

Investing in People

Periodic Updates from the Individualized Funding Coalition of Ontario
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Moving Toward Individualized Planning, Support, and Funding: Engaging Agencies That Provide Services

Currently in Ontario, community agencies receive most of the government resources allocated to provide support and services for people with disabilities. These agencies have an important role to play in the world-wide shift toward individualized supports for citizens with disabilities. How do agencies change and begin to make this shift? How do you engage an agency to begin the journey? In order to engage an agency effectively you need to do some homework. In some cases, because you are familiar with an agency this is relatively easy. If you are not familiar with the agency then it becomes harder.

Who makes the decisions?

You need to recognize that when it comes to individualized planning, support and funding, agencies are all over the place! Some are already on their way and fully embrace individualized funding, others are not familiar with the concept at all, and many others are somewhere in between. This does not mean agencies are better or worse, or good or bad. It means that they are different and things are done the way they are for various legitimate reasons. To support agencies to begin to shift toward individualized options, you need to figure out where the decisions are made that shape an agency. Is it the board of directors, the executive director, the quality assurance committee or some other group or individual? When you have identified the group or individual (sometimes it's more than one) then you can begin to engage the agency.

Every agency has people wanting to try something new

Many agencies are mired in traditional supports because they are not willing or able to see outside of the box. This again does not necessarily make bad agencies.

You will find that most agencies have key people that are chomping at the bit to figure out better ways to help people. You need to identify some of these people in your agency so that you can "bounce some ideas" off them. I call this "planting the seeds," for the minute you do this, your idea will be spread to other like thinking people within the agency. This can create a ground swell or movement.

Thinking outside the box

I have a friend who told me this story many years ago. It is a great example about creativity, hard work and thinking outside of the box.

John boarded with a man in a small town in Ontario. This man owned a house that like many houses of its era had a dirt floor crawl space instead of a basement. For many years it had been his desire to dig out the floor and make it into a full basement. He approached John to help him dig in return for a reduction in his board. John agreed, and the digging began.

Progress went smoothly until they were about 2/3 finished. They ran into a huge rock. It was about half the size of a small car. John was upset as he could see no way to get the rock out of the way and leaving it in the basement would not be very desirable. The home owner, however, was unfazed. It now being Friday, John went home for the weekend. When he returned on Monday he was incredulous when he discovered the rock was gone. "How in the world did you get rid of the rock", he inquired? "It was simple", was the reply.

Can you figure out what happened to the rock?
We will print the answer in our next issue.

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