

## Deep Connection with Ordinary "Community Life"

### IDEA 2: TRANSFORMING FACILITY-BASED SERVICES INTO COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS



*"We did it because it was the right thing to do for the people we support."*

#### THANK YOU...

Thanks to the following organizations that provided the insight and wisdom that served as the foundation for this paper!

- Tobosa Development Services
- DSI
- Los Lunas Community Program
- Katahdin Friends, Inc.
- Onondaga Community Living
- Common Ground, Inc.
- Arc of Iroquois



#### **IN A NUTSHELL:**

In an effort to support people in more typical, person-centered ways, organizations both in New Mexico and across the country are transitioning from facility-based services to community-based supports. Through thoughtful examination of its values and meaningful conversation about what community-based supports can look like, organizations are transforming both their structures and the lives of the individuals they serve. While each organization's transition process is unique and cannot be easily reduced to a list of "how tos," this paper was developed to provide organizations considering the transition process some ideas and tips that may inspire, guide and support the transformational process.

#### **SUCCESS STORY**

For the story of how Tobosa Development Services in Roswell transitioned its day services, take a look at "Transitioning from Facility-Based Services to Community-Based Supports: Tobosa Tells Its Story" included in the *And Yet More* section of the *Meaningful Day Idea Book*.

## **A SUMMARY OF IDEAS AND TIPS INCLUDED IN THIS PAPER**

### **Theme One: A Commitment to Person-Centered Support Usually Triggers Organizational Change**

- Ways Organizations Saw the Need to Change
- Undergo Organizational Change “One Person at a Time”
- Think about People First and Finances Second
- Look at the Person’s Whole Life: Recognizing that a Person Lives and How She Spends Her Day are Linked

### **Theme Two: Involving Stakeholders from the Beginning and Getting Consensus on the Transition Process**

- Create Lots of Learning Opportunities
- Invite People to Be Involved in Developing the Game Plan
- Show ‘Em
- Create Lots and Lots of and Lots of Opportunities for Discussion
- Identify Champions
- Show How the Service is a “Win/Win”
- Highlight Success Often
- Take the Concerns Seriously
- Know that Some People Will Leave

### **Theme Three: Making the Move: The Physical Transition Process**

- Develop a Timeline, Making Sure it’s Long Enough...But Not Too Long!
- Phase Out the Old Way of Doing Business
- Start the Transition with Those People Who Want Something Different or Clearly Aren’t Happy with Their Current Services
- Consider an Incremental Transition Process to a Drop Off Site.
- Ideas for Working with Other Services
- While Having a Transition Strategy is Important, Some Things You’ll Have to “Figure out as you go.”

#### **Theme Four: The Importance of Creating a Person-Centered Culture**

- Make the “Conceptual Leap” from Providing Programs to Supporting People
- Celebrate the Transition’s Milestones with Stories, Pictures and Parties
- Do Lots of Training
- Redesign Organizational Systems to Reflect and Reinforce Person-Centered Values
- Acknowledge the Cultural Shift May Take Awhile

#### **Theme Five: The Money CAN Work**

- Cost Shift
- Maintain a Lean Infrastructure
- Remember the Hidden Inefficiencies in Providing Services that Don’t Work for People
- Acknowledge that the Transition Phase, with a Financial “Foot” in Both the Old Model and New Approach Can be Awkward
- Know Where Your Money is Going: Person-Centered Budgeting
- Consider Quality over Quantity
- Secure Funding Flexibility
- Rework Documentation to Ensure All Available Dollars Can be Captured under Community-Based Service Structure

**And now, without further adieu...**

## **IDEAS AND TIPS FOR TRANSFORMING ORGANIZATIONS**

### **THEME ONE: A COMMITMENT TO PERSON-CENTERED SUPPORT USUALLY TRIGGERS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE.**

#### **Ways Organizations Saw the Need for Change:**

- As more people were introduced to “person-centered” philosophies through trainings and conferences, people and their staff became frustrated with the facility-based status quo.
- New leadership wanted to build community-based supports.
- “We acknowledged to ourselves that people were just clocking time in our day facilities.” One organization recognized that having a physical space had become a “crutch” for staff and had reduced creativity and creative problem solving about community-based challenges.
- One organization experienced evolution instead of revolution. With an increased emphasis on community-based supports, the organization’s day facility was being used less and less. This decreased use led to the organization’s official decision to transition to community-based supports and close the day facility.

#### **The Value of One Person at a Time**

While transforming services affects everyone in the organization, most organizations believe the transition process must happen through thoughtful planning and developing support arrangements for *each* person served.

Below, are some of the ways organizations have planned transitioned efforts one-person-at-a-time:

- Organizing person-centered planning sessions, with independent facilitators, using PATH, MAPS or another futures planning tool.
- Having lots of thoughtful, relaxed conversations with a person, his family and his staff and working together to develop a support structure that feels right for that person.
- Inviting groups to come together around the most “difficult” people the organization serves to brainstorm on possible solutions to possible problems. (Note: these conversations are *solution* focused and are not intended to change the organization’s decision to close its facility).

### **People First, Finances Second**

Transitioned organizations tend to think about how to best meet the community-based needs of people and *then* develop a financial strategy that supports its goal.

### **Look at the Whole Life: Where a Person Lives and How She Spends Her Day are Linked**

During the transition to community-based supports, many organizations noted they could not effectively accomplish their community-based goals without looking at the person’s *entire life*.

This “whole life” approach means thoughtfully assessing a person’s “day” and “residential” services and often merging, combining, or restructuring them so people live in their own homes or at least have a more flexible, “fluid” support services to accommodate the person’s specific interests or scheduling needs.

## **THEME TWO: INVOLVING STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE BEGINNING and GETTING CONSENSUS ON the TRANSITION PROCESS**

### **Create Lots of Learning Opportunities**

Organizations that transitioned typically immersed their staff, board and families in values-based trainings throughout the process.

Below are a few ways to provide values-based learning to stakeholders in values and transition process:

- Send direct support staff, managers and families to conferences together.
- Organize visits to other organizations that have transitioned services.
- Organize monthly facilitated conversations on different themes and opportunities in community-based supports at a time that is convenient for stakeholders.
- Invite current staff and family members to help lead trainings within the organization about the values of community-based supports.
- Develop learning opportunities for a person's team (including people who do not work for the organization, like the person's case manager). These team-oriented learning opportunities can be about general community-based supports or about topics specific to a person.

### **Invite Them to Help in Developing the Transition Game Plan**

While an organization's leader usually makes the decision to transition to community-based services, listening to the feedback of others makes the process smoother and strengthens the community-based services that result.

Here are a few ways organizations have invited the feedback of stakeholders:

- individual conversations over meals and in people's homes;
- town hall meetings;
- meeting with each group that will be affected by the transition: people who use services, families, staff and community members;

- Email listserves/discussion forums;
- Asking people who use services and their families to sit on any workgroups or committees created to assist with the transition process.

### **Show Them What is Possible**

Create opportunities for people who use services, families, staff and others to visit with people who currently receive community-based services and the organizations that support them. While some organizations may request a small fee for their staff's time, most organizations are happy to share their experience of transforming services with others.

### **Create Lots and Lots and Lots of Opportunities for Discussion**

Most organizations recognize the value of people simply *talking* with each other during times of organizational change. Many of the organizations interviewed talked about how the long-term, trusting relationships they have with people, families and staff was a key reason the organization's transition was successful.

Below are some suggestions for maintaining a "culture of constant conversation" with people affected by the transition:

- Make sure people affected by the transition have "easy access" to the organization's leaders.
- Eat together!
- Meet one-on-one as needed with individual families.
- Let everyone know how the transition process is going through regular meetings and updates.
- Develop a family advisory committee to hold "family lunches" so families can discuss the transition and learn what they can do to make sure the effort is successful.

### **Identify Champions**

When an organization decides to transition to community-based services, it does so to better meet the needs of at least some of the people it serves. When going through the transition process, get those people who will immediately benefit from the effort to help

“sell” the effort to others in the organization. As people who use services, family members and staff who support the transformation emerge, create opportunities for them to have conversations about the transition with others.

### **Show How the Service Transition is a “Win/Win”**

While the main reason for transforming services is to provide better supports to people with disabilities, the transition can also produce “perks” for others in the organization as well. Many organizations that transformed their services worked hard to make sure that the transition benefited everyone involved, not just the people who used services.

Below are some examples of how organizations made the transition a “win/win” for everyone include:

- Instead of requiring a family member to drop off a person using services at the organization’s office or other site, one organization began picking people up at their homes. This saved families time and transportation costs.
- Several organizations used the transition process as an opportunity to increase a person’s and/or a person’s family’s involvement in the staff hiring process.
- One organization developed individualized, flexible staff scheduling for each person that also incorporated the person’s family’s scheduling needs.
- Several organizations used the transition process as an opportunity to create better matches between each person’s interests and the staff person who supported him.

### **Talk About Successes Often**

During times of change, when there is a greater chance of confusion and concern, people need to feel that everything is going to be okay.

Sharing success stories about the transition process can build morale and strengthen everyone's commitment to the transition process.

Importantly, even "small" successes --a person introducing herself to a waiter for the first time or a person interviewing possible staff for the first time-- should be celebrated.

Here are a few ideas for how to share good news:

- At every kind of meeting, invite people to share successes.
- Write down the success stories—even if just a few sentences. Keep them and distribute them (changing the name to protect confidentiality if needed) through newsletters, meetings, the organizational website, whatever makes sense.
- Share the stories throughout the organizational community, through websites, newsletters, town hall meetings, dinners, etc..

### **Take the Concerns Seriously**

When people who are going to be affected by the transition ask thoughtful questions about the process, the questions can really make the entire effort stronger.

Inviting feedback both encourages conversation and creates a chance to identify problems and possible solutions that the organization's staff may not have considered.

Taking people's concerns seriously also shows respect for them. This, in turn, builds trust—an element critical in a successful transition.

### **Some People WILL Leave**

Some individuals will not agree with an organization's decision to transition to community-based supports. Many of these folks, with enough information and encouragement, will usually stay with the organization, at least long enough to see how the transition will impact them.

However, some people will never be comfortable with organization's decision to transition to community-based supports and may leave. Nearly

every organization interviewed lost people, staff or board members because of the organization's community-based direction.

Organizations making the transition to community-based supports should anticipate losing some people as a result of the decision.

### **THEME THREE: MAKING THE MOVE: THE PHYSICAL TRANSITION PROCESS**

#### **Develop a Timeline, Make Sure the Transition Timeline is Long Enough, But Not Too Long!**

Because each organization is different in size, composition and circumstance, the time between deciding to close a facility and actually closing it varies among organizations.

While the transition timeline depends on the organization, many organizations took roughly one year to change to community-based supports.

One executive director who led an organization through a two-year transition process reflected that the timeline was too long and in hindsight, wished the organization would have transitioned more quickly.

#### **Consider Starting by Phasing Out the Old Way of Doing Business**

Many organizations began the transition process by simply not accepting new people into the *old* facility-based services. For example, one organization decided to not accept any more in-house contracts. Any new person served after the organization's decision to transition received only person-centered, community-based supports.

#### **Consider Starting the Transition With Those People Who Want Something Different or Who Clearly Are Unhappy with Their Current Services**

Some people clearly want to receive services outside a facility. Some of these people use words to convey their preferences and others use their actions. Some people may not ask for community-based supports but have

clear ways of communicating the status quo is not working for them. We know this through their behavior. When at the facility, they are more likely to hit people, become sullen, or go to sleep.

If your organization decides to transition to community-based services one individual at a time, consider starting with the folks who are clearly asking—either through their words or their actions—for something different than what they currently receive.

### **Consider Transitioning to a Drop-In Site**

When transitioning out of facility-based services and into community-based supports, some organizations found it to helpful to establish a “drop-in” site where people with accessibility needs could use the restroom and people with medical complexities could rest.

The primary challenge is to ensure the drop-off site does not become “facility lite.” Some organizations have worked to prevent this by using a space that is not big enough for people to stay in.

Organizations have also prevented this by ensuring the drop off site serves primarily as an administrative office, with only a small room for a person be changed or to get off his pressure points. One organization also viewed the drop-off site as an explicitly temporary solution and rented the space instead of purchasing it. Another organization reduced the appeal of the drop-off site by removing the soda machine!

### **Working with Other Services During the Transition**

#### **Bridging “Day” and “Residential” Services**

When a person’s services are divided into “day” and “residential” with different staff, managers, and sometimes even providers, it is difficult for organizations to build the individualized fluid, flexible support schedules usually needed for a person to have a “typical life experience.”

Many organizations believe their transition to community-based supports was easier when they provided both “day” and “residential” services to

people and could more effectively create a seamless support structure or at least require “day” and “residential” members of a person’s team to work together.

One organization fundamentally restructured itself so staffing teams were configured around each individual person instead of service type. So, instead of the “Day Hab” staff meeting together and the “Residential” staff meeting together, those who supported John from “day” services and those who supported him in “residential” services would meet as “John’s staff.”

Shortly after transitioning its traditional day services into community-based day supports, one organization that did not traditionally provide “residential” supports, began supporting people to live in their own homes. The organization did so in an effort to provide more fluid, flexible supports to the people it served.

### **Working with Clinicians**

Organizational transformation requires *all* people to change the way they work, including people not directly affiliated with the organization. This includes case managers, therapists and other clinicians.

Organizations report they often had to support clinicians to rethink how they provided clinical services. Instead of visiting a person at the facility at a time convenient for the clinician, clinicians had to think of community-based ways of providing therapies. This may mean doing physical therapy in a community gym or doing occupational therapy through “real life” activities like going out to eat or getting coffee.

### **While Having a Transition Strategy is Important, Some Things You Have to “Figure out as you go.”**

Thoughtful, creative planning about how the transition will happen is extremely important. However, even with the best planning, unexpected issues and challenges will surface during and after the transition.

Below, are some things that may help an organization unplanned situations:

- A strong, clear community-oriented mission and vision can guide organizations through difficult decisions.

- Listen to the person and continue making decisions “one person at a time.” When faced with a decision that affects a person, ask yourself, “what decision will lead to the best possible outcome for this person?”
- If you are a manager or a family member, have you asked for input and suggestions from direct support staff?
- Contact other organizations that have transitioned or regional coordinators to get support in thinking through decisions.

## **THEME 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A PERSON-CENTERED CULTURE**

### **Making the Mental Leap from Providing Programs to Supporting People**

Building person-centered supports often goes hand-in-hand with transitioning services into the community. This makes sense; the main reason for transitioning to community-based supports is for people to be included in community life. However, if people are grouped together, it is hard for people to become truly known and included as individuals.

Most organizations that transition away from facility-based services also restructure their services to be more person-centered. Redesigning services around each person served means building more individualized supports based on the person’s interests and needs.

Here are few examples of how organizations have made their services more person-centered:

- Hiring staff specifically for an individual instead of for the organization.
- Developing a flexible staffing schedule for each person instead of a preset schedule that applies to everyone.
- Having staff identify themselves as “John’s support” instead of working for “ACME Support Services.”

Several organizations interviewed talked about how difficult it was for some staff to begin identifying themselves as a person's support instead of a member of a "residential" or "day service" team.

The following list outlines some of the feelings staff may have as an organization redefines how it provides services:

- "I am uncomfortable being seen as person's staff when I thought my role was to supervise the person."
- "If I am a person's staff but the organization pays me. Does that mean I have two bosses? Who do I answer to?"
- "Why does one person receive six hours of service and another person receives ten hours a day of service? That seems unfair."
- "I do not understand why it is important for her to volunteer. Her disabilities are so severe, I don't think she even notices."

As with most challenges, supporting staff need to think about their role in person-centered ways that may not have an easy solution.

Here are some approaches that organizations believe helped:

- Have a strong, living, person-centered mission and vision that can guide conversations about the organization's direction.
- Hold lots of conversation about people's interests and needs (not necessarily about organizational policy).
- Invite direct support staff to serve as a key advocate for the person's interest and the organization's vision.
- Involve direct support staff (and the person!) in the redesigning of services.
- Support staff to participate and attend conferences, trainings and consultations about person-centered support.
- Support positive staff to become organizational leaders on PATH, MAPS or other person-centered planning tools.
- Assist staff who are not comfortable with the organization's transition to find new employment. This is not a euphemism for termination or a forced exit, but rather an opportunity to support staff with job leads, networking and other efforts that lead to employment.

## **Celebrate the Transition's Milestones with Stories, Pictures and Parties**

Transforming services is hard work and it is important to always recognize and celebrate the success stories the transition creates. Celebrations remind people why they are working so hard and also motivates others to try new, creative things.

Below are some suggestions of successes to celebrate:

- If a person is living in his own home for the first time, how can the organization help organize a house warming party for him?
- If a person has just hired his own staff for the first time, celebrate this with photos of the two of them together or hold a party or celebrate in a way that makes sense to the person.
- If staff are going to a conference out-of-state for the first time, take pictures.

## **Support Lots of Training**

All of the organizations that have transitioned services note the critical role values-based conversations and training played during the transition process.

Invite people using services and staff to help lead the training and share stories. This reinforces the "people first" culture the organization is trying to create.

## **Organizational Systems Reflect and Reinforce Values**

In transitioning services to providing more individualized, community-based supports, organizations often revise their internal systems (like human resources, finance, and administrative structures) to better reflect their more person-centered supports. For example, one organization reexamined what qualities it wanted in its staff and redeveloped its staffing job description and interview questions to reflect the increased emphasis on community-building.

### **Know the Cultural Shift May Take a While**

As staff and families begin seeing the benefits of community-based supports (staff often say they enjoy their work much more after the center closed), the culture will begin taking hold.

However, it sometimes takes **several years** for an organization's culture to truly shift from facility-oriented thinking to individualized, community-based thinking.

## **THEME 5: THE MONEY *CAN* WORK: THE FINANCES OF PERSON-CENTERED, COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS**

An organization's decision to offer more person-centered services is not usually motivated by money. Person-centered services do not usually result in a huge profit. However, providing person-centered supports can be financially viable. This section outlines key fiscal strategies used by organizations that have transitioned to community-based supports.

### **Cost Shifting**

When an organization transitions to community-based, person-centered supports, *cost-shifting* is important. Some people will require more support than the individual's funding provides and organizations may serve them at a loss. It becomes critical for organizations to have alternative income sources to offset the loss of supporting some people.

### **Maintaining a Lean Infrastructure**

Providing person-centered services usually increases direct support staffing, transportation, and other expenses that directly support the person. To make sure people get the level of service they need while keeping the organization financially stable, organizations often need to find ways to create a leaner, less expensive infrastructure.

Here are some ways organizations have saved money by reducing their infrastructure:

- Closing facilities resulted in a reduction of both fixed costs (rent, mortgage, etc.) and variable costs (utilities, insurance, etc.).
- Outsourcing human resource functions to contracted entities.
- Relying on volunteers to assist with office management and staff training functions.
- Using technology in effective ways.

### **Remember the Hidden Costs in Providing Services that Do Not Work for People**

People providing traditional, facility-based services often question the cost-effectiveness of providing person-centered support. However, people often overlook the hidden costs of serving people in ways that do not make sense.

Below are a few of the hidden costs of providing services that do not work for people:

- Turnover costs related to staff leaving because of a person's "challenging behavior."
- Staff turnover potentially higher because of the stress of supporting several people at one time.
- Workers compensation claims resulting from injuries related to people's "challenging behavior" which often increases when a person is in settings he doesn't choose.

### **Transitioning Service Models Can Be Financially Challenging**

The most difficult part of a transition occurs when an organization has both the "fixed" costs of the facilities that have not closed yet and the costs of providing individualized services to people. For example, one organization decided to close a group home and begin serving the residents in homes of their own. At one point, the organization was supporting two residents in their own apartments with individualized staffing while maintaining the fixed costs of the group home to ensure stability for the other two residents until they also moved into homes of their own. The organization noted this was financially awkward.

## **Know Where Your Money is Going: Person-Centered Budgeting**

Often, the facility serves as a “cost center” in a facility-based organization’s budget. The organization analyzes its spending trends from a facility or “program” perspective. This approach makes it difficult to figure out how much support should go to each individual’s costs.

When organizations use person-specific budgets as the centerpiece for their organization’s budget, they have a better understanding of the specific support needs of each individual and are better able to provide the service and advocacy needed for a person to enjoy a high quality of service.

Developing a person-centered budgeting structure both reinforces a person-centered organizational culture and also provides an effective management tool. By building the organizational budget from the person out, it ensures the organization is prioritizing the support needs of the people it serves, and can more effectively determine where additional resources may be needed.

## **Consider Quality over Quantity**

To manage costs of community-based, individualized services, one organization interviewed reduced the number of hours it served people in order to provide more individualized and flexible staffing options. So instead of a person being served from 9:00 am-3:00 pm without exception, the organization worked with people and their families to develop a four-hour-a-day support schedule with a lower staffing ratio. The person could choose the support companion who could shift from week to week to accommodate the person’s and the families’ specific scheduling needs.

## **Full Time Staff May Actually Cost LESS in the Longrun**

One organization that transitioned services initially tried to trim costs by making its employees part-time. However, over time, the organization determined that this approach resulted in increased turnover and ultimately was *more* expensive to the organization. The organization now invests in full-time positions, that provide greater continuity and are more economical in the long-term.

## **Rework Documentation to Get as Much Money as Possible**

Traditional documentation requirements do not always support more flexible, community-based services. Often, traditional documentation is divided by service type instead of by a person's "whole life" schedule. When people begin receiving community-based services, this traditional documentation becomes increasingly difficult to complete. As a result, organizations may not capture all of the funding available to them.

### **✓ CHECK IT OUT:** **GOOD RESOURCES**

- For a summary of important lessons learned from transitioning a workshop services into individualized, community-based supports, check out: "Working Together to Convert the Last Sheltered Workshop in Vermont to Individualized Supports" by Jennifer Sullivan Sulewski. Available at:  
[http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=201](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=201)
- For an analysis of the process of transitioning a "residential service," check out: "Deliberate—Fire; An Account of Organizational Transformation in Onondaga Community Living, Syracuse, New York" by John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien Available at: <http://thechp.syr.edu/OCL.pdf>
- For case studies of various organizations that transitioned to community-based supports, visit Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy's website at <http://thechp.syr.edu/>. Select *Publications and Resources*, then *Resources and Reports on Community Inclusion* and finally, *Alternative Day Activities*.
- For a book on developing person-centered "day services," that includes a chapter on transitioning facility-based day services, read: *Make the Day Matter: Promoting Typical Lifestyles for Adults with Significant Disabilities*. Available at:  
<http://www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/walker-67137/index.htm>

- For a discussion of people with disabilities living in their own homes, take a look at: “A Reflection on Group Homes and Supported Living” by David Wetherow Available at: [http://www.communityworks.info/articles/group\\_homes.htm](http://www.communityworks.info/articles/group_homes.htm)
- For thoughts about facility-based services from a parent’s perspective, check out: “Why a Facility?” by David Wetherow Available at: <http://www.communityworks.info/articles/facility.htm>
- For an analysis of closing facility-based employment services, take a look at: “The Successes and Struggles of Closing a Facility-Based Employment Service” by John Butterworth. Available at: [http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=36&staff\\_id=2](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=36&staff_id=2)

## **TRY IT OUT: ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES AND COMPELLING QUESTIONS**

If your organization is exploring how to provide community-based supports, pull together a group of trusted advisors (people served, staff, families, etc.) and collectively ask:

- What does our organization’s mission call us to do?
- What would successful, community-based services without a facility look like to us?
- Do the leaders of this organization know each person well?
- Does any organizational reluctance to transition come from a need to put the organization’s interests above the person’s (examples include: fear of staff loss, fear of liability, fear of reducing a profit margin, fear that the process is just too hard)?
- Does our current way of doing things create opportunities for people to have typical experiences that most people without disabilities value: a job, living in one’s own home, going on a date, getting to know others in the community on a first-name basis?
- Is each person we support *happy* with his/her services or simply not complaining?
- Have we shown people we support and their families alternatives to facility-based supports?

- Do we ask ourselves, with every facility-based activity, *HOW* could this be done in a community setting?
- Have we effectively used the staff's, families', and board members' community connections and resources to build meaningful opportunities for people in their communities?