

# Investing in People

*Periodic Updates from the Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario*

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## BEYOND WAITING LISTS: INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT EMPOWERS PEOPLE AND USES MONEY WISELY

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Throughout Ontario, people with disabilities and their families WAIT!! Waiting lists for housing and support services have never been longer than they are today. There are many reasons for this, including changing demographics and government cutbacks.

As people wait for services that may never come, frustration grows and people have deep concerns for the future. At the same time, several communities have been exploring alternatives to the passive approach that waiting lists demand. Growing evidence indicates that individualized planning, support, and funding empowers people and uses money wisely.

When the Windsor-Essex Region began its *Brokerage for Personal Supports*, it became the only source for unencumbered planning in the area. Families that initially approached *Brokerage* wanted paid support for their family member. In the first year, 16 of the 30 families that became engaged in person-directed planning and network development did not require any paid support for their son or daughter!

The *St. Marys and District Association for Community Living* utilizes facilitators for individualized planning. Jennifer Leslie, a facilitator with St. Marys, explains that the power of individualized planning lies in the simple yet amazing way it can channel the energy and abilities of people with disabilities and others in their lives!

Leslie says she has found that, “focusing on what is needed now can be especially helpful in the complicated and confusing maze of waiting lists and limited options for services within the current system.” Leslie stresses that, “offering an opportunity for people to express what they want, what they fear and dream about, they often discover new options and new ways of getting what they want in untraditional ways”.

Marlyn Shervill from *Brokerage* says that individualized planning empowers people to start asking questions. “But first,” explains Shervill, “you have to deal with family fears.” Because many families have been socialized to be passive, the idea of building a support network or asking others to help out is foreign. But, as Windsor-Essex discovered, with support and planning, families and individuals will get involved with others.

The *Massachusetts Family Driven Networks of Support* has shown that money addressed to people with no supports or funding can be very cost effective when the process includes facilitators/brokers and individualized planning. Research with this approach shows that the capacity of families, along with hope and vision, are strengthened.

The Western Australia Local Area Co-ordination and Direct Funding Project has demonstrated that waiting lists can be reduced.