

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Co-researching with People with Intellectual Disabilities

What is PAR?

PAR involves inclusive research approaches where people who would typically be seen as the subjects of research become full or partial participants in the research process. The goal of PAR is that the results from the research will help solve the real, "on-the-street" problems that stakeholders experience.

What is the purpose of PAR?

PAR is intended to promote social change among vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as people with intellectual disabilities.

When members of a marginalized group take part in PAR, they are empowered to ask questions that they want answered, and to find solutions to problems based on their ideas and experiences.

How does PAR work for people with ID?

At a minimum, PAR involving people with ID should be guided by the following principles:

- The research question, problem, or issue must be one that is owned by people with intellectual disabilities.
 - Participants communicate about important issues in need of exploring. This communication can be *exploratory* – open to explore all issues relevant to the group or *topical* – only open to explore issues related to set objectives.
- It should be collaborative. People with intellectual disabilities should be involved in the process of doing the research.
 - This can be achieved through training people with ID to serve as co-researchers where they learn how to conduct focus groups, conduct interviews, and create reports.
- The research question, process, and reports must be accessible to people with ID.
 - Reports should be created so that they are easy to read, use visual graphics rather than large blocks of text, are available in audio format, etc.

What are some examples of PAR projects?

The Inclusive Research Network (IRN) in Ireland has created a network of people with ID who work together to address needs and issues of importance. The PAR project, 'Where We Live' the group explored the living situation of adults with ID in Ireland.

The purpose of IRN is to provide education and training in inclusive research methodologies, disseminate the findings from inclusive research nationally and internationally, provide a forum for dialog and discussion among and with people with intellectual disability about research issues and provide a platform for influencing national policy in intellectual disability in Ireland through the voice of people with intellectual disability and their supporters.