



Self-determination of People with Developmental Disabilities

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Self-determination is defined in the DD Act as “individuals with developmental disabilities, with appropriate assistance, having—

- a) The ability and opportunity to communicate and make personal decisions;
- b) The ability and opportunity to communicate choices and exercise control over the type and intensity of services, supports, and other assistance the individuals receive;
- c) The authority to control resources to obtain needed services, supports, and other assistance;
- d) Opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, their communities; and
- e) Support, including financial support, to advocate for themselves and others, to develop leadership skills, through training in self-advocacy, to participate in coalitions, to educate policymakers, and to play a role in the development of public policies that affect individuals with developmental disabilities.”¹

The opportunity to make meaningful decisions about one’s own life is a fundamental right that should be afforded to all adults. Unfortunately, often people with developmental disabilities face a daily struggle to express their right to self-determination. The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council supports individuals being in charge of their own lives to the fullest extent possible. The service system, families, and friends of individuals with developmental disabilities should support their right to make decisions about their lives and support them in those decisions.

One way in which the principle of self-determination is afforded to individuals with developmental disabilities is through self-direction. Using the self-direction model of service delivery provides individuals with maximum decision-making authority over certain services and also gives them direct responsibility to manage those services. Self-direction promotes personal choice and control over the delivery of services, including who provides the services and how services are provided.²

However, this model is not for everyone, and individuals using the traditional service provider model can still achieve self-determination in their lives if providers respect the wishes of the individual and support them in making decisions. Friends and family also play a key role in supporting the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to make their own decisions and respecting the actual choices they make.

Whether through self-direction, the traditional service provider model, or natural support, the choices of the individual on where they live, work, learn, and play – and with whom they spend their time – should be honored by state agencies, providers, families, and friends. In Louisiana, the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to have power over their own lives must be a central focus of all services for people with developmental disabilities.



References:

- 1 P.L.106-402 Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000
https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2016-12/dd_act_2000.pdf
- 2 Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Self-directed Services.
<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/ltss/self-directed/index.html>