Champions Assure Progress is Linked to the *ISP*

IDEA 1: HOW TO BE A CHAMPION: IDEAS FOR INTERDISCPLINARY TEAMS AND TEAM MEMBERS

What we believe can happen dramatically influences our drive and accomplishments. This is also true of our expectations of others. Teams need to continually elevate their expectations regarding individuals whom they support.

- Angela Pacheco and Teresa Tomashot

IN A NUTSHELL:

Team members are in a unique and privileged position of deeply influencing what a person's life looks like. They guide a person's decisions. They advise a person on how to use his service funding. They largely determine what the person's services (and even life) look like. It is a role that should be taken humbly and in the spirit of truly supporting a person.

The very best teams include *champions* for the person and become *champion* teams.

LIVING IT: A SUCCESS STORY
Dorothy and Her Supports

Through a personal profiling session, Dorothy said she wanted a job. Her team was surprised since she was 60 years old at the time and had no previous work history. As a result, Dorothy got a job at a restaurant that she loved and where the regulars knew her by name. With her team's support, Dorothy made a career change and now works at OK Travel Center. Dorothy saves most of her money in her own savings account.

Her staff and her team also encourage her to make friends and do things on her own. Her team fully supports her membership in the Knights of Columbus and she won a recent volunteer award for her various community contributions!

BRINGING IT TO LIFE:
THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

Ideas for Outside the Meeting

People Are People: Connect First as Human Beings.

- Spend time with the person you support in your "off hours" sharing mutual interests: a movie, a ballgame, a horseback riding trip.

- Work from an assumption that the person you support is your equal. Period. End of story.

- Work to support each other in different ways—look for ways to contribute to positive energy.

Work To See the Person in His Most Positive Light

- Model the respect you hope others will give the person you support.

- *Flip 'negative' behavior*. Is laughing loudly or talking a lot really a "negative" behavior? Support a person to find places where her "negative" behavior isn't a big deal or is even appreciated.

Support Each Other's Learning of What Person-Centered Support Means.

- Invite everyone on the person's team to commit to stretching a little outside his or her comfort zone if doing so is right for the person. For example, if a person's mom is anxious about her son living in his own apartment, ask if she will consider going with her son to *meet* others living in their own homes.

- Share articles, websites, books and conference materials that may deepen each member's understanding of how to support a person.

- Challenge your *own* assumptions about the person and your motivation for being involved in his life. Share new lessons you've learned about your own assumptions with others. Doing so creates a safe space for others to acknowledge and explore their own biases.

- Help organize a personal futures planning session for the person, where the person invites anyone he wants and only the people he wants. The session is about dreaming and

not necessarily about paid services.

- Attend "best practice" conferences as a group and talk about what you learned.

Ideas for Team Meetings

Create a Relaxing Space for Conversation

- Get out of the conference room. Meet where people connect most comfortably: at their homes, in a meeting room at a favorite restaurant, at a park.

- Go where it's quiet. Natural light helps too.

- *Peace Begins with a Smile*
  -Mother Theresa
  Try to check any frustration you're having at the door. The person deserves positive, attentive support. Just smiling helps.

- Consider starting each meeting with a positive quote, reading or something else chosen by the person. Invite the group members to share what they're grateful for or share a success story about the person at the center of the meeting.

Fun Is Effective

- Consider partying at the meeting: bring fun food, celebrate accomplishments with music, balloons or whatever makes the person happy.

- Look for opportunities to laugh. Consider inviting everyone to come to the meeting and share their favorite joke, their favorite "Top Ten" list from David Letterman, or their favorite movie clip from a funny movie.

- Go party as a group afterwards. Go out to eat. To a ballgame. To a movie. To play pool. Bond as people.

It's All About Her

- Support a person to lead, facilitate or contribute to his meeting. If she's falling asleep, chances are there's a better way to involve her or structure the meeting. See the *Check It Out* section for resources about supporting a person to lead or participate in her own meeting.

- Listen *deeply* to the person as if you had all the time in the world…and ask follow-up questions.

A Proposed Order of Conversation: Person First, Team Second, ISP Form Third

- Try keeping the general ideas and the general questions from the ISP in your head and then frame the meeting as a conversation with the person. Don't write immediately. Listen. Ask follow up questions.

- Invite positive input from the team after the person has had an uninterrupted opportunity to talk about what he wants in his life and in his services.

- As a team, consider identifying an ISP "note taker" who is quietly completing the ISP form based on the conversation. Then work together as a team at the end of the meeting to make sure everything is captured.

- If you're responsible for preparing the ISP, come prepared with the simple parts of the form (a person's name, address, etc.) already completed. This leaves more time for creative, person-centered conversation.

Being Sensitive To the History: It takes a lot of guts to share your entire history with a bunch of people.

Before starting a meeting, consider asking the person for permission to discuss their story. Some people enjoy telling their story and will readily share it with others. If so, support them to tell it and ask questions that invite them to share new information.

Other people have grown weary of telling and retelling their story. If that's the case, here are a few suggestions:

- Build from what history you already have. Instead of expecting a person to retell his story every year, ask him to share what's happened since you last met.

- Minimize the negative history that is no longer applicable. People make mistakes. People grow. People change. Support the person you serve to release the part of his identity that no longer applies to him. If he hasn't started fires in 15 years, it may not be necessary for new people in his life to have a conversation about this history; it's in his file if, for some reason, they must know it.

Model Optimism and Enthusiasm for Others

- Ask yourself with every decision, what is the most positive outcome for the person I serve?

- Celebrate successes…even the tiny ones. Has the team arranged for Anne, a coffee lover, to go out for coffee every morning before she goes to work? That's probably a big deal to Anne. Support the team to celebrate these accomplishments.

- While staffing issues affect a person, try handling these issues at a staff meeting instead of during the person's ISP meeting. When you *do* handle them, involve the person in the management decision and proposed solutions.

Being The Person's Ally

- Before meetings or conversations, consider taking a minute to remind yourself of all of the person's positive attributes and why you choose to remain a part of her team.

- Model good listening when the person is talking. Make eye contact if culturally appropriate, don't interrupt, put down your pen, ask follow up questions, and summarize what you heard.

- Understand that the person's preferences may be unexpected: sometimes a person actually wants to meet in a conference room because the meeting goes faster!

- If the team wants to meet without the person, consider what that preference suggests. It often means that the team wants to "strategize" about how to have a "unified front against" the person. It's difficult to believe that team members are true allies of the person when this occurs. Have the courage to thoughtfully tell others why meeting without the person makes you uncomfortable. For suggestions on how to voice your concerns, see *Try it Out.*

- Invite the opinions of others. Listen to those who may not always be encouraged to share their perspective: the person (of course), but also their direct support staff.

- Guardianships are often much more limited than we assume.

Under law, guardians are still required to support a person to make her own decisions to the extent possible. If a person has a guardian, make sure you know what kind of guardianship it is and exactly what rights the person has had taken away. Help the person share his wishes with his guardian.

Inspiring Others to be Allies:
Voting for Opportunity

- Be the one who shifts the conversation from *if* a person can do something to *how* a team can support a person to do it. Sometimes, just changing the words used can make a huge difference. Be the one in the group that asks "So, *how* can Sara live in her own home?" instead of "Can (or should) Sara live in her own home?"

- Acknowledge and openly appreciate the gifts *everyone* on the team brings. Sincere compliments, playing to people's strengths and using the gifts we each have encourages others to embrace "capacity thinking."

- Consider suggesting to the team that the words "no" or "can't" be off limits, unless voiced by the person.

- Build personal relationships with each team member. If a team member always seems reluctant to try new things, get to know that member well. Oftentimes, people become reluctant to try new things because they are afraid. Relationships based on trust can help people overcome their fears.

Discussing Money

- Remember, each person paid through a person's waiver can have a potential conflict of interest: the team member's income level is often directly tied to the amount his service is authorized to provide. Trust your gut. If a team member is recommending services that you don't think a person needs, probe a little about 1) why the service is needed and 2) what other "non-service" ways a person could receive the same kind of support.

- Sometimes a person or his family renews the same level of the same services every year out of habit. And sometimes, a person may not know they have the option of adjusting his

services or how his funding is used. A champion reminds the person/his family of these choices and supports them purchase the services that best meet their needs. See *Try it Out* for ideas on explaining the ARA budget and the option to adjust services.

***The Space between the Reality and The Vision Is Where the Creativity Lies*...Cultivating Creativity**

- "I want to be president."

Champions encourage big dreams. Dreams don't always come true but they inspire us to stretch and try new things as we work towards them.

- *Don't think outside the box, throw the box away.*
  —Judy Stevens

What would a person want in his life if :

- Money weren't an issue
- He couldn't "fail"
- There were no safety concerns

When supporting a person to dream start with the answers to these questions.

When We Disagree Or Are Stuck…

- Listen to the person first. Let the opinion of the person using services guide the conversation.

- If the conversation is heated, strive to be the calm one in the group.

- Take even more time than usual to collect your own thoughts before speaking. When people disagree, the words, tone and style they use when talking can determine the productivity of the conversation.

- *You cannot solve a problem by using the same type of thinking that created it.*
  —Albert Einstein
  Consider inviting "new blood" into the thinking process. There are "good thinkers" both within the DDSD system and in the community that may bring a different perspective.

- Be careful about making absolute statements that tend to create an adversarial dynamic like "that's wrong." Articulate things from your perspective, using phrases like,

"The way I see it" or "I think that…" "As I understand it…."

- Come back to the things everyone *can* agree to and start there.

- Remember, complete consensus from the team isn't required for a person's decision about her life to be respected.

For additional ideas for working together when team members disagree, see *Try it Out*.

Doing The Right Thing Over Doing Things Right

- The team's first responsibility is to *support* a person. Sometimes, in urgent situations, like when a person's family member dies or there is another emergency, doing what's right for the person may not be consistent with what the rules require. This may mean that meetings and paperwork are temporarily set aside while team members support the person to cope with the emergency at hand.

  In urgent situations where you don't follow protocol, consider asking yourself three things: 1) am I doing what is most respectful and matters most to this person right now? 2) Who do I need to call and keep up-to-date on what's going on? 3) Would it be a good idea to write down a few notes about my approach to supporting a person?

√ CHECK IT OUT:
GOOD RESOURCES

- For resources on team-building and conflict resolution, contact Christine Wester at 505-841-5529 or at Christine.wester@state.nm.us

- For ideas for involving people with disabilities in meetings, check out *The National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services* handbook: *The Guide: The NASDDDS Handbook on Inclusive Meetings and Presentations* at http://www.nasddds.org/pdf/TheGuide.pdf

- For ideas for being a "communication ally," take a look at Mayer Shevin's article "On Being a Communication Ally." It's available at: http://suedweb.syr.edu/thefci/7-4she.htm

TRY IT OUT:
ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES AND COMPELLING QUESTIONS

Exercise: **A Tale of Two Teams**

Read the following scenarios and then as a group, discuss your answers to the following questions:

1. If you were Maya, which team dynamic would you want?
2. What practical things can we each do to build a team that supports a person to live a life she chooses?

Scenario One:

Maya has an IDT team consisting of a corporate guardian, case manager, day services manager, a group home manager and a behavior therapist. Maya rarely sees her guardian outside the ISP meeting. Each year, this team meets in the day service conference room to develop Maya's ISP. Maya says she really wants to live in her own apartment, but the team notes that if Maya moved into her own apartment it would result in lost revenue to the group home. The team decides to table the discussion about the apartment. The team spends the majority of the meeting discussing how Maya is manipulative. The team authorizes another year of behavior therapy on the ARA. Even though Maya says she doesn't want this therapy, the guardian overrules this decision without further discussion. The rest of the meeting is spent completing all parts of the ISP form, which frustrates the providers who have already submitted some of the information to the case manager to be included. After the signature page is circulated, everyone leaves and goes to other meetings.

Scenario Two:

Maya has a team consisting of her former guardian (who is now Maya's friend), her case manager, day services manager, a group home provider and behavior therapist. Maya used to have a corporate guardian but the team petitioned the court to reconsider the need for this after it became clear that with supports, Maya could make many of the decisions assumed by the guardian. All of Maya's team is committed to doing what they can to support Maya to thrive. Each of them has spent time with Maya informally: going to a movie, out to eat or sharing a "smoke break" with her. They all knew before the ISP

meeting began that Maya really wants to live in her own apartment and doesn't want as much behavioral therapy. Maya decides to hold her ISP meeting over lunch at her favorite restaurant and with the help of her direct support worker, reserves the meeting room there. During the lunch meeting, the case manager and Maya lead a conversation about what it would take Maya to live in her own place. Her group home provider offers to provide come-in support to Maya in Maya's apartment. Maya's direct support worker from her day services program has a friend who manages an apartment complex and has agreed to be an emergency contact for Maya if she decides to live in the complex.

During the meeting, the case manager takes notes as the team develops an action plan for Maya to live in her own apartment. Maya and her team think it's possible for Maya to move into her own apartment within six months and commit to doing so.

Exercise: Supporting People to Understand Where the Money Goes in the ARA.

Some ideas:

1. Talk to them: Sometimes simply sitting down with a person (and her family if appropriate) and explaining how the ARA works is enough. Ask a person to share what services are most important to her. Ask her if there are services she thinks she doesn't need anymore? Are these preferences reflected in the ARA? If not, make sure to point this out to the person (and if appropriate, her family).
2. Show them: For people who don't read or do math, a pie chart can be a really useful tool for showing how much of the budget or "pie" goes to each service. This enables a person to make a more informed decisions about how to spend her ARA budget.
3. Brainstorm with them: Sometimes a person will continue services she doesn't really want because she likes the person providing them. If this is the case, consider brainstorming with the

person and her team for how the person can remain connected to the service provider without continuing the service.

Exercise: Some Ideas for How to Disagree Nicely

Finding a "right" way to disagree or raise concerns to others is never easy. And an approach that may work really well for one person, won't work at all for another. However, there are a few approaches that seem to work well in most situations.

Try to Keep People from Feeling Defensive

- Avoid using "you." Look for ways to use "we" or "the team." For example, instead of "You shouldn't have meetings without Tim" try "I don't think we should hold Tim's meetings without him."

- Frame your thoughts as your opinion rather than a fact. For example, consider saying "I am really uncomfortable about having a meeting about Tim without him" instead of "It's wrong to have a meeting about Tim without him."

- Even better, frame your opinion in the positive. For example, "I think we could better serve our roles as team members if Tim were a part of the discussion."

Open Up the Conversation to the Group

- Ask team members to share their own thoughts. "I would really like to talk about why we want to have a meeting about Tim without him." Simply raising the issue is sometimes enough to get people to rethink the logic of the decision.

- Gently ask the question: "Do we have the Tim's permission to meet without him?" Sometimes team members simply assume it's ok to meet without the person. Asking the question encourages people to think through this assumption and potentially develop a more person-centered alternative.

- Oftentimes, it's only one team member who truly wants the team to meet without the person and other team members silently go along with it. Sometimes, by gently raising another alternative (like including a person in his own meeting) other team members will have the confidence to voice their own opinions.

A Note About Personal Choice

- Sometimes the person actually *doesn't* mind when others talk about him without him and would prefer to not be a part of every meeting. The key is to ask the person what his preferences are *before* holding a meeting without him.