

Personal Support Technology – Exploring the Possibilities

Many of us are familiar with basic Home Automation or “Smart Home” concepts. People are using Home Automation to remotely program thermostats, control lighting, control appliances and entertainment options, provide home security, etc. More recently these systems have been optimized with the needs of the elderly and persons with I/DD in mind. This has opened up a world of possibilities that can help people be more independent and less reliant on staff or family for everyday health, safety and access needs.

The NM DD Waiver now includes a funding option for Personal Support Technology (PST). PST is defined in the standards (Chapter 14 – Section 14.2) as, “an electronic monitoring device/ system and associated supports that assists individuals with I/DD to be more independent in their home or community.” This service is intended to: promote increased independence and quality of life, offer opportunities to live as safely and with as much privacy as possible in one’s home and in the community, and to promote increased health as well as increased personal freedom.

PST funding up to \$5000 per ISP budget year inclusive of a 15% allowable administrative fee is available. This funding can be used to pay for: PST devices; installation; rental; maintenance; warranty fees; subscription costs; education in the use of the devices; daily monitoring; and provision of assistance to respond to events identified through monitoring.

A PST service provider must be identified by the individual or guardian through the Secondary Freedom of Choice system. The Individual Service Plan (ISP) should have outcomes that reflect the need for a PST system or the Health and Safety section of the ISP should outline the proposed PST needs.

Possibilities depend on the types of PST systems utilized. Systems may incorporate cameras in public areas given appropriate permissions by the individual/guardian and approval by a human rights committee. Most modern systems can be controlled via a computer, tablet, and/or cell phone. Many systems can be configured to give you various alerts via e-mail or text message. Some systems can also be programmed to have an automatic response to various events. IE: If the Smoke Alarm goes off the system dials 911 or emergency contacts, unlocks the door, turns on lights, triggers a recorded message directing the individual to get out now, etc.

If you have more than one approved PST provider in your area make sure to contact the providers and find out what that provider has to offer. Ask about specific concerns that you, your family member, or your client need solutions for. Would you would like alerts when the person gets home? Do you need a way to monitor if the doors are locked or to open/lock a door remotely? Would the individual like to explore an integrated medication management system? If a PST provider recommends some particular items/systems, get the specific names of the companies and items so you can do additional research if you would like. It is also a good idea to ask about how reliable and expandable a PST system is. Learn about what support and response options are available as well. Finally, ask about the PST provider’s experience with systems customized for the I/DD population or seniors. The PST provider should meet with the IDT to help put together a PST plan that is customized for the individual’s needs.

The examples below are meant to help you decide if PST might help provide solutions for increased safety, health, and/or independence. This resource is a *small sample* of some possible concerns and solutions that might be addressed. PST systems and options are changing and expanding all the time, thus, PST possibilities are a “moving target”. Remember also that PST solutions are often part of a support system that includes other types of Assistive Technology; Environmental Modification; various “apps” like GPS, reminder systems, and cueing for activities; custom strategies from therapists and other support professionals; as well as the most important support system of all – people like you who care.

Personal Support Technology – Exploring the Possibilities (cont.)

Routine or Activity Focus	Description of Concern	Possible Solutions through Personal Support Technology
Getting Up in the Morning	Joe often likes to sleep in and will turn off or ignore the alarm. With no on-site staff how will we get Joe up?	The home or apartment can be programmed with a “Wake Up” scenario that might: open the drapes, start the coffee, gradually turn on music/lights, etc.
	How will we know if Joe actually gets up and at ‘em?	Various sensors such as motion sensors or pressure sensors can be set to send an alert if no movement is detected by a certain time.
Video “Check In” and Cues for various activities or routines.	Mary gets anxious if she does not know others are around and “taking care of her”. She needs cues for certain activities.	A home monitor can be set-up to allow two-way audio/video communication. Sessions can be set-up for certain times. Mary can be reminded by various means that it is time to talk to her family-member or staff and how to do that. Live cueing or on-site cueing systems or voice-alerts can be part of the solution as well.
Making meals and snacks.	Brian would forget to eat if no one is around. How will we know if he is getting adequate nutrition?	Sensors can alert you when Brian accessed the refrigerator/ microwave/small appliances/liquid containers, etc. or can alert you if he does not access these items. Family/staff/ third-party monitoring can monitor through 2-way audio/video option.
	Sue tends to over-eat and can access food too often.	Above options would apply. Tele-health options might also include scales that can report weights on a regular basis.
	Sue can make simple things on the stove but is sometimes distracted and forgets to turn the stove or oven off.	“Stove Guard” or other items can automatically turn the stove/burner off if Sue is not detected near the stove for a programmed length of time.
Leaving the house	Mark often forgets to lock the door and turn off lights/appliances/heat or AC.	When Mark leaves the house a “leaving home” scenario can be triggered by GPS or sensors to do these things automatically.

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Safety Issues	What If... Sadie gets lost?	GPS watches, sensors, cell phone systems can allow Sadie to call for help and be located or be programmed to call/text for help automatically beyond a certain radius, etc.
	What If ... Sadie falls?	Fall sensors on pendants or watches can detect a fall and call for help as programmed.
	What If ... Sadie is sick or needs help?	Various Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) are available.
	How will I know if Mark leaves the house, gets to work, gets back home?	GPS apps or various sensors can text you when Mark arrives or leaves various locations.
	What If ... there is a fire or CO leak?	These detectors can be programmed to call/text contacts or emergency personnel.
Travel Assistance	Raul needs staff to ride along to make sure he gets to work or appointments.	Various GPS apps can provide custom videos and specific cues that are coordinated with GPS location in real-time.
Self-care Routines	Ann often forgets to brush her teeth and does not always take a shower without reminders/monitoring, etc.	Sensors can be set-up to alert you when toothbrushes, shower doors, shampoo, deodorant, hampers, etc. have not been used for certain time periods or to text/e-mail when they are used.
Health Monitoring	Family/staff/or nursing must monitor BP, weight, O2 stats, glucose, heart rate or other health indicators. Can the frequency of visits be reduced?	These health issues can often be remotely monitored through various Tele-health systems. This may allow decreased staffing for this type of monitoring and may help catch health problems earlier.
Medication Management	Ozzie needs verbal prompts to take his meds on time and correctly.	A large variety of medication management systems are available. Some of these systems can be integrated into PST systems to alert you if Ozzie does not take his medications by a certain time.