LiveLife Therapy Solutions, Inc.
Specializing in Assistive Technology

How to Support Older Adults in Learning of Assistive Technology

As a result of this presentation, learners will be able to:
1. Describe perspectives of older adults relating to learning assistive technology
2. Apply the Model of Competence to older adults' use of assistive technology
3. Outline the steps of successful AT service delivery using the Service Delivery Model
4. Define supportive approaches to older adults' learning of assistive technology
5. Explain ways to best format AT supplemental learning materials for older adults
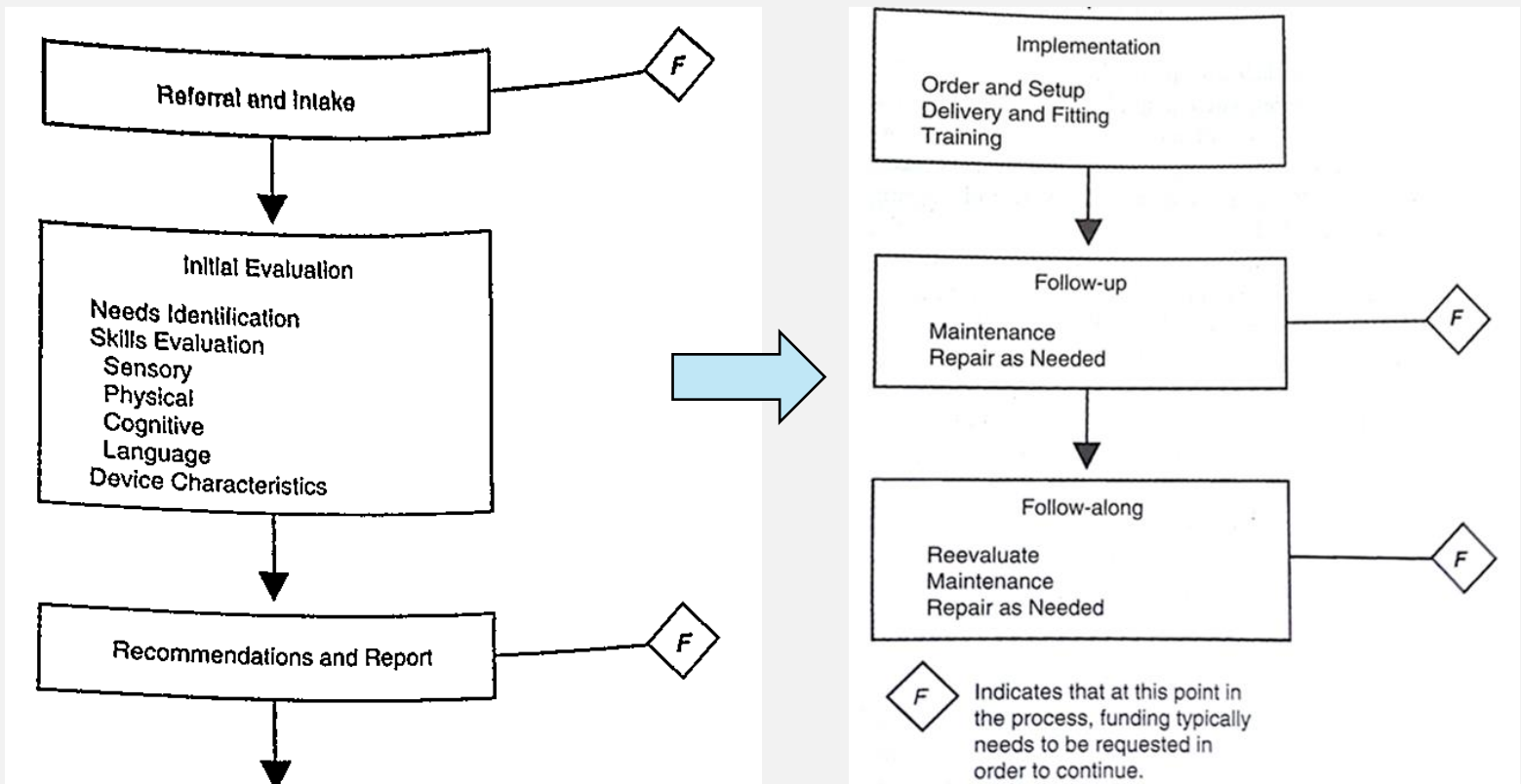
Perspectives from Older Adults – Supports to Learning

- Peer/family support [1,2]
- Quality printed instructions [1,3,5,7]
    - Simple and easily usable
- Internet searches and forums [1,2]
- In-person education [3,6]
- General continued education [4,5,8]
    - Support to troubleshoot and go beyond the basics

Model of Competence [9]

- Introduces 4 types of competence in relation to AT
- Operational competence
    - Ability to use AT for its intended purpose
- Strategic competence
    - Developing higher level or secondary skills
    - Often requires additional training
- Social competence
    - Understanding of social implications of device use
    - Especially when using AAC devices
- Linguistic competence
    - Understanding of the vocabulary for successful device use
    - E.g. "wake" words, appropriate phrasing

Service Delivery Model (9)

- An outline of the AT process

Initial Evaluation

Needs Identification
Skills Evaluation
 Sensory
 Physical
 Cognitive
 Language
Device Characteristics

Referral and Intake

Recommendations and Report

Implementation

Order and Setup
Delivery and Fitting
Training

Follow-up

Maintenance
Repair as Needed

Follow-along

Reevaluate
Maintenance
Repair as Needed

F Indicates that at this point in the process, funding typically needs to be requested in order to continue.

Approaches

- Need to know vs good to know
  - Refer to intended device functions
- Simplest is best (9)
  - Gadget tolerance
    - People have various tolerances for complexity and views on tech differ
  - Complex world → value of simplicity
  - Start with the basic features only
  - Add additional features as needed to avoid overwhelming the user
  - Choose options designed to be intuitive with uncomplicated design

Designing Print Resources

- **Prioritize high contrast**
- Include clear pictures of directions when able
- Avoid too much content and overwhelming use of color

Designing Print Resources – Microsoft Word

- Checking accessibility in Microsoft Word
    - Checks your file against a set of accessibility rules
    - Review → Check Accessibility → Check Accessibility
- Checking grade level in Microsoft Word
    - Review → Spelling and Grammar
    - Correct or ignore spelling and grammar suggestions, then look for ""Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level"
    - Per the American Medical Association, it is best to be at or below a 6th grade level (10)

Designing Video Resources (11)

- Use captioning (corrected, not just auto generated)
- Consider low vision adaptions of describing visual information
- Ensure transcripts are provided when needed
- Create videos with good lighting and high resolution

Case Study – Shirley (Fictional Case)

Shirley is an 81-year-old woman who lives alone in rural MN. She recently had a fall and sustained a femur fracture. Shirley also has macular degeneration, and her vision is limited. Shirley just returned to her home after a short stay at a TCU. She is currently using a front wheeled walker as she has a 50% weight bearing status for the next 4 weeks. Shirley worked with both an OT and PT to modify her environment to meet her needs. She will be getting a stair lift, exterior ramp, and a variety of smart home devices. The OT and PT have been working together to determine how they can provide Shirley with learning materials for her new devices.

- What modifications would you recommend that the OT and PT use to create resources that work for Shirley?
- Would you choose a print or video resource? Why?

Key Takeaways
- Stay person-centered and aim to support all areas of competence in AT use
- Always err on the side of simplicity when creating resources
- Introduce basic functions first, moving to more complex upon mastery

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