

CHAPTER V

SUPPORT OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

A GUIDELINE FOR CONSUMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

What does it mean when someone tells you that you have a developmental disability? It means that you have one or more serious problems that started before you became an adult. These problems usually last for a person's whole life. Because of the disability, three or more of your major life areas are very limited: self-care, hearing or talking, learning, physical movement, self-direction, living alone, or making a living. These disabilities can be called pervasive developmental disorders or mental retardation. Pervasive developmental disorders are often defined by impairments in social interaction, communication and the presence of repetitive types of behavior such as those seen in Autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Mental retardation is defined by problems in thinking and may be profound, severe, moderate or mild. You must have an evaluation by a social worker, psychologist or doctor to know if you have a developmental disability.

Some people with developmental disabilities may also have other types of problems more frequently than the rest of us: health problems, dental problems, earlier aging, side effects from medications, difficulty coping with evaluation and treatment, problems with weight and exercise.

Because of the problems mentioned above, you may need life-long supports to reach your goals and to live the life you want. Sometimes these supports start in school where you may learn academic skills and other functional skills such as how to ride public transportation, how to make a bed, how to budget money and shop, or how to cook. You may have also identified some goals for the type of work you may do later in life. When you are an adult, you may need additional support in your daily life. Upon receiving services from your mental health agency you will have a very special type of planning called "person-centered planning". This is a way of helping you identify the supports you will need to achieve your hopes, dreams and desires. This planning is your right and is required by the State of Michigan for anyone who receives services through the mental health system. This type of planning will help you build a plan for community life and will honor your preferences, choices and abilities.

Person-centered planning starts with a worker helping you name people that you might want to attend a meeting to help you plan. These people might include your mother, father, sister or brother and other family members. You could also invite neighborhood friends, friends from school, and your teachers, people from your church, or people who are part of groups that you belong to. Finally, you may include other workers who are helping you to reach your goals. It can include anyone that you want to have at the meeting. You can also decide if there is anyone that you do not want to have at the meeting.

There are many ways to help you plan. Planning must be done in a way that makes you feel comfortable. The goal of planning is to help you reach your dreams for the future.

The plan should include:

- Supports and strengths that you have;
- Supports from your family, guardian, friends and significant others;
- Any resources available to help you in the community or in your neighborhood;

- Other public supports available to anyone in the community, and finally;
- Supports and services you need from the mental health agency.

To help with this planning process, you and your family and friends will be asked things like:

- Where do you want to live?
- How do you want to spend your time each day?
- Who do you want to spend time with?
- What are some great things about you?
- What are your favorite things?
- What things don't you like?
- What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

Person-centered planning must:

- Base choices on your strengths;
- Help you gain access to resources already available in your community or neighborhood;
- Coordinate services around your life rather than around the needs of staff;
- Recognize the abilities of friends and families to assist you in achieving your dreams;
- Recognize that despite your disabilities, you are the most important person in planning your supports.

Sometimes people will need help to make choices because they haven't had a chance to choose in the past. Your worker can explain your choices and help you try out things that you have not experienced in the past. The worker must also help you with any difficulties you may have communicating your choices. This can include helping you by being your voice if you are unable to speak, helping others to identify what makes you happy, and making sure that any personal or cultural preferences you have are included in your plan. The worker will also help others communicate with you.

The worker is required to help you figure out the right steps to reach your goals and to make sure that your health and safety needs are met. A person's choices are influenced by the resources they have. Your plan will include these resources and assist in directing the services you receive. Sometimes you may not always see things that might be a problem for your health and safety, such as: medical conditions, places where you go, or behaviors that you do that may cause harm to you or others. It is your worker's job to help you identify those areas and to make a plan so that you are healthy and safe. Sometimes unsafe behaviors require the use of a behavior plan or medications. A behavior plan is a structured way to help teach you skills that will allow you to be safe and successful. Medications may also be used if you need additional assistance in learning to control your behavior.

Person-centered planning is not a one-time thing that happens once per year. Your life changes every day. You meet new people, move to new places, change your goals for the future, develop new support systems, and find new resources in the community that can

assist you, or discover new interests. These changes must be included in your person-centered plan as they come up. Your worker will help you arrange another meeting to make changes in the plan. They will make sure that these changes are communicated to others who are important to you.

The best way for you to stay connected is by using the resources that are available to you in your community. This can mean living where you want, shopping at your local store, attending your local church, being involved in community groups, and having a network of friends to do things with. Sometimes you may need additional support to help you be able to do these things better. Your mental health agency will assist you in finding resources that are able to help you. When there are no resources available, your mental health agency may provide those necessary supports through one of its providers. Here are some areas where you may need additional assistance:

Self-Direction

Self-direction means increasing your ability to make your own decisions about your life. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Opportunities to make your own choices.
- Practice identifying what is important about a particular choice and how to prioritize what is most important.
- Help in identifying problems with certain choices.
- Teaching caregivers to support self-direction, including allowing you to learn from mistakes.
- Presenting choices to you in a way that you can understand.

Health Management

Health management means supporting you to take care of your own health needs to the best of your ability. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Giving you information about your health and healthcare.
- Advocating on your behalf with healthcare providers.
- Providing you support when you have a healthcare procedure.
- Assistance in managing your healthcare for you if you need this. This can include giving you medication, helping you to prevent problems, providing good nutrition, and identifying times when you may have health problem.

Safety Management

Safety management means helping you identify times when you or others may be in danger. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you this area include:

- Changing your environment so that you may be safer.
- Providing sex education so that you know what is appropriate and what is not.
- Identifying safety needs for you.
- Providing fire safety training and community safety training.

- Providing education so that you know if you are at risk of becoming a victim of abuse or neglect.
- Using role play and pictures to help teach you how to respond to unsafe situations.
- Teaching you how to use emergency number.
- Teaching you vehicle safety.

Social Skills

Social skills are ways that you interact with other people to make your needs and wants known. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Helping you identify areas where you might like to improve social skills.
- Giving you lots of chances to practice social skills in places where you are comfortable.
- Giving you chances for feedback and reinforcement.
- Breaking skills down into smaller, easier to learn steps.
- Assisting you in practicing skills in the community.
- Providing education to family and friends in ways to assist you in learning new skills.
- Teaching you better ways to express negative emotions.

Self-Care

Self-care involves taking care of your day-to-day needs like bathing, eating, using the bathroom and taking medications. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Modifying your home to make it easier for you to take care of yourself.
- Providing items like special spoons or other equipment to make it easier for you to take care of yourself.
- Providing total assistance if you need this for self-care.
- Providing reminders and prompts for those things you can do yourself.

Supported Living

Supported living means the supports that you need to live as independently as possible. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Assisting you in choosing where you want to live and the type of housing.
- Making modifications, as needed, to the environment so that you have better mobility.
- Assisting you with other community resources such as a personal response system.
- Assisting you in living with who you want.

Community Use

Community use means assisting you in increasing your involvement with the community. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Assisting you with activities that involve people without disabilities.
- Teaching you how to interact with community people such as a bank teller or a grocery store clerk.
- Teaching you what common signs mean, such as restroom signs.
- Helping you to obtain an identification card.
- Assisting you with skills to use public transportation.
- Helping you to learn street safety.

Functional Academics

Functional academics are skills you learn that assist you with daily living, such as how to make change or read a grocery list. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Giving you opportunities for enough practice so you can learn a skill.
- Giving you chances to practice the skill in the community.
- Helping you obtain special equipment, if needed, for help in these areas.

Employment

Supported employment is a service to help you get a job and provide you with support to be successful in a job. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Assisting you in finding a job that matches your skills and desires.
- Breaking down the job into small steps to help you more easily learn the job.
- Assisting you in getting special equipment that will help you with the job.
- Helping you identify your strengths for a particular job.
- Describing, for you and the employer, the specific strengths that you have.
- Helping you with resumes and interview preparation.
- Helping you problem solve if you are having trouble with a job.
- Talking to your employer to find other ways to assist you if you are having trouble.
- Helping you with transportation to and from the job.
- Job follow-up as needed to see how you are doing.

Leisure Skills

Leisure skills are activities that you find enjoyable that may be done with other people. Some of the supports that may be offered to help you in this area include:

- Helping you make choices about what leisure activities you want to do.
- Helping you with planning when your interests in leisure activities change.
- Assisting you with needed transportation so you can do the leisure activities that you want to do.

- Helping you with special equipment that you may need so you can participate in desired activities.
- Ensuring that any items you use, such as bicycles, are in good working order.
- Offering opportunities to participate with non-disabled people.
- Assisting you in building relationships with other people.