

# Overview of Person-Centered Planning

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*Person-centered planning is a process, directed by the participant, intended to identify the strengths, capacities, preferences, needs and desired outcomes of the participant.*

The Centers of Medicare and Medicaid (CMS)

Government and private human services agencies throughout the country are shifting from a focus on agency practices and system rules to being more centered on the people with disabilities, what each individual wants for their life, and how people with disabilities can have fully inclusive community lives. One of the most powerful methods for achieving those goals is person-centered planning, which has a variety of formats.

The person-centered planning process is centered on the person and not on the state, the provider, or the family. It supports the growing movement across the country to change from a system driven service planning to a person-directed process where the individual identifies what is important to him or her and, through the process, expands the circle of supports to assist the individual to achieve his or her goals while maintaining safeguards.

It is a comprehensive strategy for putting necessary services and supports in place to help people achieve their goals. Person centered planning is driven by the individual, but works best when it includes other people (both paid and unpaid) who can contribute valuable information to the process.

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities publication book "It's My Choice..." defines person-centered planning as "one way to figuring out where someone is going (life goals) and what kinds of support they need to get there." It is about supporting people in the choices they make about their life.

Person-Centered-Planning is a process of listening and learning from elders and individuals with disabilities about their lives and the goals and dreams that they would like to achieve. Many individuals have life goals and dreams they want to accomplish, or they may desire change in their living environments, employment, day activities, or who they spend time with. Throughout the planning process it is most important to keep the individual at the center of the planning process. Paid staff, friends, relatives, and others are there to support them to make decisions about their own life.

Essential components for a positive person-centered planning process include (adapted from Cornell University):

- An environment of active people
- A climate of respect
- A climate of acceptance
- An atmosphere of trust
- A climate of self discovery
- A climate of openness
- An emphasis on the uniquely personal contribution of each member
- A climate where difference is considered good
- A climate which supports risk taking
- A climate which supports the right to make decisions
- A climate which supports the right to make mistakes

The key elements of person-centered planning include:

- Is driven by the person and his/her preferences
- Establishes a vision based on strengths, capacities and preferences
- Based on informal and formal knowledge and supports
- Requires collaborative teamwork
- Requires a commitment to action
- Process uses a facilitator

Person-centered planning begins with a clear and shared appreciation of the gifts and capacities of the person. Committed people develop a common understanding the person's dream and meet regularly to brainstorm and act on commitments.

One key elements of person-centered planning is the development and involvement of a Circle of Support. A Circle of Support refers to a network, group, or "circle" of supportive people to help reach daily and life goals. A Circle of Support is made up of people who care for the person, advocates and includes people who can offer assistance in achieving the person's goals. The person identifies the people who they want as active participants in the development and implementation of the plan.

A Circle of Support:

- Creates a social network around a person
- Improves and intensifies relationships
- Keeps people safe, protected and in control
- Ensures choice and fulfillment
- Shifts the balance of power more equally
- Allows people to dream and reach their aspirations
- Encourages individuality and self determination
- Increases motivation and support

## **Process for implementation person-centered planning**

- (1) Identify a neutral facilitator.
- (2) Facilitator contacts individual (or someone close to the person if assistance is required for communication) and asks him/her to pick a place to meet that they are comfortable in.
- (3) Facilitator meets with individual (and preferably a neutral person if assistance is required for communication or if they would feel more comfortable having someone that knows them well present).
- (4) At initial meeting (or possibly two or three meetings if needed), facilitator will take the time to explain the purpose of the meeting(s), discuss a little bit about the facilitator's role, discuss the person-centered planning process and its objectives, discuss who the individual would like to be involved in their person-centered plan, and discuss next steps.
- (5) If deemed necessary, the facilitator would meet with a family member to ensure all critical information is obtained prior to the first person-centered planning meeting.
- (6) All team members as requested by the individual are invited to the first meeting. At this first meeting, information is collected around who the person is, what his/her hopes and dreams are, what is working in their life, and what they would like to change. To the extent there is time, specific short and long-term objectives are identified with timeframes and who is responsible to working with the individual to accomplish the objectives. An initial decision is made as to the frequency of the meetings and who will be involved. The next meeting is scheduled with an agenda established.
- (7) Meetings are held as frequently as needed to complete the planning process and work on implementing the objectives established. There is not a set standard as to how often meetings should be held. They should be scheduled based on the individuals needs.
- (8) Most importantly, as objectives are identified and tasks established, the person-centered planning process ensures there is movement towards responding to the outcomes established by the individual to improve his/her quality of life.