AgrAbility Regional Training Workshop Agenda

Weber’s Boutique Hotel  
3050 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103-1997

Workshop Schedule

**Tuesday, July 16th**

11:00 Check in

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Welcome and introductions

1:15 **Disability Etiquette**

What is like to live with a disability? How do we think about people with disabilities? Can we understand their situation and comprehend the challenges they face? Are the greatest barriers to their quality of life related to physical challenges, or how they are treated by the ‘able bodied’? This session will explain general principles for communicating and interacting with people with disabilities in a respectful way. Should we help push someone in a wheelchair up a hill? Should we move someone’s walker out of the aisle while they are seated at a table? Should we shout to a person who is hard of hearing? Learn the answers to these questions and more about disability etiquette.

**2:15 Non progressive medical conditions**

Non-progressive medical conditions are conditions that don't worsen or become more serious over time. Spinal cord injuries, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, amputations, stroke and brain injury are common non-progressive conditions that cause disabilities and require assistive technology to enable people to complete necessary tasks. This session will give an introduction of these conditions and their symptoms and some of the associated medical terminology.

**3:15 Break**

**3:45 Progressive medical conditions**

A progressive medical condition can become worse over time resulting in decreased functional abilities. These disabilities gradually develop over time at various rates. Common examples of progressive disabilities include arthritis, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, Parkinsons disease, types of vision and hearing loss, ALS, heart disease, COPD, and cancer. These conditions can limit worker’s mobility, strength and endurance, and ability to repetitively reach and grasp. Assistive technology will enable tasks to be completed for a time and will likely need to be updated as the medical condition changes. This session will give an introduction of these conditions and their symptoms and some of the associated medical terminology.

**4:45 Group discussion:** name, career, lesson learned or questions about situations of farmer clients with certain medical conditions and what you have learned – point out medical terminology usage – connect ag people with medical people.

5:30 Closing remarks, dinner (on your own)

**Wednesday, July 17th**

8:45 Welcome and introductions

**9:00 Assessment models HAAT and caregiver buy-in**

The Human Activity Assistive Technology (HAAT) model is a systematic framework to evaluate assistive technology needs. There is a serious problem with abandoned assistive technology because of incomplete evaluations. Caregiver buy-in is a critical aspect of assistive technology evaluation because they are integrally involved in how the device is used and maintained. Many times assistive technology is purchased for a worker before the big picture is understood. An assistive technology professional might quickly assume that a certain wheelchair or device will help someone do necessary tasks. However, without understanding the person’s culture, emotions, finances, abilities, work environment, and activities it is impossible to make good AT recommendations. This session will emphasize the need to fully evaluate a worker’s situation to increase the likelihood of the AT being used successfully.

**10:00 Assessment interview – using the farm assessment tool**

We will now learn to apply the HAAT model to a farming environment. Learn how to interview the farmer with a disability in a trustful way, not an intrusive interrogation. Build rapport and talk about the weather and markets. In a conversational way begin asking questions about the farm business, the history, and the future dreams vs. plans. Is there a marketing plan and is the farm viable? What are the goals of the farmer? Are they farming for income, exercise, mental health? What are the medical conditions that are causing barriers to the farmer completing necessary tasks? Who else is helping on the farm, and do they even want to be involved? Make sure the caregiver is present and involved in the conversation, and if possible have a private conversation with the caregiver also. Listening, listening, listening! Take good notes to understand the most important tasks that the farmer must complete.

**11:00 Assessment observations**

After the interview we will learn how to make the best observations of the farm. The farmer cannot tell us everything about the farm during the interview. There are many aspects of the farm that we will learn by careful observation. Ask the farmer to give you a tour of the farm and show you the common tasks. Ask for permission to take pictures and be respectful of the farm property. A tape measure, fish scale, quality camera, clip board, and rubber boots are helpful during the farm assessment. This session will teach tips and methods for gathering necessary information to make good recommendations of assistive technology that will be used for years to come.

12:00 Lunch and discussion of farm assessment stories and lessons learned

**1:30 Writing an AT recommendation report – making the case for the AT**

In this session we will learn how to use the assessment information to help the farmer acquire appropriate assistive technology. After the assessment interview and farm assessment observations we have three challenges to address. First, we research what assistive technology is available that can enable the farmer to complete the highest priority tasks with a SMILE. Second, we discuss the options with the farmer and write a clear summary of our recommendations for the farmer and caregivers to consider. When we have reached consensus, we finally write our official farm assistive technology evaluation recommendation report for the funding agency to consider. Each recommendation must clearly demonstrate how a specific assistive technology will enable the worker to overcome a barrier to their employment due to the disability.

2:30 Load up to travel to farm assessment tour

**4:00 Farm assessment interview and tour**

This session will demonstrate how to do a farm assistive technology worksite assessment for workers with medical conditions. Arthritis, back injury, carpal tunnel syndrome, amputation, paralysis, and other medical conditions restrict farmers from completing necessary tasks. Functional limitations include mobility climbing equipment, bending over to make repairs, lifting feed bags, gripping hand tools, walking long distances. While larger machinery exists for commercial farmers, smaller operations require more manual labor. It is just not ‘worth it’ to spend a larger percentage of annual gross sales to purchase one assistive device. Learn how to evaluate a worker’s needs and make suitable recommendations for their farm work. We will use observations from this assessment to research assistive technology options tomorrow.

1. Practice interviewing the farmer.

2. Practice making observations of the farm.

3. Discuss potential assistive technologies with the farmer.

6:00 Dinner at the farm, discussions with the farmers, more farm details

8:00 Return to Weber’s

**Thursday, July 18th**

8:45 Welcome and introductions

**9:00 AT for farming and ADL’s**

There is a large assortment of assistive technology devices that will enable a farmer to complete necessary tasks. This session will be an overview of various technologies for different farm types and medical conditions. We will learn how to use the AgrAbility.org/toolbox to research options for assistive technology. As we observe options, learn to apply them to the assessment we completed yesterday.

**10:00 Smartphone access and AT apps for EADL’s**

Smart phones have revolutionized the availability of electronic aids to daily living. Assistive technology apps enable people with low vision to read documents, hear descriptions of their environment, and navigate their phone by voice. Other apps convert speech to text for people with hearing impairments. Smart phones and tablet computers can be used as back up camera monitors in tractor cabs, reminders for cognitive disabilities, and to control appliances from a distance. There are varieties of ways to mount a smart phone device to a wheelchair or in a tractor cab for these uses.

**11:00 Follow up interview with the Farmer, AT follow up services**

We will invite the farmer from yesterday’s assessment to join us in the classroom for a follow up conversation. We will present our assistive technology ideas to her and discuss the options. We will consider together how to describe the barriers to employment, assistive technology descriptions, and specific recommendations. Additional farmers with disabilities will be invited to share their experiences and how assistive technology has enabled them to continue their gainful employment.

12:00 Closing remarks