Supporting Person-Centered Approaches For People with Disabilities Experiencing Poverty

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Person-Centered Supports are for All People
Person First Language

- Put the person first!
- Describe what a person has, not what the person is

- Disability is not a problem or challenge
  - “People with disabilities” vs “The disabled”
  - “Sue has a learning disability” vs “Sue is developmentally delayed”
  - “Sue cannot see without glasses” vs “Sue is visually challenged”
What do we mean by a person with a disability?

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.”

- “Major life tasks” are defined by the ADA as “caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.”
What does the population of people with disabilities look like?

• 12.6% of Americans have a disability (Based on American Community Survey vs 19% of the population found in the 2010 Census)
  – Disability becomes more prevalent with age, with 35.4% of people ages 65 and over reporting a disability compared to just 10.4% of people ages 18-64

• The most common types of disability are ambulatory, cognitive, and independent living

• The employment rate of people with disabilities is 34.9%, compared to 76% of people without disabilities
Poverty and Earnings

• 28% of people with disabilities experienced poverty compared to 13% of people without disabilities.

• Household incomes for persons with a disability were $41,600, compared to $65,900 for households without a person with a disability of working age.

• A person with a disability earned a median income of $21,572 in 2015 compared to $31,872 for a person without a disability, a $10,300 earnings gap.

The Intersection of Disability and Poverty

- 59.7% of people experiencing poverty (up to 125%) also have a disability

- Disability is a cause and condition of poverty
  - Disability is associated with lower levels of educational attainment, associated with lower incomes
  - Limitations on work limit income

- Limitations on savings limit asset building associated with “middle class”
The Intersection of Disability and Poverty

- Poverty and disability can be isolating
- Poverty and disability are stigmatizing
- Cost of living for people with disabilities is often higher, exacerbating poverty conditions
The Intersection of Disability and Poverty

• Limited choice

• Limited exposure or experience

• Limited social capital or networks
The Intersection of Poverty and Disability

- Resiliency
- Creativity
How do we support people with disabilities experiencing poverty to lead self-sufficient lives?

- The myth of self-sufficiency
- The myth of “special needs”

How do we support people with disabilities experiencing poverty to lead a good life?
USING PERSON-CENTERED SUPPORTS
One Size Fits All Approaches
What are Person Centered Approaches?

• Person Centered approaches are directed by the person receiving supports rather than the program providing them.

• Person centered approaches focus on the strengths and abilities of a person, along with personal preferences and conditions needed for success.
Example: Direct Support for People with Disabilities

Traditional Services, LLC

- Program for home-based support
  - Supports offered specific to personal care, homemaking
- Staff hired by agency
- Services offered for prescribed hours

Person Centered Services, LLC

- Services catered to individual needs
- Staff hired by individual receiving services
- Services offered during hours that are good for the person
Example: Job Training in Person Centered vs Traditional Services

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Services, LLC</th>
<th>Person Centered Services, LLC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Workers utilize standardized tool to analyze participant’s fit for training</td>
<td>- Workers utilize structured but personal interviews on interests, strengths, and needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Participants can choose from nursing, trucking, or welding certifications</td>
<td>- Participants select any short-term training that matches their personal interests</td>
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Why use person centered approaches?

• One size fits all does not work for all

• Supporting people to live self-determined lives leads to better outcomes

• Supporting people to lead self-determined lives is the right thing to do

• Person centered approaches empowers the person receiving services long-term
HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT PERSON CENTERED APPROACHES?
Discovery

• Take time to get to know the person
  – Likes, dislikes, strengths, needs

• Discovery takes time & patience

• Dream!
Eric's Northern Star

- Compassion
- Humor
- Wrestling
- Helping Others
- Political Involvement
- Continual Learning
- Adventure
- Safe
- Marriage
- Carpe Diem
- Art
- Video Games
- Happiness
- Quiet Time
Find Strengths

• Deficit finding vs Strengths finding
  – Needs Assessments

• “Tell me everything that gets in your way” vs “Tell me everything that works”

• Consider: Does your program truly operate from a strengths-based perspective?
What Works?

- NO Distractions → Focused time
- Deadlines
- Mornings/Early Day
- Engaging/Interactive
- Self-Determination
- Results → Quick Wins
- Time for Research/Discovery
- Mentors
- Clear Expectations
- Freedom to choose HOW

- Structure
- Active
- Support
- Accountability
- Artistic Pursuit
- Inspiration
- Teamwork
Dream Big!

• Through discovery, you will learn big things about a person— and big dreams!

• Big dreams can be intimidating...
  – Doesn’t have to be all or nothing
  – A piece of the dream?
  – “What would that look like?”
  – Capacity perspective vs deficiency perspective
Make a Plan

• Based on discovery, identify the path forward

• Include major stakeholders in the person’s life
  – “Circle of Support”

• Goals, short-term, long-term
  – Next steps (services provided)
Implement choice where possible

• Where is choice feasible?/Where can services be flexible?
  – Hours? Staff? Location? Type of service? Delivery of service?

• Support people to make choices
  – Long-term impact of limited choice
Supporting People to Make Decisions

• Teach decision making skills
• Educate on the topic
  – Teach the person on how to educate themselves on this topic
• Present different options (you don’t have to like them all!)
• Ask why?
• Foster independence
But what happens if someone makes a wrong choice?

- Consider:
  - Is the person going to be in immediate physical danger?
  - Are others going to be in immediate physical danger?
  - Is it illegal?
  - ...Is it just uncomfortable for me?
What is your goal?

- Moving out of poverty?
- Living a self-determined life?
- Living an independent life?
- Improving the conditions associated with poverty?
  - Or improving conditions associated with disability?
- Supporting people with disabilities and/or low incomes to participate in their community?
PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES EXPERIENCING POVERTY
Moving out of Poverty ➔ Employment

• People with disabilities are not “unable to work”

• Moving out of poverty is often impossible without employment

• Finding employment that accommodates the strengths, needs, and preferences of the person
Address Isolation ➔ Community Building

- Identify social roles the person would like to hold in the community
  - Social Role Valorization Theory
- Build a plan to support the person in those roles
Improving Conditions ➞ ABLE Accounts

• ABLE accounts allow people with disabilities to build financial assets
  – Assets in ABLE accounts are not means tested

• Learn about ABLE accounts:
  [http://ablenrc.org/road-map-enrollment](http://ablenrc.org/road-map-enrollment)
To Summarize...

• Disability and poverty are closely aligned

• Design programs for people (not disabilities)

• Work from a strengths-based perspective

• Implement choice wherever feasible and possible
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