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Abstract

This paper describes Personal Futures Planning - a new way of thinking about meeting an individual's unique needs, desires and abilities, and compares it with previous systems. Personal Futures Planning is described as a way of assisting individuals and families in identifying what is important to them, empowering them with decision making as well as providing appropriate support from service providers to meet the individual's needs. It focuses on supporting community participation by a person, on building relationships and on capacities rather than deficits. **Keyword: Individualisation**

FUTURES PLANNING — SUPPORTING A NEW VISION

The Fall issue of NEWS NOTES featured an article on Quality—A New Way of Thinking which touched upon services being developed to meet an individual's unique needs, desires and abilities. This new way of thinking involves a shift from the preoccupation with preparation (or the graduation out of prevocational, semi-independent programs) to a focus on supporting participation in the community building on capacities rather than highlighting deficits, and building on relationships. This article is designed to explore the traditional way services are delivered to individuals and the new focus on creating services to meet individual needs. This new way of

thinking has been referred to as Personal Futures Planning.

Personal Futures Planning simply means assisting individuals and families in identifying what is important to them, empowering them with decision making as well as providing appropriate support from service providers to meet the individual's needs.

The following chart outlines the traditional view of providing services versus the new way of thinking and supporting persons with disabilities.

1) How the system views individuals with disabilities

TRADITIONAL

Look at a person's disabilities and deficits. Knowledge of person is based primarily on disabling condition

NEW

Focus on person as a who being. Look at person's strengths, capabilities and preferences. Assist people to contribute their strengths to the community.

4) Who takes action and what do we believe about the community.

TRADITIONAL

Community will be rejecting.

NEW

Cannot dump people in the community and expect acceptance. Need to spend more time on bridge building or supporting strong positive relationships. Bridge builders are people who are hired to get to know the local community and pave the way for an individual based on his/her strengths and preferences.

2) What do we believe is possible for the individual

TRADITIONAL

Give people in service systems a lifetime of goals and objectives. Once achieved, new goals and objectives are placed on the individual. Place individuals through segregated services which have offered little opportunity to express individual gifts. People are fit into programs.

NEW

Plan futures that are rich. Think about life experiences we want people to have. Ideas about the future based on person's interest. Locate places within the community that would be accepting.

5) How do we believe service systems will respond.

TRADITIONAL

They don't respond or do in a limited way.

NEW

Services can respond to change individuals' specific needs. The service system will become person centered. Systems need to start small, to learn and expand.

3) Who makes the decision for the individual

TRADITIONAL

The majority of time, professionals make decisions for the individual based on their views of what the person is capable of achieving

NEW

Listen to the individual, his/her family members and friends. The people who know him/her the best. Direct service people need to have input. Spend more time with people on an informal basis to really get to know them i.e., their like and dislikes and capabilities.

6) What motivates us to pursue an ideal.

TRADITIONAL

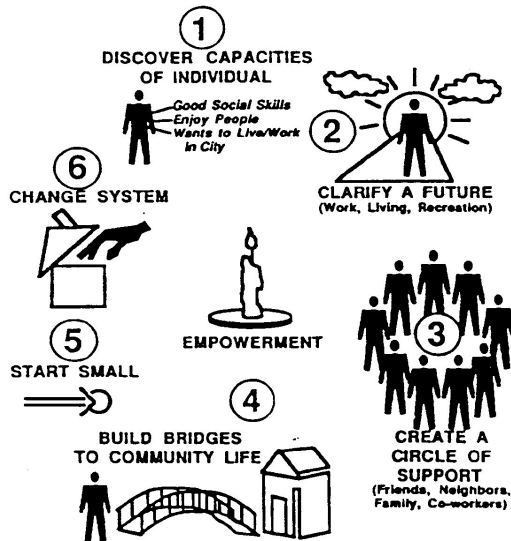
Coercion and competition.

NEW

Build relationships, bend resources and rules to get people what they need.

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Personal Futures Planning Process for Change

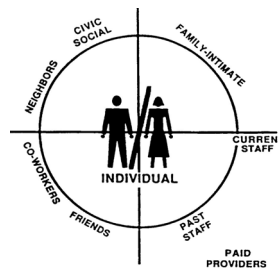


There are six basic rules established to Increase the likelihood of a positive plan outcome for Individuals.

- 1) All persons involved with the planning (individual receiving services-the family direct service staff and other professionals) must have a clear and shared appreciation of the plan..
- 2) There must be a common focus and understanding of a specific positive future-A Common Dream.
- 3) The group must agree to meet regularly to brainstorm and make a commitment to act. (These people generally have the biggest investment in making the plan succeed.)
- 4) Group needs to involve family member or advocate.
- 5) Group needs to include a bridge builder who will investigate the community to determine, based on the individual's strengths, positive outcome and pave the way.
- 6) One key agency involved in the individual's plan must be committed to o organisational change.

RELATIONSHIPS AND BRIDGE BUILDING

As previously reported in the Quality—A New Way of Thinking article, the opportunity to keep and develop meaningful relationships with others should be a major goal of all programs. In order to appreciate relationships already established, the future planning process has developed a tool known as the Relationship Map. This map will assist in the identification of those individuals who are most important to the individual being served. This knowledge is of utmost importance and will assist in the identification of persons within the individual's circle of support.



The impact of these developments in person-centred services has not yet tipped the balance in the life experiences of people with developmental disabilities. Madeleine Will, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services summarized the new vision when she stated:

"Citizens with developmental disabilities want the same opportunities and ought to have the same opportunities as other members of the community— not because it is cost effective, even though it is, and not because it is prudent, even though it is. They should have the same opportunities because they deserve it." (Will, 1984)

In retrospect, futures planning is a:

- a move from fixed and predetermined expectations of persons with disabilities (whether mild or severe) to higher and more demanding expectations by the individuals themselves, their families and service providers.
- a move from short-term, developmental planning to life-long, functional planning.
- a move from providing a service continuum with emphasis on 'facilities' to seeking a service array that adapts generic resources by providing the assistance and support as needed.
- a move from fragmented grouping of separate services to recognition of the need for a holistic, interdependent and integrated service system.
- a move from a system of service delivery to creation of individualized supports.

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WHAT CAN YOU PERSONALLY DO TO SUPPORT THIS NEW VISION

As consumers and parents, it is important that you participate in the team meetings and individualize the planning process. Key questions to remember

1. *How will the plan or the activities assist the individual with the disability to live and participate in the community?*
2. *Would the goals and objectives (activities) be appropriate for a person of the same age who is not disabled?*
3. *Is the objective geared toward the future and will it provide the individual with functional skills?*
4. *Is the development and support of friendships a part of the plan?*

- Find out what is feasible and request that providers also know the state of the art.

As Advocates:

- Contact legislators and policy makers requesting that they ensure funding is linked to the achievement of valued outcomes. Demonstrate how quality services lead to independence, productivity and integration.
- Invite your legislator to visit services and programs regularly. Encourage them to talk to the individuals whose lives are affected by these services and programs.

As Board Members, Committee Members and Professionals:

- Be knowledgeable about state of the art programs.
- Review our practices and the various programs serving individuals with disabilities to ensure that individuals are treated with respect and dignity, are age appropriate, functional and community referenced.
- Respond to the needs of individuals ensuring that they are involved in decision making.

Continually ask. "Are we doing the right thing. are

we responding to the critical needs and are we being proactive?" Request regular and frequent feedback from consumers and families.

As Citizens, Friends and Neighbours:

- Utilize your relationships in the community to assist persons with disabilities in becoming a part of the community.
- Welcome individuals with disabilities into your neighbourhood, school, business, church, social club.
- Visit the services and programs offered by your community.
- Think about how many friends you have who are not paid to talk to you, and compare that to the number of friends in the lives of people with disabilities
- Look around your community and discover who is missing or has had to leave your community because services and supports were not available. Consider what you can do to help the situation.

"All Communities depend on the capacity of people---on their fullness, on their possibility---the heart of community is 'capacity'. If we want to create community we build on capacity of the individuals we serve and not on needs." (John McKnight~ Associate Director, Centre for Urban Affairs & Policy Research. North-western University)

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A New Way of Thinking
State of Minnesota, Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities

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