

# Disability and Rehabilitation Studies

## Working to Improve Lives



Since 1965, we have conducted research, program evaluations and policy studies and provided technical assistance related to the needs of persons with disabilities. Our work **covers a broad range of disability issues**—on a cross-disability and across-the-life-span basis—in healthcare, employment, education, independent living, housing, income security, civil rights and transportation.



### Disability and Rehabilitation Cross-Disciplinary Proficiency

Abt Associates provides cross-disciplinary expertise essential in all aspects of disability- and rehabilitation-related research, evaluation and technical assistance. Experienced policy researchers who have disabilities often direct our project teams, and their involvement has helped implement landmark legislation, including the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the 2001 New Freedom Initiative.

### Cross-Life Span Skills

Our disability and rehabilitation work extends from studies on children with special healthcare needs and their families to seniors with chronic conditions and functional impairments.

### Our Specialities

- survey design and data collection
- measurement, evaluation design (experimental and quasi-experimental)
- focus groups
- policy analysis
- process and impact analysis
- secondary data analysis
- quality improvement strategies
- health communications

We have developed several strategies to include and retain people with disabilities in surveys and other data collection activities. These strategies include specialized training of interviewers and focus group leaders.

### Our Work in Disability and Rehabilitation Studies

#### Keeping People in Their Communities

Abt conducted the System and Impact Research and Technical Assistance evaluation project for the Real Choice Systems Change Grants sponsored by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). These grants help states build an infrastructure that results in effective community supports and services for children and adults with a disability or long-term illness. This, in turn, enables them to live independently in their communities. For this project, we collected evaluation data through Web-based data reporting and interview visits with each grantee site.

#### Understanding Disability Across the Life-Span

In this four-year longitudinal study of 2,000 adults with multiple sclerosis (MS), conducted for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Abt is surveying people with MS to understand how MS influences their daily lives and how they utilize healthcare. We are also examining their access to MS therapies and specialists, the characteristics of quality MS mental health services and the psychosocial impacts of the disease.

#### Designing a Population-Based Registry

Abt has conducted feasibility studies for the design and implementation of a population-based registry for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and for lupus for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

### **Empowering Medicare Beneficiaries**

For CMS, Abt evaluated a demonstration program that empowers Medicare beneficiaries to negotiate with suppliers of durable medical equipment to obtain the best price for powered wheelchairs and related purchases.

### **Caring for Children With Special Needs**

For the District of Columbia (DC), Abt conducted an evaluation of an 1115 Medicaid Waivers to test a voluntary managed care system designed specifically for DC children with special healthcare needs in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

### **Expanding Personal Assistance Services**

Abt conducted a three-year research and technical assistance project for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare that expanded the state-funded Attendant Care Program with a parallel Medicaid Waiver personal assistance services (PAS) program, helping the state eliminate the waiting list for in-home PAS and obtain federal cost sharing for them.

### **Compiling Policies for Assistive Technologies**

Abt researched all Medicaid State Plan and waiver programs to compile a national compendium of policies and practices regarding provision of, and funding for, assistive technologies and home modifications. This work was performed for the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

### **Assessing Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace**

For the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Abt examined the potential of PAS and workplace PAS, in particular, for an employment initiative that will give working persons with disabilities access to these vital Medicaid services. We provided detailed recommendations to the cooperating state agencies and presented the findings to a coalition of consumers and other interested stakeholders.

### **Evaluating Aging and Disability Resource Centers**

Abt and its partner are conducting a national evaluation of participant experiences with the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) for the Administration on Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) for the Administration on Aging.

### **Contact**

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**Abt Associates** is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 40 countries.

