

One Voice – A Statement about Individualized Funding

Key Messages from the Individualized Funding WorkFest held in Toronto Ontario

February 2004

Preamble - A Question of Citizenship

Citizenship is the right of every Canadian. Citizenship requires that there exists:

- Full participation such that people enjoy the richness and benefits of life in their community and contribute to their community.
- Relationships for the common good among individuals, communities in all their diversity, and government.
- Human rights that are protected so that people have a sense of belonging and attachment to their community.

Citizenship is enhanced when appropriate supports are made available to respond to the unique requirements of a person with a disability. On the other hand, *citizenship* can be empty of meaning when these supports are not provided. It is nothing but a hollow concept if a person cannot assert, practice, and actually live *citizenship*.

Families, friends and members of the community all play a role in supporting a person with a disability to be fully engaged in community life. Government plays a role in facilitating this support through appropriate legislation, policy and funding.

Individualized funding is a means by which government can provide resources to a person with a disability or his family to supplement and enhance the natural support of family, friends and community.

Individualized funding does not require that a person live within a government funded service system in order to access support as has been the case in the past with institutionalized approaches to support; nor does it fund inexact support to groups of people based on the assumed disadvantage caused by the particular disability or label shared by that group.

Individualized funding provides unique support to a person. It ensures flexibility and freedom of choice so that the person can be a participating citizen in their community and it enables the individual to express their citizenship. Through this flexibility it better accommodates cultural differences and choices and thereby promotes and enhances multiculturalism and diversity in our society. It is an investment in the entire community and holds the potential to improve life for all citizens.

Elements of Individualized Funding

Individualized funding must:

- be founded on and guided by a set of core values
- be legislated
- be an option for all people who live with disabilities; they must have access to and control over funding and supports that are individualized to meet their unique support requirements
- be portable and guaranteed for a lifetime
- enhance life possibilities provided by family, friends and community in order to facilitate a fully engaged life in community; it is an integral piece.

Core Values:

A set of core values for individualized funding derived from the collective wisdom of many individualized funding pioneers (people with a disability, their families and friends), drives the elements of the key message contained in this document. These core values must also drive the development of policy and legislation that is needed to see the realization of individualized funding. (See Core Values Document from the WorkFest)

Current Environment:

It is generally impossible for traditional/institutional models to provide for some of the most important support requirements of an individual with a disability. We have learned that the government’s role is to strengthen natural relationships (family, friends, and the ordinary places of community life.)

There is gathering momentum for change – people with disabilities and their families want supports that are responsive to the individual, are controlled by the person or his family, are portable and can move when the person moves, and are accountable to the person with a disability for quality outcomes that lead to true citizenship. This is expressed by some people in the following way:

- “It is my life and my choice.”
- “Government has no right to tell me how to live my life or to tell me where and with whom I can live.”

Anticipated Outcomes

- People who live with disabilities will be fully engaged citizens.
- Their gifts will be recognized and enhanced.
- Supports and funding will be portable, following the person wherever s/he goes, and will flex to meet changing support requirements and dreams throughout ones lifetime.
- Supports will better accommodate cultural differences and choices, and promote and support multiculturalism and diversity.
- People who live with disabilities will experience increased safety and security in community. There is safety in being openly present and engaged in the life of the community.
- An investment in individualized funding is an investment in people; an investment in people is an investment in the whole community.

Individualized funding enhances and recognizes the gifts that the person with a disability brings to the community. If properly implemented, it is flexible and accommodates changing dreams and support requirements throughout the life of the person. It increases the safety and security of the person.

People have the right to expect support from their community and government to assist them to fulfil their role as a citizen. Individualized funding is an approach through which the government can fulfil this responsibility by financially assisting the person to participate in the good life with all other citizens.