

A Quarterly Newsletter of the National
Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

Frontline Initiative

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Teamwork: A Foundation for Quality Supports

Becky supports four women who share a house. The four women have known each other for many years, and chose to share a house when they moved from a large facility. All four women have mobility impairments, yet are very active in the community and in managing their household. According to Becky everything runs smoothly day-to-day because there is a sense of teamwork between the direct support workers, the supervisor and the women being supported. Regular meetings are held with the women being supported, the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and the supervisor, to come up with a schedule for ensuring that the women are able to accomplish their plans for the week, and to ensure that everybody's voice is heard. Beyond that, the group is able to honestly communicate with each other about concerns that may arise. This combination of including everybody in the decision making and open communication among all involved creates a sense of being a team for all who live or work in the house, ultimately creating a good quality of life for the women living in the house.

As any DSP can affirm, there are significant changes in how human services are being delivered today versus ten or fifteen years ago. Most noticeably is that many of these services are now being delivered in the community. For example, people who receive services are now provided supports in their own homes or in smaller, alternative

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Lathan ("Lakeside") Simmons, Jr., winner of the 2000 John F. Kennedy, Jr. award for Excellence in Direct Support. See the story on page 9.

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Frontline Notes

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Yes, *Frontline Initiative* is still being published! We apologize for the delay in getting this issue out to you. Nicole Lei the former editor, moved on to other opportunities. The new editors, Lynda and Beth came on board in the Fall. Lynda and Beth both have many years of experience as Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). We're excited to be a part of this publication and the role it plays in spreading the word about the importance of DSPs.

It is fitting that this issue of *Frontline Initiative* is about teamwork. It took teamwork to get us up to speed, get this issue put together, and into your hands.

Teamwork is also a critical part of the DSPs job. DSPs are expected to be a part of a team of co-workers, to be participants on consumer's support teams, and many DSPs are becoming involved in agency-wide teams. The articles in this issue of *Frontline Initiative* defines "team" and what teams do, offers suggestions on how to be a good team member, and highlights agencies and individual DSPs that put the ideas of good teams to work.

Our next issue will focus on the important topic of ethics. The development of a code of ethics is a key step in the recognition of any field as a profession. The next issue will feature an article on the development of National Alliance of Direct Support Professional's (NADSP) Code of Ethics, an article on how DSPs can use ethical thinking in

their work life, and on the development of training in ethics for DSPs. If you or anybody in your agency has thought about ethics, and ways to promote ethical practice, we'd like to hear more about it!

Happy New Year!

FI Editors

Soliciting Best Practices in Direct Support Staff Workforce Development

The Research and Training Center on Community Living is soliciting best practices in workforce development. Solicitations are requests for programs and initiatives advancing the goals of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP). Models of the best practice will be highlighted in future issues of *Frontline Initiative* newsletter and through member organizations of the NADSP and those best reflecting NADSP goals will be visited. If you know of a program or agency that is doing something great in the recruitment, retention, and training of DSPs, please nominate them. For a nomination form visit <http://rtc.umn.edu/downloads/practices.pdf>.

NADSP Member Organizations and State Contacts

Frontline Initiative is a product of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. The NADSP is a collaboration of organizations who are committed to promoting the development of a highly competent human services workforce that supports individuals in achieving their life goals. The following are some of those organizations —

- Administration on Developmental Disabilities
- American Association on Mental Retardation
- American Association of University Affiliated Programs
- American Network of Community Options and Resources
- The Arc of the United States
- Association of Public Developmental Disabilities Administrators
- Association for Persons in Supported Employment
- CARF...The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission
- Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
- JFK Jr. Institute for Worker Education
- Council for Standards in Human Service Education
- Human Services Research Institute
- Institute on Community Integration (UAP), University of Minnesota
- International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
- Irwin Siegel Agency Inc.
- National Association of State Directors on Developmental Disabilities
- National Association of State Directors of Vocational Technical Education
- National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion
- National Center for Paraprofessionals in Education
- National Organization of Child Care Workers Association
- National Organization for Human Service Educators
- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals
- New Jersey Association of Community Providers
- President's Committee on Mental Retardation
- Program in Child Development and Child Care, University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work
- Reaching Up
- Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered
- TASH
- United Cerebral Palsy Association

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The Real Scoop

Welcome to *The Real Scoop*. Clifford is a self-advocate who has been politically active for years. He's ready to give you his spin on how to deal with issues you face as you forge ahead in your role as a Direct Support Professional (DSP). Seth has been a DSP for many years, and he loves to give advice. He may ruffle your feathers, but hey, it's for your own good! Clifford and Seth tackle this one with a few suggestions.

Unsupportive Supervision

Dear Cliff and Seth,

I work at a small group home for teenagers. Most of the staff get along really well and we like our work. But we just got a new supervisor who seems to only see what we do wrong. Some of the staff have already left and more of us will if she keeps this up. What can we do about the way she treats us?

— Wants to Get Along in Washington

Dear Wants to Get Along,

I feel the first thing you could do is talk to your supervisor's supervisor. Make sure when you do so that it is a meeting between only you and that person so that you can feel free to discuss the issues you are having with your own supervisor. You can be sure they don't want to lose the competent staff they still have. It's difficult to form a cohesive team of workers if someone in a leadership role is making it intolerable for the staff under them. Most likely the company's senior management are aware that people are

leaving and would be appreciative of you letting them know there is a specific reason that people are choosing to leave the company. You are probably aware of the staffing crisis currently affecting the field of direct support services, all the more reason to tell the leaders of the company about what is happening from your viewpoint.

Hope this helps,

— Cliff

Dear Get Along,

Your situation is a major workforce issue that has been addressed by research. First-line supervisors have one of the most demanding jobs in our industry. Their effectiveness directly affects DSP job satisfaction and retention. A strategy to support and train supervisors including instruction on using fair and supportive management practices is important. Supportive, being the operative word here would lead your supervisor to communicate constructive, non threatening ideas and solutions to whatever you are doing [in your own words] wrong. Your supervisor should learn how to give praise and recognition for a job well done which leads to an atmosphere of professionalism and high performance. However, for the moment, I suggest you request a meeting one on one with your supervisor and speak your mind in the respectful tone in which you would like to be addressed. Explain to your supervisor that you understand the demands placed on her. Tell her also that you and your colleagues want to do the best job possible for the people you serve and the agency. Let her know that to achieve this goal it would really help if she pointed out the positive

work and showed her appreciation by acknowledging it. Hopefully, she won't feel threatened, and things will improve for you and your fellow DSPs.

Let me know,

— Seth

Ask Clifford and Seth

Do you have a burning question about direct support, but didn't know who to ask? Submit it to —

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Please include your name, day phone for verification, and alias, if desired.

DSP Web

<http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp>

Did you know the NADSP has a Web site?

Did you know you are needed to make it even better?

Go to <http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp> and check it out!

Alliance Update

NADSP on National Credentialing for DSPs

Happy 2001 from the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. We are thrilled that this new issue of *Frontline Initiative* is finally out the door and assure you that the next important issue on ethics will soon follow.

It seems unbelievable that the NADSP has been in existence now for over 3 years. This group of committed organizations and individuals has worked feverishly to bring heightened attention to the critical issues of direct support. We are thrilled with the opportunity to learn from one another and develop strategies to address workforce issues.

What's the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) recently been up to? A lot! Here's a brief update —

- Training and supporting new editorial staff for the *Frontline Initiative* newsletter.
- Welcoming new state alliances in New Mexico.
- Supporting potential state coalitions to form alliances and become members of the NADSP.
- Sharing best practices in direct support workforce development.
- Identifying and sharing information about policy and legislative initiatives designed to support issues of importance to the NADSP.

- Conducting validation workshops for the draft of the national Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).
- Presenting information about direct support recruitment, retention and training challenges at several state and national conferences.
- Planning for our winter meeting to be held in conjunction with the ANCOR meeting in Phoenix, AZ on February 24, 2001.

The new year promises to be an exciting one for addressing issues related to the direct support workforce. The reauthorization of the federal Developmental Disabilities Act for the first time includes programs that specifically target direct support issues; the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services held a two day summit on direct support workforce issues and many directors left this conference charged to go back to their states and make a difference; and, the first ever national Code of Ethics for Direct Support Professionals will be finalized and broadly disseminated.

We look forward to another good year and will do our best to share information, ideas, and inspiration through future issues of *FI*.

Goals of the NADSP

The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) was founded several years ago as a coalition of interested national organizations and individuals who came together to strengthen supports to people who rely on human services by finding solutions and strategies to address the workforce issues in human services. To that end the NADSP has embraced several goals and has been actively working to achieve these goals. The five goals of the NADSP are to —

1. Enhance the status and image of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs).
2. Provide better access for all DSPs to high quality educational experiences (e.g. in-service training, continuing education and higher education) and lifelong learning which enhances competency.
3. Strengthen the working relationships and partnerships between DSPs, self-advocates, other consumer groups, and families.
4. Promote systems reform which provides incentives for educational experiences, increased compensation and access for career pathways for DSPs through the promotion of policy incentives (e.g. legislation, funding, practices).
5. Support the development and implementation of a national voluntary credentialing process for DSPs.

DSP in Action

Creating Your Own Portfolio

What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of information that demonstrates mastery of work-related skills. In areas such as human services, skills are best demonstrated in actual work situations. Rather than paper and pencil tests, developing a portfolio is an exciting way to help bridge the gap between traditional testing, which is practical to implement but does not necessarily reflect true work skills, and skill demonstrations, which provides information on a person's skills but is difficult to implement

Why Create a Portfolio?

There are a number of reasons for planning and creating a portfolio that clearly reflects your work-related skills, knowledge and attitudes. A portfolio is a portable way to show others that you have mastered important work skills, which can be valuable in your career development. The portability of portfolios may also have potential to be a part of any voluntary credentialing structure in this field.

The process of creating a portfolio is a learning opportunity in and of itself. If you are bored with training options currently offered, you could propose to gain training credit by exploring an area of your interest, implementing new skills in work, and describing your new skills as a way to demonstrate to your employer your skill development. This documentation can then become part of a portfolio. If you're not sure where to begin, you may get some good ideas by reviewing the Community Support Skill Standards (CSSS), the nationally validated core

skills for community support human service workers.

Once you have a good portfolio developed, it may be useful in situations such as helping new or current employers understanding your skills and abilities in order to have a basis for hiring, raises, promotions or new positions. Portfolios may also be useful in getting credit for prior learning or in post-secondary educational settings.

What's in a Portfolio?

Your portfolio can have anything you'd like to put in it that meaningfully reflects your capabilities as a DSP.

Documentation of Work Samples

As a real reflection of your skills, the portfolio should contain authentic work samples. These can be displayed in any method that shows your actual work. We produce a lot of paper in human services and it's likely many your samples will be based on reports, logs, or other paper based methods. However, there is no reason to limit your creativity. Using another method, such as a picture log or a video or audiotape presentation can be more fun and will make your portfolio stand out.

Other Items —

- A personal statement regarding your views on our work and your professional goals;
- A current resume;
- Letters of recommendation from current and previous employers, coworkers and consumers or their families;

- Certificates or awards you have received related to your work;
- A table of contents that makes the materials easy to find and view.

Format

Plan not only what information you need to gather, but also the format you would like to use. For instance, if you want to demonstrate your skill helping a consumer select and use a new communication device, you could use a combination of pictures and audio tapes to show the process of selecting and then using the device with more sophistication over time. To help the reviewer understand the overall value of the sample, all samples should have a summary statement that includes information about the goal, the implementation, and the outcome of the skill being demonstrated in the portfolio.

Confidentiality

Remember you must always respect the confidentiality of the person you are supporting. Get written permission from them and their guardians, if applicable, before using any pictures or other information that belongs to the person (such as formal records, etc.) Put copies of these permission slips into your portfolio (or at a minimum note on your samples that permission was given) removing names from documentation will let a prospective employer or any other person reviewing your portfolio know your respect for the consumer's right to privacy and confidentiality.

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Virtual Teambuilding Reinventing the Way We Work

The South Mississippi Regional Center made history this season with the debut of its video conferencing system. The system is the first multi-site communications technology in use by any Mississippi government agency. DSPs at South Mississippi Regional Center (SMRC) which provides comprehensive service options for people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities who reside in the six southernmost counties of the state now have the opportunity to participate in cyber team building activities and training.

This system provides an “almost like being there” link between SMRC’s main campus at Long Beach and outlying program sites. The convenient size of the hardware,

roughly the size of a regular PC and monitor with a small camera mounted on top, fits easily into any office. The equipment is user-friendly, similar to making a telephone call with the added feature of viewing callers in color at each site. The system has a “chat room” feature, which allows participants to send messages that are visible at the other sites. Other collaborative features of the equipment make it possible for users to work together on written documents and joint projects.

As SMRC continues to expand services, the agency’s need for cyber-teamwork and collaboration along with real time, cutting edge training also grows. The system is the centerpiece of the agency’s networking and

continuous learning experiences. With desktop video conferencing, staff who are located at sites several hours from the main campus are connected and able to fully participate in training activities without leaving their worksite. This system will accrue immediate savings in time and money, while still allowing DSPs to maintain required training hours and the opportunity to take advantage of additional training opportunities available via downlinked programs.

Dr. Pamela Baker is the executive director of the South Mississippi Regional Center in Long Beach, Mississippi. She can be reached at 601.868.2923.

State of the Art Definition

Managed Care

For most people “managed care” is a familiar term, often associated with the way in which many of them receive their health care. But what does managed care have to do with support services for people with developmental disabilities? As cuts in both federal and state budgets have been the trend in the last several years, methods for containing cost, especially in areas funded by Medicaid, have been part of the discussion. Most support services to people with developmental disabili-

ties and to the elderly are funded through Medicaid. Efforts to contain costs have been linked with managed care options. Managed care is any number of strategies that seek to maximize the value of services by controlling their cost and use. One concern about managed care is that because there is a limited pot of money and limitations on services, people may not get the basic care they need. On the other hand, with its emphasis on avoiding unnecessary services and implementing quality

assurance mechanisms, managed care could be one way to serve more people with the same amount of money. Like any major funding change, a move to managed care would have to be done thoughtfully and with the active participation of the communities it affects.

Working Together to Create Professionals

Special People In Northeast, Inc. (SPIN) is a non-profit organization founded in 1970 as a summer camp for children and adolescents with moderate and severe mental retardation. Today, 300 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) at SPIN assist over 1,500 infants, children, and adults with mental retardation. Our mission is to develop community resources, services and initiatives in support of people with mental, physical and/or sensory impairments so that they may exercise their right to a fully integrated life as citizens of their communities.

In the fall of 1998, SPIN informed its Union (AFSCME Local 1739) that a change was needed in the direct care position in the agency in order for SPIN to be current with best practices in the field. Our vision is to help all 300 staff to develop greater skills and move beyond simply caring for people with mental retardation towards actively teaching and supporting people with mental retardation in their pursuit of an everyday life.

SPIN proposed that AFSCME Local 1739 and management work together as a team to forge the vision of a new position. The Union readily concurred. A new staff position, titled Direct Support Professional (DSP), was suggested to the Union, which reflected the shift in the field, and this agency. This shift moved the direct care position focus from care giving and habilitation to support in living an inclusive and meaningful life. Later that year, representatives of the Union, which included DSPs, and SPIN management worked together to design this

new position and the training needed to support the conversion to a new model of providing supports

The DSP planning team met weekly to develop the vision, values and job responsibilities for the DSP position. After two months of positive, open meetings, the job responsibilities of the DSPs position were developed. The

next step was designing training to develop the competencies needed to perform the newly defined job functions for the position.

The foundation for the development of competency-based curriculum for the DSP trainees focused on two important premises, professionalism and teamwork.

SPIN looked at the individual strengths in the agency and identified people within the organization to develop and teach the courses. Each course provided the information that supports the mission of SPIN in its efforts to assure quality services. Current trends, philosophies and practices are included in the course materials and facilitate participant interaction, problem solving and group discussion. The courses are: 1) Introduction to Documentation, 2) Documentation II, 3) Supporting Everyday Lives 2000, 4) Community Based Instruction, 5) Health Information Recording System (HIRS), and 6) Indi-

vidual Support Plan (ISP).

The grand finale to the training program was a series of three-hour team building sessions in which all DSPs and their supervisors participated together. The goal of the team building class was to ensure that all staff developed an appreciation and an understanding of the "team"

process and its relationship to providing quality supports for individuals with disabilities. There were four main objectives. They were to identify the difference between a group and a team, to identify the roles we take in a team, to identify the roles that render a team ineffective, and finally, to discover

how working as team can be more effective than working alone.

One example of a team building exercise used in this training was an activity in which participants break out into teams of DSPs, and supervisors. Team members were encouraged to share the following information; one positive thing that happened at work within the past two weeks, one positive thing that they did or said to a coworker and one positive thing happened to them today. The point of the exercise was simply to focus on the positive things in your life, rather than the negative.

After nine successful months of training over 300 direct support staff in this new program the first

At SPIN, we strongly believe that staff development, education, and teamwork are among the most effective ways of living our mission.

Kennedy Award Recipient Exemplifies Professionalism

My name is Jackie Randell. It is my great pleasure to tell you the extraordinary story of a Direct Support Professional (DSP), Mr. Lathan Simmons Jr., known as “Lakeside” to his friends. Lathan is a Professional Life Coach at Support Works, Inc. a non-profit agency in Raleigh, North Carolina, which provides a variety of support services to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Lakeside is a humble, wonderful human being who loves his job and most of all, the people he works with. As the mother of a son with special needs, I deeply admire and appreciate Lakeside for the person he is and the job he does as a DSP.

Support Works is committed to the principles of person-centeredness, self-determination, and community inclusion. Its clients choose where they live, work, and have fun. Support teams, composed of Support Works staff, family members, and friends, assist each individual in successfully living and working in the community. In his role as a Professional Life Coach, Lakeside’s primary responsibility is to work with three people living in a supported living residence in Raleigh. Luckily, my thirty-year-old son Jeff is one of people to whom Lakeside provides supports. Lakeside encourages the three young men in life skill development, helps them to be accepted and respected in the community, and encourages them to im-

prove their self-esteem, and to grow as individuals. He always goes the extra mile to help them to look their best at all times and he encourages them to reach higher and to accomplish more by continually seeking out opportunities for them to participate in activities in their community. The people he supports are busy bowling, swimming, hiking, going to ball games, or shopping. He has even led them and a

group of their friends in going Christmas caroling in their neighborhood.

A single parent with two children, Lakeside is a devoted father who holds another full-time job in addition to his position with Support Works. Yet, he enthusiastically and diligently carries out his job responsibilities. As Jeff’s mother, I have had opportunities to observe Lakeside in both routine and challenging situations. I am constantly amazed by his energy, patience, sensitivity, insights, and heartfelt spirit. He has superior job skills and a contagiously delightful and charismatic personality. He loves, accepts and respects the people he supports for who they are, and they know it!

My son feels secure and loved when Lakeside is around. He demonstrates confidence and trust in Lakeside’s guidance and responds positively to his gentle reminders to do his best. Because he is a person with autism, Jeff experiences frequent challenging behaviors

throughout the day. His faith in Lakeside’s friendship allows him to feel less anxious as he accomplishes his daily activities. At a recent party, Jeff was unable to enter a room where many people had already gathered and some activities were underway, which is a typical symptom of his autism. A creative problem solver, Lakeside used the gift Jeff brought for exchange as a transitional tool to help him relax promptly and eventually enjoy the evening. Likewise, he facilitated Jeff’s participation in singing with the M’n’M Singers, a local choir. He stood by Jeff whenever he needed him during the concerts, and even performed with the group.

Last year, Lakeside received the J.F.K., Jr. Award for Excellence in Direct Support, a distinguished honor from the President’s Committee on Mental Retardation. He also won the statewide award of Direct Service Professional of the Year, given by the Community Living Association, a North Carolina advocacy organization. Of his many professional and personal accomplishments, an important one is that the men he supports have grown as active and confident individuals. Their social skills and independence have vastly improved. They are enjoying an enviable life, for which they owe Lakeside in so many ways. To them, Lakeside is mentor, teacher, cheerleader, advocate, and most of all, a friend. He makes their home and community fun places to be.

This was originally a support letter written by Jackie Randell and submitted to PCMR in support of Lathan Simmon’s nomination for the JFK Jr. award.

I am constantly amazed by his energy, patience, sensitivity, insights, and heartfelt spirit.

Working Toward a Common Goal

As I watched the coverage of the Olympics on television recently, it occurred to me that the outcome of these games did not depend solely on the efforts of one person. The athletes, their families and coaches, the International Olympic Committee, as well as their national counterparts, and all of the broadcast staff, combined their efforts to create a successful Olympiad.

The success of our work as DSPs (DSPs) is, in many ways, similar to the efforts that created a successful 27th Olympiad. It takes hard work and a lot of teamwork to achieve good results.

In my own work as a DSP, Kathy, a Resource Coordinator for The Arc of Frederick County, stands out as someone who exemplifies the principle of teamwork. Our relationship is characterized by the spirit of cooperation and teamwork. Several factors have contributed to the success of our relationship.

Regular communication has been one key element. I contact Kathy on a regular basis to update her on new developments in the lives of the individuals we both support. Slowly, Kathy informs me about any pertinent information she receives from other provider agencies.

Joint advocacy efforts have also brought positive results for the individuals we support. Together, we have been able to accomplish more than what we might have been able to accomplish individually. Several examples come to mind. One in-

volves the successful transfer of a woman we support from a day program that did not meet her needs to one where she feels valued and productive. It took us 14 months to accomplish her goal of moving to a new day program, but our persistence paid off. The woman we support has expressed on numerous occasions how delighted she is to

now be a part of a program where she feels respected.

Another example involves the use of person-centered planning at a person's annual team meeting. Even though the person's

family was hesitant to use a new process and had actually canceled meetings to discuss person-centered planning. However, we decided to continue informal discussion the day of the meeting, we went ahead and used the person-centered planning process. The family couldn't have been happier with the results. They were so pleased that they wrote thank-you notes and sent a letter indicating that this had been their daughter's best annual meeting ever.

A sense of common vision and common ideals has also contributed to our ability to work well as a team. The values of personal choice and the ability to live one's dreams guide both of our actions as DSPs. For example, we have supported one woman to achieve her dream of a

more independent and "normal" living situation. This woman indicated that she wanted to live alone with the help of a specific support person. There were many obstacles along the way, ranging from slow response time on the part of the agency providing supports to family concerns about safety. Through teamwork and persistence the woman we support has recently moved from a group home setting with two other women and a staff person to an apartment with one roommate.

Finally, our willingness to work as a team has personal benefits, as well. The sense of mutual support that develops from a team is an invaluable resource. When there is need for a little encouragement, we have another person to whom we can turn. Ultimately, the benefits of such encouragement involves being able to put forth our best efforts for those we support.

Like the athletes who participate in the Olympic games, progress (and ultimately success) is not based solely on individual effort. It is only when all of us are working toward a common goal, are all of us successful.

Terri Niland is an Individual Family Care Provider with The Arc of Montgomery County, Maryland. Terri is also a Community and Employment Specialist with the Abilities Network. Terri can be reached at 240.631.9803. Kathy Sargent is a Resource Coordinator with The Arc of Frederick County, Maryland, and can be reached at 301.926.9557.

Together, we have been able to accomplish more than what we might have been able to accomplish individually.

Member Profiles

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) was created as a Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ADD works with state governments, local communities, and the private sector to assist people with developmental disabilities to gain independence, productivity, and community integration.

The ADD was created as a result of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Act was based on the idea that disability is a natural part of human experience and does not diminish the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to enjoy the same opportunities as other citizens. It was also based on the idea that it is in the nation's best interest for people with developmental disabilities to be employed, and to live conventional and independent lives as a part of families and communities.

With this in mind, ADD has defined six goals in the areas of employment, self-determination, education, community support, health, and housing. ADD also emphasizes a community-based approach that recognizes and expands on the resources and benefits of diversity.

ADD attempts to meet these goals through the programs it funds, which include the State Developmental Disabilities Councils (DDCs), the Protection and Advoca-

cacy Systems (P&As), the University Affiliated Programs (UAPs) and the Projects of National Significance (PNSs). Together they have developed the "Roadmap to the Future", which establishes a course of action.

DDCs are made up of individuals with disabilities, family members, and service agency representatives. Together, they develop and implement statewide plans that address priorities such as: employment, case management, child development, and community living. They promote activi-

ties which demonstrate new approaches to enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families, such as; training activities, supporting communities to respond positively, educating the public about their abilities, preferences, and needs, providing information to policy-makers to increase their opportunities, and eliminating barriers.

P&As provide advocacy, training, information, and referral services to hundreds of thousands individuals each year. They provide services for the protection and advocacy of legal and human rights in areas including: education, abuse and neglect, institutional and habilitation services, guardianship, and housing issues.

UAPs are public and private non-profit agencies affiliated with a university. They support interdisciplinary

nary training, exemplary community service programs, provide technical assistance to Direct Service Professionals, and conduct research and dissemination activities. The network of UAPs has expanded from 40 in 1987 to its present total of 61. Along with this growth, the focus on the consumer has grown and now emphasizes consumer empowerment, independence, and inclusion.

PNS focus on the most pressing issues affecting people with developmental disabilities and their families on a national level. Funds are awarded to public or private, non-profit institutions to provide technical assistance to the state based programs (DDCs, UAPs, and P&As), and to assist with projects that "hold promise to expand or improve opportunities for people with developmental disabilities."

In their priority areas for Fiscal year 200, ADD has awarded grants in the following areas. "Mobilizing for Change/Rapid Deployment of Good Ideas" is the first priority area and is open-ended as to subject, issue and topic. Grants were awarded to projects that "reinvent" new models in the field, which will transfer information through creative and innovative methods. The second priority area is "Bridging the Digital Divide: Building Content." ADD will provided a grant to design and build an Internet site that will provide information on the Medicaid program for individuals and their families. The final priority is "Managing Our Program Knowledge Through Web Improvement."

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and does not diminish the right of individuals.

Building a Sense of Teamwork with Families

Green Chimneys is a residential program located on a 150-acre farm in Brewster, New York. The program serves 89 children with emotional difficulties, ranging in age from six to fifteen. Most of the children are experiencing significant emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulties to the extent that they are unable to remain in their homes and communities. The task at hand is to put support services together, which would permit the children to return to their homes or some other permanent placement.

Family weekend, a tradition at Green Chimneys, is an exciting and unique experience offered as part of the program. It began as an idea of the Parents Action Committee (PAC) six years ago. PAC, as a group, decided that they would like to see a “day in the life of their child” at Green Chimneys. It began as “Family Farm Weekend” to give families, including parents and siblings, a chance to spend the weekend at Green Chimneys. The goal of the weekend is to bring families together, find common issues between staff, families and people who receive supports, and to break down any barriers if they exist. This model developed at Green Chimneys is one that could perhaps be replicated by other agencies in their attempts to bring together direct support staff and their families.

The most important aspect of the weekend is the reoccurring theme of

teamwork. From the beginning planning phases to the closing ceremony, the weekend revolves around building teams.

Family Weekend looks something like this. It begins on a Friday night, staff greet the families upon arrival and the evening is spent networking and learning more about the services offered by the agency. Saturday morning begins bright and early,

with an activity designed to get people moving, such as a hike or a swim. After breakfast, the families and staff are introduced to a wide range of challenging games and activities intended to

build teamwork. These activities include such things as “trust walks” where they are blindfolded and guided by other weekend participants, canoeing and relay races. Another teambuilding activity included in this weekend is a cooking activity in which the parents previously sent in lists of ingredients needed to prepare their own special dish. During this activity, the parents are able to use the teamwork methods learned earlier to work cooperatively with each other in the kitchen. When using these methods, the sharing of the limited supplies and small space of the kitchen proves to be an easier task. The families and staff then join together to enjoy the meal.

The weekend also includes an evening activity called “Letting Go.” This activity starts with the group

leader leading the members through guided imagery of a journey. The family members are then asked to write down on a piece of paper emotional issues that they desire to “let go.” The group then stands around the bonfire and one at a time tosses their “emotional issues” into the fire in an effort to symbolize people moving forward to a more positive future.

The closing event is a candle-lighting ceremony used to offer closure for the families who attend the Family Weekend activities. Each individual participant (staff and family members) shares with the group his or her thoughts and feelings about his or her experiences over the weekend and then lights the candle of the next person.

The relationships that develop from these weekends are significant. Many parents acquire new friends, learning that they have much in common with one another. They learn from each other, support each other, form networks with each other, and look forward to future opportunities to get together. The weekend also provides an opportunity for staff to build a better rapport with families, seeing them on a more personal level, rather than just a professional level. The staff are able to witness the dynamics of a family and learn just how much the parents love and want the best for their children. The rewards of this team-building weekend are endless and the experience is priceless.

Jill Latteri is a social worker at Green Chimneys Children's Services in Brewster, New York. She can be reached at (914) 279-2995.

The rewards of this team-building weekend are endless and the experience is priceless.

Supporting Successful Travel

The Guided Tour, founded in 1972, was a pioneer in providing travel and vacation programs for people with developmental and physical challenges. The program evolved from one-day and weekend trips to include longer trips around the United States, Europe, Mexico and the Caribbean.

There are a number of things DSP can do to ensure that the people they support have a successful travel experience. For example, DSPs assisting people to complete applications for

travel need to ensure that the information provided is complete in order to prevent any problems on the trip. Information that has proven particularly important includes —

- *Information about food allergies or special diets.* Tour guides can then assist the travelers in making healthy food choices to prevent an illness that could ruin the vacation for the traveler.
- *Information about challenging behavior.* Tour guides who are forewarned about challenging behavior are better able to structure activities, recognize stressful situations, redirect travelers, and are better able to assist travelers in managing the stressors that often come with travel (such as roommates).
- *Information about fears and other anxieties.* This can be critical information for tour guides to have. While tour groups can assist and

accommodate many people's fears, some trips may not be possible for some people who have long-standing fears. For example, a fear of heights can make trips to London challenging where three to four story high escalators are used to access the subway system.

DSPs can play an important part in ensuring the people they support have a fun-filled, successful vacation

DSPs can play an important part in ensuring the people they support have a fun-filled, successful vacation by helping the people they support carefully consider their likes, dislikes, needs and

desires when selecting a vacation. Using this information can ensure an appropriate vacation is planned, tour staff are prepared to assist travelers with their needs, and that fun will be had by all.

Irv Segal is the director of The Guided Tour. He can be reached at 215.782.1370 or at gtour400@aol.com.

A Fun-Filled Vacation: Mississippi River Cruise

I saw an ad in the ARC news about The Guided Tour, and picked a cruise on the Mississippi Queen to New Orleans.

I flew to New Orleans for the trip. There were about 15 to 17 people that went on the cruise. We waited until everybody arrived and then we went to the hotel together. It was a wonderful feeling that I had accomplished this in my life, that I can do this.

I met a nice man who became my roommate, and we had a good time. We did almost everything together on the ship. On the first day, we walked to the French Quarter of New Orleans, before we got on the boat. We went to a famous coffee shop on Bourbon Street. We also went to souvenir shops. It was really exciting, even though there was no live entertainment while we were there.

We took a bus from the hotel down to the docks. I thought the boat was huge when I first saw it. When I walked inside, I was surprised. It was luxurious with couches and looked really comfortable. Our room was small, but nice.

We went up to Baton Rouge and then back to New Orleans. The side trips we took were very exciting. We stopped and got off the boat and went to a plantation. There was a huge old mansion, pretty flowers, and beautiful fields.

On the boat, we played shuffleboard, flew kites, and sat on the rocking chairs. The sunsets were beautiful.

One night we had dinner at the Captain's table. There was a lot of southern food. I ate a lot!

They had entertainment after dinner. There was music with guitar and piano, swing dancing, a Mardi Gras celebration, games, and country line dancing.

When the trip was over, we went back to the airport. I was glad to get back home, even though the flight was smooth. It was good to see Mom and Dad!

Brian Clukey is a self-advocate from Falls Church, Virginia.

Self-Determination A Matter of Teamwork

There is a lot of talk about self-determination in the field of direct support these days. Self-determination is different for each person, depending on who the person is, and what his or her circumstances and experiences are. In my case, I need physical assistance in almost every area, such as getting out of bed, taking a shower, preparing meals, and so on. For me, self-determination is not physical independence. It is more about my knowing what I need and being able to explain this to my personal assistants so that they can best help me.

Self-determination is knowing that there are resources out there that I can use to enhance my growth and independence. I don't always know how to meet all of my needs and things change. It helps to know that I can find and use other resources. For me, that is true self-determination. It not only helps me grow, but my personal care assistants grow, too. We learn together as a team. It is great when I have assistants who are willing to learn, both from me and the other resources out there.

Because I need my personal care assistants, self-determination for me is a matter of teamwork. I am not trying to become independent of my assistants. I am their employer, but we work together hand in hand and respect each other's ideas and opinions. If we disagree on something that has to do with my care, my assistants know that I have the final say.

Open communication is a part of any type of team and is very important in the relationship between people and their personal care assistants. It can be difficult to create a sense of teamwork in situations where one of the team members has difficulty communicating. When this happens, it is important that support staff start with the assumption that

people can make choices and express preferences, and then to support the development of a communication system before decisions are made. Staff

need to be aware that whenever they are assisting someone to make choices it will always be limited by their beliefs and expectations. It is important that staff are willing to grow learn and modify their beliefs and expectations. I think service providers, family and friends will find that if they listen closely and give honest feedback to people, which can include being clear about what their own limits are, that people will learn better ways of communicating and will work better as a team to solve problems.

Real self-determination happens when there is good communication and when the person has a trusting relationship with someone, or with several people. I can't emphasize enough how important this is. Teamwork and equality are the keys to a trusting relationship. There is a

big difference between that and just giving an order. As a staff person or a friend or a family member, put yourself in the place of the person with a disability. Instead of overpowering the person you supporting share the responsibility and everyone in the relationship can grow to make things work for both of you. Neither of you has to pretend to have all of the answers.

For staff people and others who do not have disabilities, as well as for people with disabilities, it is also important to share power. At every part of the day, there are decisions that have to do with power. The question is, who makes the decision? Where does it start and where does it end? The person with the disability needs to have the final say as to what will happen, even if it's a decision that is jointly made with other people. If a decision is jointly made, the responsibility (including the risk) for the decision needs to be joint, too. The power sharing process doesn't stay the same all the time. It changes as the people involved grow and learn from each other.

Self-determination is what life is all about. It's about trust; power sharing, communication and teamwork. It's about putting the person with the disability at the top, and supporting that person to live a full life.

Mike J. Kennedy is a self-advocate who works at the Center on Human Policy at Syracuse University's School of Education. He may be reached at 805 South Crouse Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13224; 315.443.3851, fax: 315.443.4338

It is great when I have assistants who are willing to learn, both from me and the other resources out there.

Frontline Resources

RIGHT ON!

Agencies supporting people with developmental disabilities strive to provide supports that allow individuals to live meaningful and productive lives in their community ... with all the rights and responsibilities that community life entails. In order to do this effectively, it is essential to empower people. Unfortunately, many people with developmental disabilities were never taught about their right or how to assert them.

The Essex County Association for Community Living's Bill of Rights and RIGHT ON! Video were developed as a tool to help people understand their rights, empower people we support in making decisions which affect their lives, and to have an impact on the manner in which opportunities are provided through community living.

The unique aspect of our new Bill of Rights and educational video is that it was developed by self-advocates, ensuring that they have a full voice in determining the role of support in their lives. Thus, ensuring that we deliver supports in a manner that is RIGHT ON!

RIGHT ON! is available from the Essex County Association for Community Living. For more information, contact Paula Gauthier, Manager, Community Relations, Essex County Association for Community Living in Essex, Ontario, Canada at 519.776.6483.

An Introduction to Teamwork in Community and Health Services

By J. Sauer, S. O'Neill, L. Sedlezky, K. Scaletta, A. Hewitt, M. Taylor, and J. Silver (1997)

A manual on teams and teamwork that provides a cohesive training guide to agencies and their employees about the knowledge, competencies, and values necessary for building and supporting successful teams. Cost: \$7.00. To order, contact Beth Knoblauch at 612.624.0060.

Teamwork from Start to Finish: 10 Steps to Results!

Rees, Fran , 1997

A book for team leaders and all members of any team. It gives a step-by-step guide to the process of creating and managing effective teams.

Cost is \$29.95. Order from Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer at www.pfeiffer.com.

Teamwork Works!

By Irene M. Ward and Associates

This 20-minute video comes with a 20-page users manual and a 39-page leader's guidebook. Features a man with a developmental disability who worked with his VR counselor, sister, employer SSA and HUD, to become more independent. Demonstrates how the system should work and what can be accomplished by working together. It includes a seven-step formula that promotes cross-agency collaboration and teamwork. It may be used to streamline complex bureaucracies and

develop community partnerships. Cost: \$99.00 plus shipping. To order, contact the Program Development Associates at P.O. Box 2038, Syracuse, NY 13220, 800.543.2119, fax: 315.452.0710, Web: www.pdassoc.com

Collaborative Team Skills

Miller, Sherod & Miller, Phyllis A. (1994)

Each individual member of any team can use this easy to use handbook on assessing and developing your skills as an effective team member. It focuses on communication skills, both listening and speaking to others and group-processing skills that help bring the individual skills into the collaborative work of teams. It includes assessing one's present skills, learning about more effective skills and activities to practice these new skills.

Cost is \$22.00 or \$28.00 with activities that supplement workbook. To order, contact the publisher at 7201 South Broadway, Littleton, CO, 80122, 800.328.5099.

Teamwork

continued from page cover

living arrangements, and working environments in their communities rather than in state institutions and large sheltered workshops. Another important change is that now people who receive services and their families are more often invited to participate with service agencies to help design the type and shape of services, to learn how to help manage their own services and, in general, to become empowered and advocate for themselves.

As a result of these and related changes, the roles and job responsibilities of DSPs in community support settings are dramatically changing. Workers are learning to plan with, and not for, persons needing services and they are teaching people who receive services how to care and plan for themselves. In addition, as supervision becomes more decentralized, DSPs tend to be more isolated. As a result they will need to rely more on individual knowledge and skills, work more closely with their colleagues, and help to create more partnerships with other professional groups in the broader community.

The following is a list of competencies identified by the Human Services Research Institute (Cambridge, MA) that relate to competencies needed by DSPs today —

- Ability and commitment to identify strengths in people and groups.
- Genuine respect for diverse perspectives and life styles.
- A capacity to listen and reflect.
- An ability to subordinate one's own ego (to put one's self aside in the interest of the group).

- Skill and creativity in helping people become more aware and confident of their own abilities.
- Appreciation of when to step back and the ability to help the individual or group assume decision-making and action (Taylor, Bradley & Warren, 1996).

Why Teams?

Many training and development professionals have observed how the number and types of teams within the business sector have immeasurably grown over the past 25 years.

The use of teams to perform ongoing work or to complete special projects has also been found in the human services area more frequently in recent years.

Why are teams used? Some of the more common reasons for using teams are to —

- Improve the productivity of work units.
- Increase the quality of products and services.
- Tap the potential and creativity of the members of a team.
- Improve the job satisfaction of the workers and the morale of the workplace.
- Reduce the levels of management.

The significance of all these reasons for teams lies in the assumption that a group of people who are focused, organized, and trained can be far more productive and creative

than individuals working alone. Part of the reason for why teams work is “synergy.” Loosely defined, “synergy” means that the ideas, attitudes, and creativity of the individuals of a team working together will result in greater productivity than what could be developed by each member alone. Another reason is that members of

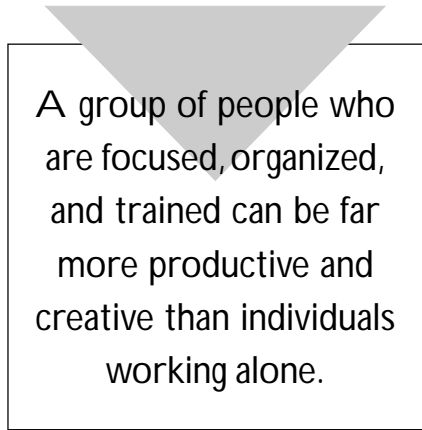
teams working together have a broader and deeper level of knowledge and skills to apply to improving work processes, making decisions and solving problems than individual team members do when working alone.

One possible downside of working in teams, at least initially, is that it can

take more time and can cost more money. The longer time needed for effective teamwork is due to involving all the team members in sharing information, clarifying issues, and solving problems. However, over time groups will become more efficient in their work and take less time. The issue of higher costs comes from workers taking time before, during, and after meetings thus having less time to work on individual tasks and responsibilities. However, if the team improves the quality of products and services, then an acceptable cost-benefit ratio is established over time.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) Working in Teams

Being a Direct Support Professional (DSP) in the human service field means that you probably are functioning as a member of some type of



A group of people who are focused, organized, and trained can be far more productive and creative than individuals working alone.

Teamwork Tips

Improve Your Communication Skills

- Provide and accept coworker support.
- Seek feedback from participants, coworkers, and supervisors regarding your performance.
- Incorporate the feedback received from peers, supervisors and participants into changing your practice and approach.
- Adapt communication to individual needs, including paraphrasing and translating.
- Ask for clarification when needed.

Understand and Manage Conflict Within the Group

- Respect and learn about cultural and individual differences in communication styles, and adapt your communication appropriately.
- Respect interdisciplinary differences among team members.
- Take into consideration another person's point of view when managing conflict.

Increase Your Participation

- Participate in the hiring and peer review process.
- Provide input into budget priorities, identifying ways to provide services in a more cost-beneficial manner.
- Understand the organizational structure of the agency and attend agency related meetings as appropriate.
- Participate in quality improvement activities.
- Attend support team meetings when appropriate.
- Work with other staff to review the organizational mission, develop organizational priorities, and discuss quality indicators for participant support.

Competencies Needed to be a Successful Team Member

Identified by Human Services Research Institute, ("An Introduction to Teamwork in Community Health and Human Services" Saur, et al., 1997, p 8)

- Ability and commitment to identify strengths in people and groups.

- Genuine respect for diverse perspectives and life styles.
- A capacity to listen and reflect.
- An ability to subordinate one's own ego (to put one's self aside in the interest of the group).
- Skill and creativity in helping people become more aware and confident of their own abilities.
- Appreciation of when to step back and the ability to help the individual or group assume decision-making and action (Taylor, et al., yr., p. 7).

Evaluation of Team Meetings

- Does the meeting have a specified agenda?
- Is there an identified facilitator?
- Does the role of facilitator rotate?
- Is there a team recorder?
- Do all members come to the meeting prepared to work?
- Are there frequent evaluations being conducted?

Conclusion

Building a portfolio can be both challenging and fun. Ideally your portfolio will be useful when seeking promotions, raises, new positions, or credit for prior learning. The very act of documenting and reflecting may help remind you of the value of your work and improve your ability to provide the best supports you can to people who rely on you.

Susan O'Neil is a project coordinator for the Pathways from Classrooms to Credentials Assessment project. She works at the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota and can be reached at 612.624.0386, or onell001@tc.umn.edu.

Working Together to Create Professionals

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time around is drawing to a close. Three fun-filled "commencement" celebrations are scheduled which are designed to congratulate everyone on their success and inspire them to meet the challenges of being a true DSP. But, this is not the end. We are currently working with the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) to develop a certificate program leading to an Associates degree in Developmental Disabilities that we will offer to all DSPs in the fall. SPIN is committed to making the world a better place for everybody, including its direct support staff. At SPIN, we strongly believe that staff development, education, and teamwork are among the most effective ways of living our mission.

Deb Matthai is director of Staff Development at SPIN, INC. She can be reached at 215.613.1013.

ADD will issued a grant to develop a Web site to increase the ability of ADD's programs to exchange information. ADD has developed these last two priority areas to ensure that there will not be a digital divide between the programs funded by ADD nor between the programs and those they serve.

The ADD has been involved in extensive collaborate efforts and innovative projects and programs which have had direct impact on the improvement in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Their vision of independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in the community of all individuals is present in all of the projects and programs that it funds. ADD continues to recognize individuals with developmental disabilities as the primary decision makers in all of life's choices and call on their expertise and insight.

Additional information about ADD may be obtained by visiting their Web site at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/add/>

team. More and more, agencies in the helping professions are looking to teams, work groups or special project committees to accomplish their mission. As a DSP, you can become a more effective asset to your employer by becoming a knowledgeable, productive, and successful team member of a team, committee, or task force in your agency or in the community. It is also likely that you will achieve a higher level of satisfaction in your work.

Probably the most common example of teams in human services is the individual program planning team or interdisciplinary planning team. This group's purpose is to work with the person who receives services, interested family members, and a range of professional and paraprofessional care staff in developing a plan of action to help the consumer achieve a healthier, more productive, and satisfying life. In smaller residential programs, the entire staff might make up the treatment planning team and might also work together as an ongoing work team. In other situations, you may represent the direct support role on the treatment planning team of which you are a member.

Some DSPs may be asked to participate on a cross-functional team such as an employee or consumer rights committee. In this capacity as a direct service worker representative, you would provide input based on your direct knowledge and understanding of the issues faced by people who receive services and other DSPs. In addition, you may have some unique contributions about the daily opera-

tion of a residential living program or work setting.

Two other areas where your opinions and competencies could be contributed to teamwork are: (1) an ongoing committee or a special task force (e.g., quality assurance team for a county human service agency, or (2) a work team for a professional or advocacy organization, such as a local chapter of The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH). In both of these team opportunities, you might represent both your organization and your role as a DSP. Your perspective is important for a well-rounded cross-functional team. Also, team leaders and members would positively receive your contributions. Furthermore, the lessons you could learn and the relationships you might develop would make you a more effective member of your home team. In more progressive agencies, you may be a member of a high performance or self-directed team. These teams work together to orga-

nize home or work supports in flexible ways, manage group homes, units within the agency, or special projects in a fairly autonomous fashion.

All DSPs are an important part of the team that works with a consumer to meet his or her day-to-day needs. This may, in fact, be the most important team of which you are a member. Teamwork is a vital part of the provision of human services. DSPs play an important role on any number of formal and informal work teams, committees, and task forces. As a DSP, you should consider on which teams you are an active member, on which teams you would like to be an active member, and how you can develop your skills to become an effective team member.

John Sauer is a Project Coordinator at the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. He can be reached at 612.626.0535.

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