

Key Concepts About Person-Centered Planning

Understanding several key concepts about person-centered planning can inspire you with the commitment to accomplish your goals for helping your family member live the life he or she wants.

1. Freedom of Choice

Person-centered or person-directed planning supports freedom of choice by looking at individual dreams and needs, planning for services, making things understandable for the individual, supporting self-advocacy and helping the individual gain control of his or her life. It is based on the idea of persons with disabilities having the support necessary to make their own choices and to have the freedom to live the lives they choose. It requires truly listening to and supporting individuals with disabilities in the choices they make. It focuses on the strengths of the individual and believes that it is possible to make things happen. It affirms the humanity and dignity of the individual. The intended results are increased personal self-determination and independence and integration and involvement in the community.

2. Planning as a Team to Achieve a Common Goal



Since no person can be an expert in all the areas that need to be planned for, the beauty of person-centered planning is that we can bring in experts in the needed areas. Experts can be drawn from family members, friends, neighbors, service providers, school personnel, medical providers and many others.

This process also can bring together formal and informal systems of support to combine resources and work toward a common goal and put long-term community supports in place.

What does the team look at during person-centered planning? For starters those hard choices and big decisions

about things like guardianship options, education, work, living arrangements, money, health care, marriage and family, and retirement plans. Effective person-centered planning can be helpful whether the person is just leaving high school or whether it is an adult who needs a better situation and long-term support.

3. The Role of Family

Families generally know more than anyone else about a young person's dreams and are in the best position to make sure a family member is able to make the decisions.

You may know that many of the agencies that serve people with disabilities use some form of a person-centered planning process. Of course, families are involved as key members of the team when agencies set up the process, but did you know that families can also take the lead in creating this type of planning? By becoming informed about the possibilities, you can develop a vision and help your son or daughter create a team and a process.



4. Keeping it Realistic

"The team must determine its own comfort level with the goals of the individual. However, how the team feels about the goals and how the young adult feels may be two very different things. Supporting young adults to learn about and further explore their dreams for the future is the proactive solution to this situation. As a result of this exploration, a young adult may decide that his or her goal is not necessarily a good match. However, the exploration process can be a memorable learning experience--a valuable way of learning about one's self, and ultimately an important way of discovering other pathways to success. It is important to realize that failure is not necessarily something to be avoided. It is a natural part of life. More importantly, a person with a disability who is protected from failure is also protected from potential success. Helping young people with disabilities pursue challenging goals provides them with invaluable opportunities for self-discovery, as well as the opportunity to surpass expectations and to actually succeed in achieving their goals." (NCSET Parent Brief)

We all know people with disabilities who attained goals that were thought to be impossible. It is a very great responsibility if we take it upon ourselves to say someone cannot accomplish something. What is the balance point? There is no right answer to this question, because we don't want to waste resources, but we don't want to rule out possibilities. If a goal is not at all realistic, look for what it is about the goal that the individual likes. For example, a person may want to be a veterinarian because of a love of animals. One such young man went to work in a pet store and eventually became a successful dog groomer and loves it.

5. Tools

Many different tools have been developed. Person-centered planning is a group of approaches, and, of course, is evolving. You may see different tools used. There is no one "right" way. None of the tools are required, but you may wish to visit the websites mentioned in this module and learn more about them. There is a charge for some of them, but you can find a lot of free resources too.

6. Touchstones of Person-Centered Planning

Sometimes watered-down or lip service-only processes are called person-centered planning. Here are some touchstones to make sure it is the real deal:

- The youth or adult with disabilities sets the agenda
- The agenda is respected and valued
- The youth chooses the people on the team
- The team works on the youth's agenda
- There are measurable outcomes
- Outcomes are celebrated
- The plan is about youth's life

Resources:

A short video that explains the concept of person-centered planning:

[https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiTcUi5K6Mc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiTcUi5K6Mc)

Article on understanding person-centered planning:

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/providers/person-centered-planning>