

# Common Principles and Trends



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NDERSTANDING TRENDS AND PRINCIPLES THAT AFFECT HOW PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ARE SUPPORTED CAN HELP YOU BETTER PLAN WITH YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER. THIS KNOWLEDGE CAN ALSO ASSIST YOU IN ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES YOU CONSIDER.

*“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”*

*— Eleanor Roosevelt*

# Common Principles and Trends

Some positive principles and trends have emerged that guide the way people with developmental disabilities are supported in our communities. These include:

***Inclusion and Integration:*** People with disabilities are no longer separated from people who do not have disabilities. They can live, work and play in typical homes, communities and workplaces when needed supports and services are made available. All people should have the right to be included in the community regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Quality services assist people with disabilities to not just “be” in their communities but to “be a part” of their communities by helping them develop friendships, use typical community services, and participate in chosen activities. This applies to all people, including those with the most significant disabilities.

***Self-determination:*** Self-determination refers to people having control over the services they receive and how those services are provided. It includes taking control of your life, trying out choices, having the power to exercise adult rights and responsibilities, and deciding how to spend the money that is available to you for supports. In 1997, the Developmental Disabilities Administration started an initiative to transform the manner in which the services it funds are provided to encompass these self-determination principles.

***Person-centered planning:*** Planning about people’s lives must include them every step of the way and they should drive all decisions, as their abilities allow. We shouldn’t plan for people, we should plan with them. Person-centered planning focuses on people’s talents, skills and abilities rather than on weaknesses and lack of abilities.

***Personal outcomes:*** Inherent in the principles of self-determination and person-centered planning is a focus on outcomes that the person with a disability — as an individual — desires. Services should improve quality of life. The quality of services and supports is measured by looking at things such as:

<b>IDENTITY</b>	People choose personal goals. People choose where and with whom they live. People choose where they work or other meaningful activity. People have intimate relationships. People are satisfied with services. People are satisfied with their personal life situations.
<b>AUTONOMY</b>	People choose their daily routines; and make decisions regarding everyday matters. People have time, space, and opportunity for privacy. People decide when, and with whom, to share personal information.
<b>AFFILIATION</b>	People live, work, and play in integrated environments. People participate in the life of the community. People interact with other members of the community. People perform different social roles. People have friends. People are respected.

<b>ATTAINMENT</b>	People choose services. People attain personal goals.
<b>SAFEGUARDS</b>	People are connected to natural support networks. People are safe.
<b>RIGHTS</b>	People exercise rights and responsibilities. People are treated fairly.
<b>HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS</b>	People have the best possible health. People are free from abuse and neglect. People experience continuity and security.

*These are outcome measures developed by the Council on Quality and Leadership in Supports for People with Disabilities (with slight modifications). They serve as one example of the focus on the individual with a disability and the impact of services on his or her life. Other personal outcome measures exist.*

**Dignity of risk:** Taking risks is a natural way for us — disabled or not — to learn and grow, and to fully experience many of life’s opportunities. We learn from experience — both successes and mistakes. Risk taking is balanced with health and safety concerns, but people with disabilities should have typical experiences, even when reasonable risk is involved. We gain a sense of dignity from trying, even if we don’t always succeed. People with disabilities should have these opportunities, as well.

**Natural supports:** These are supports provided by people who are naturally in the lives of an individual with a disability as compared to supports provided by paid staff. This includes care and support provided by family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church members, store clerks, etc. Natural supports should be maximized and paid services should build on them.

It is important to encourage and support friendships for people with disabilities beginning when they are young, including friendships with people who do not have disabilities. Friendships provide us with enduring support and enrich our lives in many ways, offering us opportunities for growth and new experiences. These friendships can play a critical role in supporting people with developmental disabilities to live full lives.

**Generic services:** Generic services are services that are available to the general community compared to services that are specialized and only available to people with disabilities. They include things like public transportation, recreation, and health care. Whenever possible, people with disabilities should have the opportunity to use the same services that everyone in their community uses. Accommodations should be made as needed. This way people with disabilities have a broader range of choices, have experiences similar to their neighbors, and have opportunities to meet friends and interact with others in the community.

**For more information:** Refer to the D.D. Council’s publication, “Best and Promising Practices” and People on the Go’s publication, “Signs of Quality” (*Appendix D*).

## Each of Us Wants a Life Where We are Supported by and Contribute to Our Communities



*(adapted from Abraham Maslow's work by:  
Michael Smull, Support Development Associates)*

### **Affecting People's Lives**

Guided by these principles, services that support people with developmental disabilities to live, work, play and participate as they desire in the community are continually evolving. The trend is toward greater flexibility in how services are provided and maximum choice and control over services by the people who need them. While this is not currently available to everyone, it represents the most progressive practices in supporting people in the community and is the direction services are moving. Our hope is that this gives you ideas for planning and a picture of what to expect of services for your son or daughter.

Some examples of how this affects people's lives include:

#### ***Where, and with whom, you live...***

More flexible, individually designed services funded by the Developmental Disabilities Administration<sup>1</sup> allow people to have greater choice over where they live, who they live with (if anyone), how supports are provided, and who provides it. A person with developmental disabilities doesn't have to live in a group home to receive adequate supports — those supports can be provided in the person's own home. This is happening for people regardless of the type or degree of disability they have.

Instead of staying at home with parents or living in housing owned and controlled by service providers, more and more people with developmental disabilities (including people with significant

<sup>1</sup> DDA is the state agency in Maryland that funds the majority of ongoing services for people with developmental disabilities.

disabilities and substantial support needs) are renting their own apartments and buying their own homes — sometimes alone and sometimes with others to share costs. Families and housing programs help make this more affordable. This includes Section 8 certificates and vouchers which assist low-income people with the cost of rent. It also includes down payment and closing cost assistance and low interest mortgages that make buying a home more affordable.

Affordable housing programs vary from county to county and, as with most publicly financed programs, there are often waiting lists. However, people with disabilities do use them successfully.

**For more information about:**

**Section 8 rental subsidies:** see “Rental Assistance Programs” in *Appendix B*

**Homeownership for people with disabilities:** contact the Maryland Home of Your Own Coalition c/o the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council; 800-305-6441

**Individualized planning around housing and other needs:** see “Service Planning/Futures Planning” in *Appendix B*

### ***Where you work or how you spend your day in other activities that are meaningful to you...***

It used to be that the only opportunity for people with disabilities to earn income was to work in a sheltered workshop, apart from people who don’t have disabilities. People who were thought unable to work attended segregated day programs where they learned “independent living skills” and engaged in other activities. Now services in Maryland are generally focused on helping people get and keep regular jobs in the community, with support as needed. This is known as “supported employment.” Other people are supported to engage in activities that are meaningful to them like volunteering, learning new skills and participating in community activities.

**For more information about:**

**Supported employment and other day services:** contact the Developmental Disabilities Administration or Division of Rehabilitation Services listed under “Maryland State Agencies” in *Appendix B* and refer to the “Services in Maryland” section later in this guide.

Other families with a member with a developmental disability, advocates, and service providers can provide you with more details on these principles and trends. Use this information as you read through *Planning Now* to plan with your child in a meaningful way about all the possibilities for his or her life.