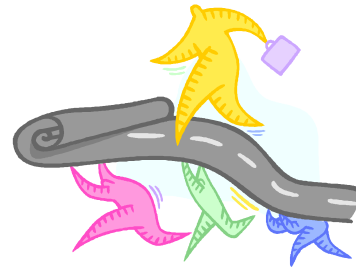


Supporting *individualized access*

IDEA 1: THE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS COALITION: VISION, VALUES AND EFFORTS TO BUILD INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES IN NEW MEXICO



Never doubt that a small group of citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Meade



IN A NUTSHELL:

We are a group of people with developmental disabilities, family members, professionals who serve them, advocates and state personnel who want full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. We are from different New Mexican communities. We are the Community Solutions Coalition.

Our coalition started with a group coming together to envision the future New Mexicans with developmental disabilities and their allies desire.

Our vision is that individuals who use DDS funded supports:

- * Are the same as individuals who do not use these supports
- * Have the same opportunities and choices as everyone else
- * Learn through successes as well as mistakes
- * Are in control of their own lives and are not managed by others
- * Love and are loved
- * Are heard with an open mind and honored for what they and their significant others have to say

Our Values:

- * Our vision (above) guides our actions.
- * Each individual has gifts and capabilities – we will learn what these are.
- * Individuals who use DDS funded supports are full and equal citizens.
- * Each individual who uses DDS funded supports, as well as people close to them, is listened to and really understood.
- * Employment is life-enriching.
- * Individuals of working age are employable.
- * Individuals who receive DDS funded supports belong and make valued contributions to the community.
- * Individuals exercise meaningful choice.
- * Individuals who use DDS funded supports are at the table for important decisions.
- * Communities are the first places we look to for supports and opportunities.
- * We always work to expand a person's life as he/she desires and to improve related supports.

- * Everyone's input is important to this process and we work hard to help each other to understand what we are doing and where we want to go. We have high expectations for ourselves, our supports and our communities.

The Community Solutions Summits

After creating this vision and values, we invited others to join us at two statewide meetings or "summits" to talk about them. At these meetings, we identified those topics most important to New Mexicans with developmental disabilities:

- ensuring service systems support people enjoying a high quality of life;
- developing inclusive services and communities;
- supporting people with developmental disabilities to advocate for themselves;
- taking a look at how guardianship affects people;
- sharing good stories about people with developmental disabilities enjoying life.

Through the summits, Coalition participants created five Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

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(PATH) groups to figure out the steps it wanted to take around each topic. These PATH groups have been working on solutions to these five issues since November 2006.

LIVING IT: A SUCCESS STORY

The Taos Awareness Project

For a story of one New Mexican's community's efforts to become more inclusive, take a look at the success story about the *Taos Awareness Project* at the end of this idea paper!

**BRINGING IT TO LIFE:
THOUGHTS AND IDEAS**

The Community Solutions Coalition invites and welcomes new participants! Take a look at the information provided about each PATH workgroup and call toll free: **877-696-1472** if you're interested in joining any or all of them!

**Information about
Each PATH Workgroup**

***How the System Affects
People with Developmental
Disabilities* PATH Workgroup**

Many New Mexicans with developmental disabilities receive support services paid for by the State of New Mexico. The State establishes rules for these services and expectations about them. The *Systems* PATH workgroup wants to make sure that these rules and expectations make sense and result in New Mexicans with developmental disabilities having better quality lives. The Systems PATH group has recently merged with the Advisory Council on Quality's Policy Subcommittee.

***Promoting Full Integration*
PATH Workgroup**

Many New Mexicans with developmental disabilities receive services that separate them from the larger community. They may work separately. They may eat lunch separately. They may not have the opportunity to build relationships with people in their communities who do not have disabilities.

The *Full Integration* PATH workgroup believes that *all* people deserve to be a valued part of their communities. This workgroup promotes community-based supports that enable people with developmental disabilities to be integrated and *included* in their

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local communities. They are working to collect examples of how community-based supports are *better* for people and to find practical ways of encouraging families, service providers and communities to support facility-free services for New Mexicans with developmental disabilities.

***Promoting the Self Advocacy of People with Developmental Disabilities* PATH Workgroup**

People deserve to be respected and in control of their lives. Yet, historically people with developmental disabilities have been controlled by others. Today, more and more people with developmental disabilities are claiming their right to make their own decisions. When people speak up for themselves, it's called *self advocacy*.

The *Self Advocacy* PATH workgroup supports New Mexicans with developmental disabilities to advocate for themselves. The group is working to make sure that New Mexicans with developmental disabilities have the advocacy skills and support:

1. To make decisions about their lives and services.
2. To serve in leadership positions and have their

voices heard throughout the state.

3. To work with and be listened to by policy and rule-makers so they can advocate for what make sense for people with developmental disabilities.
4. To build a coordinated, statewide network of self advocates.

In order to meet their fourth goal, the *Self-Advocacy* PATH group has merged with the Southeastern Self-Advocacy Coalition and the New Mexico People First group to create one, coordinated, statewide network of self advocates.

***Telling the Stories of Community and Personal Experience of People with Developmental Disabilities* PATH Workgroup**

Sometimes the best way to share information is through a good story. New Mexicans with developmental disabilities often have powerful stories about their lives that have never been told but can teach us all important things. The *Storytelling* PATH workgroup wants to support New Mexicans with developmental disabilities in sharing stories about their experiences, their jobs, their relationships and their services.

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The workgroup believes telling stories is an effective way for New Mexicans to appreciate people with developmental disabilities as full and equal citizens.

Guardianship, Alternatives and the Impact on People with Developmental Disabilities PATH Workgroup

Guardianship is the legal process that takes away a person's right to make his own decisions on certain things. Many New Mexicans with developmental disabilities have *guardians* who make decisions about where they live, how they spend their money and other fundamental life decisions.

The *Guardianship* PATH group supports people with disabilities in making their *own* decisions whenever possible. They hope to achieve these goals by supporting efforts that

- 1) educate support teams, families, the service delivery system and the legal system about alternatives to guardianship;
- 2) reexamine the guardianship status of New Mexicans with disabilities;
- 3) support people with developmental disabilities in

learning how to use their own voice in making decisions and advocating for themselves.

To learn more about the five PATH groups, go to the DDS website at:

<http://www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd/PromisingPractes/PATH/TakingActionNM.htm>

✓ **CHECK IT OUT:**
GOOD RESOURCES

- <http://www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd//PromisingPractes/PATH/PATHtoBetterLives.htm>
- Asset Based Community Development: When People Care Enough to Act. Mike Green with Henry Moore and John O'Brien. Toronto: Inclusion Press, 2006.
- *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges.* C. Otto Scharmer The Society for Organizational Learning www.solonline.org
- *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed.* Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Patton www.amazon.ca

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TRY IT OUT: ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES AND COMPELLING QUESTIONS

- Join one of the PATH groups.
Go to the DDS website at:
<http://www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd/PromisingPractes/PATH/TakingActionNM.htm> to learn how to join a PATH.
- Invite people to come together in your community to talk about issues that interest you. Make sure to invite a variety of people, get together in a comfortable space, have some food and ask compelling questions. Listen to the discussion and make action plans based on what people really want to do something about.

LIVING IT: A SUCCESS STORY

GOING LOCAL TO PROMOTE FULL INCLUSION: THE TAOS AWARENESS PROJECT

As a result of the Summit's discussion around *inclusion* and the principles of *asset based community development*, a group of Taos citizens have begun meeting to think creatively about building a fully inclusive community that recognizes the individual gifts *each* citizen offers.

This group began when a Summit participant had coffee with a fellow Taos citizen who is equally committed to people with developmental disabilities. Together, they invited a small group of community members to come together and talk about their town and what *inclusion* means. These citizens brought various experiences and perspectives but share a love for their Taos community and know a lot of people *in* the community. The group met in a church rectory one evening and talked about what a fully inclusive Taos community would look like. The discussion was not about how to improve disability services but rather how to build a more inclusive community.

After meeting regularly for the last two months, the group has named itself the Taos Awareness Project and has identified those pieces of community life they feel are the most important for promoting full inclusion. These priorities are:

- expanding the physical accessibility of local buildings;
- working with local law enforcement and other "first responders" to build capacity when supporting a citizen who has developmental disabilities;
- creating more inclusive social opportunities for citizens with developmental disabilities, particularly children;
- working with local school systems to promote inclusive education.

As word gets out about the Project's efforts, others in the Taos community have asked or have been invited to join. The Project sees one of its primary functions as connecting citizens interested in a particular element of inclusion with other citizens who can help. While the Project is now shifting from its conceptual stage to taking action on its interests, one member observed, "There have been changes already just because of the conversations."

The *Taos Awareness Project* is not a formal service or program. It has no paid staff or formal funding. The Project is simply a group of citizens that wants its beloved community to be fully inclusive and to embrace the gifts each community member has to offer.

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