Training Center on Full Participation in Independent Living, a division of the Research and Training Center on Independent Living (RTC/IL) at the University of Kansas.

“Taken together, these results show that the Center for Independent Living Personal Assistance Service program improves choice and satisfaction with the personal assistance as well as increases the choice and satisfaction in many activities, in which people with disabilities participate,” said David Gray, project director, and professor of neurology at Washington University in St. Louis.



Funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, this study surveyed 87 people before and after their use of personal assistances to help them with daily living activities. Most study participants were middle-aged, black females receiving care from paid relatives. Before enrolling in the program, most had their personal assistant services (averaging 10 hours per week) paid by the Division of Aging and by Medicaid after joining the program.

This study was done in collaboration with several Independent Living Centers in Missouri, which include Paraquad, Heartland, and Tri-County. Participants had a variety

of disabilities such as spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and cerebral palsy.

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