

*Building Community Capacity***Families and Individuals Learn to Plan**

February, 2004

A Key Message from the Individualized Funding WorkFest

In conventional approaches to disability supports, families put their child's name on waiting lists for services and programs. With the new paradigm of individualized approaches, the focus shifts to individualized planning, so that the person with the disability can dream, set goals, and participate in determining what they want their life to look like. Individualized Funding requires that families learn to plan. Agencies do not determine what you need. It is up to the family, the individual, and the person's network to plan what disability supports they require and how Individualized Funding can help them achieve their goals. For many families, this shift to planning requires a new mind-set. Instead of "waiting for services," families now begin to see the value and responsibility of supporting the strengths and gifts of their family member. We all do some planning in our lives, of course, whether for a vacation or for a family party. Yet, often, we do not plan for the vulnerable person, even though they may require it more than other family members. Planning works best when there is a facilitator from outside the family and when a few other people who care about the person have been invited to participate. When planning, individuals and families soon learn that planning is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process that adapts as individuals change their dreams and goals.

Core Values about Planning

Planning is most effective when it is based on clear values and principles. These can include:

- planning emphasizes relationships and is person-directed
- planning is guided by "Ask Me First" and "Nothing About Me without Me"
- planning focuses on community as a first resort
- families, friends, and support networks are vital aspects of planning
- participation and genuine choices of the individual are key parts of planning
- inclusion is a critical goal and outcome of planning

- planning must be based on respect and dignity
- the planning process will differ for each individual and family

Strategies for Insuring that Families and Individuals Learn to Plan

Strategies related to insuring that families and individuals learn to plan are designed to build capacity for increased planning skills and knowledge. Communities, networks, and families can do a great deal to build this capacity. In the end, however, government support for the process of facilitation and independent planning will be critical.

1. Build strong support for the “Ask Me First” principle by:
 - Local IF representatives engaging local People First groups and other self-advocacy groups with dialogue about “Ask Me First” related to planning
 - Encouraging local family groups to adopt “Ask Me First” and “Nothing About Me without Me” as guiding principles for planning (For further information, see WorkFest piece on “Ask Me First”)
2. Create effective education and training for “learning how to plan” by:
 - Inviting local family groups and IF groups to sponsor training events on person-directed planning
 - Sharing stories of success on the web site and in training events
 - Speaking at Special Education Advisory Committees to stress the importance of beginning Life Planning at age 14.
3. Develop a step-by-step planning process for wide distribution, by the IFCO:
 - Developing planning process guidelines
 - Designing ways for developing support plans and budgets
 - Utilizing the web site for sharing Plans and planning issues.
4. Developing an inventory of planning approaches that are effective, by:
 - Listing all models of planning and facilitation that enhance family and individual participation
 - Sharing this information with agencies, families and government.
5. Building a case for secure financial support for planning, by:
 - Creating the rationale in conjunction with the work being done related to the need for independent planning and facilitation
 - Convincing the Ministry of Community and Social Services that independent planning and facilitation is cost effective and will build capacity of families and individuals to be more independent in the future.