

2. Changing Approaches in Providing Supports

In thinking about transition, it can be helpful to start with a little information about societal changes that have occurred in responding to the needs of persons with developmental disabilities

Changing Philosophies

Services to people with developmental disabilities have experienced three distinct eras based on different social and philosophical contexts. These three have been characterized as:

- Medical or Custodial Model
- Developmental or Program Model
- Citizenship or Community Membership Model

Medical or Custodial Model

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it
George Santayana

The first part of the 1900s was characterized by a philosophy of segregation of persons with developmental disabilities. This resulted in large numbers of individuals being removed from their families and communities and being placed in institutional environments. The medical or custodial model focused on individual safety and restriction with little emphasis being placed on each individual's development of their capacities. During the 60's and 70's increasing knowledge of the conditions of life being experienced by many people living in institutions led to a demand for reform. This, in turn, led to re-evaluation of the prevailing approach to service delivery and the subsequent introduction of new philosophies for service.

Developmental or Program Model

As the pressure increased to improve the life experience of people living in institutions, the developmental model of service delivery emerged. This model was based on the belief that all people, regardless of their disability, could learn and develop skills and should be encouraged to do so. Services became focused on individual programs and plans, typically directed by a team of professionals whose goal was to teach skills that were thought to be needed to help that person live in the community.

Although this approach benefited many individuals, the developmental model also received some criticism. Skills were often taught through elaborate procedures that were removed from the context within which they would be needed. (e.g. Teaching cooking skills in a day program rather than at home.) Even more troubling was the underlying assumption that, for individuals with disabilities, living in the community was a privilege to be earned - not a right of citizenship.

Citizenship or Community Membership Model

Do not help me, even if it makes you feel good. Ask me if I need your help. Let me show you how you can best assist me
Norm Kunc

Further development has resulted in the majority of individuals with developmental disabilities now living in communities. The prevailing philosophy is of citizenship, or community membership. This recognizes the right of every individual to live in his or her own community and enjoy the same benefits as do other people.

The current focus is on full community inclusion – efforts to ensure that individuals do not live in isolation within their communities, surrounded by professional and support staff, but are active members in all aspects of community life.

This often means that there is less emphasis on the concept of disability and more emphasis on each person’s abilities and gifts. Supports and services try to seek ways to support each person in exercising and sharing their abilities and gifts.

Current Directions

*I want my son to live in a place that is safe, to have some friends, and to have something meaningful to do in his life, both vocationally and recreationally
...a parent*

Persons with developmental disabilities have defined several things as important in their lives:

- Having strong positive relationships with family and significant others
- Being Independent
- Having a job
- Enjoying leisure time
- Participating in, and contributing to, the community
- Having choices and being able to make decisions
- Being treated with respect
- Being safe and healthy

See the [Inclusion Fact Sheet](#) for more info

Based on this and other information, the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Central Region Community Board is working to increase:

- each individual’s capacity to participate and contribute through self advocacy opportunities and networks, opportunities for learning such as through Leadership Today and through opportunities to participate in various elements of the PDD program such as through the Board Intern, Plain Language Translation and various workshop and conferences.
- communities’ capacity to include individuals in community life through initiative such as the Building Community Capacity initiative and the Board’s efforts to build key relationships.
- the service systems’ capacity to support individuals effectively through efforts to support the workforce and through ongoing innovation in planning and service delivery such as the emphasis on person centered planning, and
- the overall capacity of the governance and administrative structure to innovate and contribute to good outcomes for individuals and communities through partnerships, improved accountability and reporting, and ongoing learning