

SELF DETERMINATION

Self-Determination is a fundamental human right. It means that people have the *freedom* to decide how they want to live their lives and receive the *support* they need. It means having *control* over their resources and taking *responsibility* for their decisions and actions. Very simply, it means getting a life!

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Understanding of and commitment to the following principles are essential to ensure this basic human right. Each action and decision made within the system should be weighed against these principles. Personal plans should also be weighed against these principles to ensure that the road to self-determination is not being impeded.

FREEDOM

People have the right to choose how they will live their lives, where and with whom. When people need help, it is friends and family closest to them who assist them in broadening their experiences and exercising their right to choose. It is essential that each person have a network or circle of support chosen by them.

RELATIONSHIPS

The relationships a person has with others are like precious gems and should be treated in that way. A relationship must be treasured, nurtured, and protected. Those with whom the individual has real relationships provide the strength, assistance, and security, which ensures each person's well being. The development of new freely given relationships is crucial.

CONTRIBUTION & COMMUNITY

Everyone has the ability to contribute to their community in a meaningful way. Giving of ourselves helps us to establish a sense of belonging and identity. Community membership includes having an opportunity to be employed, to have your own home, to be truly involved in the routines of the community and to make a difference in the lives of others.

RESPONSIBILITY

Individuals, as they take greater control and authority over their lives and resources, assume greater responsibility for their decisions and actions. They are also responsible to contribute to their supports if resources exist to do so. They will find their power, become self-advocates, and communicate their needs. Professionals and staff work for the individual rather than for the system. Families, friends, and staff assist people to create more meaningful relationships, link them with needed supports, remove barriers, develop safety networks, and help make dreams come true.

AUTHORITY

People have the power to make decisions and truly control their lives. This includes authority over financial resources, as well as authority to determine what supports are needed, how they will be implemented and by whom. People have control of hiring and evaluating those who will provide support.

DREAMING

All people have hopes and dreams, which guide the actions they take and are most meaningful to them. A commitment to helping people determine their dreams, respecting those dreams, and helping make dreams come true is crucial.

DIGNITY & RESPECT

All people have an inherent right to be treated with dignity and to be respected as a whole person. Disability is secondary to the development of a full and meaningful life. Through life's journey, most of our greatest lessons are learned when we make choices that we later realize were mistakes. All people have the right to the dignity of risk. The network of support makes risk possible by weaving a safety net, which provides safety and supports growth.

SUPPORT & FISCAL CONSERVATION

Making things happen does not always require money. It is imperative that alternatives to paid supports be found. When support must be purchased, people will get what they need, pay only for what they get, make real investments, spend money more efficiently, and make adjustments when they are needed. To find the best quality for the most reasonable price, people are free to purchase in and out of the system.

WHATEVER IT TAKES

An attitude that nothing is impossible, as long as it is legal and causes no harm, is required. "No, we can't" as an answer is replaced by "How can we make this happen?" Those who work in the system become barrier removers.

LIMITS ON THE USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

- The choice cannot do harm or be illegal.
- The choice must be available to all.
- The choice must not be devaluing.
- The choice cannot require congregation of people with disabilities.