



Community Support for People with Developmental Disabilities

Updated January 2015

Research shows that community support affords greater opportunities for full participation in social and economic life and yields demonstrably greater benefits for individuals with disabilities than institutional care.¹ Additionally, people who move from institutions to community settings have experiences that help them to improve their adaptive behavior skills.² Despite compelling research and recent transition of hundreds of people from developmental centers, Louisiana still ranks first in the country for the number of individuals per capita living in intermediate care facilities for people with developmental disabilities (ICFs/DD).³

The Developmental Disabilities Council believes that individuals with disabilities, “regardless of the severity of their disability, should be afforded the opportunity to make decisions for themselves and to live in typical homes and communities where they can exercise their full rights and responsibilities as citizens, and that children, regardless of the severity of their disability, need families and enduring relationships with adults in a nurturing home environment.” (Act 378 of 1989; State of Louisiana).

These guiding principles should drive all community supports and services such that they are designed and delivered to maximize success, in the most individualized environment and enable individuals the right to exercise control over all services and support their right of self-determination. The support system sometimes fails to meet this standard; an individual does not fail, but the person is the one who is often penalized by losing his/her home. This must change. The support system must keep trying until it succeeds.

Services should be responsive to the needs of the individual and their family members, rather than fitting people into available programs. Unfortunately, without availability of appropriate services, *when* they are needed, many families must seek out-of-home placement. Far too many Louisianans with developmental disabilities continue to live in residential facilities providing 24-hour services when they require far fewer hours of support.

Since a quality work force is critical to ensure successful community living outcomes, it is imperative that direct support workers receive competitive, living wages and are provided a graduated compensation structure that recognizes advanced skill competencies. Adequate training and technical assistance, particularly related to effective skills and strategies with supporting people with challenging behaviors and medical needs should be available throughout the state. Regulations and policies regarding administration of non-complex medical procedures should ensure service providers are able to provide basic assistance to individuals.



Community support for individuals with disabilities is cost effective but more importantly it allows for greater quality of life, fuller participation in society, larger social networks, and positive behavioral outcomes. In Louisiana, high quality support in the community should be the guiding principle for services for people with developmental disabilities and all public policy should facilitate that outcome.

Recommendations:

1. Build system capacity to provide high quality individualized supports and services in the community for people with developmental disabilities by
 - a) Providing adequate funding to ensure
 - Services are available *when* they are needed,
 - A stable workforce of direct support professionals (DSPs) who receive competitive compensation, and
 - A qualified workforce of DSPs who demonstrate an appropriate skill set and have access to a graduated certification process with corresponding compensation increases.
2. Implement a Money Follows the Person program to allow individuals residing in private ICFs/DD the option to move into the home and community of their choice.
3. Make out of home placement unnecessary by
 - a) increasing the capacity of community providers to serve people with challenging needs through
 - rate enhancements and
 - training, technical assistance and collaboration with other agencies,
 - b) enhancing the safety net system for individuals in each region of the state by:
 - expanding criteria for and the number of emergency waiver slots available,
 - implementing a comprehensive crisis prevention and intervention system for individuals in the community including proactive preventive services and coordinated 24-hour crisis response services.

References:

- ¹ Neely-Barnes, S., Marcenko, M. Weber, L. (2008). Does Choice Influence Quality of Life for People with Mild Intellectual Disabilities? *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 1, 12 – 26.
- ² Kozma, A., Mansell, J., Beadle-Brown, J., (2009). *Outcomes in Different Residential Settings for People with Intellectual Disability: A Systematic Review*. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 114, 193 – 222.
- ³ In-Home and Residential Long-Term Supports and Services for Persons with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities: Status and Trends Through 2012, Research and Training Center on Community Living Institute on Community Integration/UCEDD, University of Minnesota, 2014, Table 3.4.