



What Should I Know About Person Centered Planning?

NOTE: In addition to the person needing supports, “you” also refers to the family member or friend who will assist him or her to get the needed supports and services.

What is Person Centered Planning?

- Person centered planning works for people of all ages, starting at birth and continuing throughout the life span. Person centered planning also works with people of all abilities.
- Person centered planning is a way for you to say what is important to you and what is important for you in your life. In addition, it helps you figure out how to make the things you want in your life happen. A plan can be as simple as you having some ideas that you tell other people. However, it helps if you write down these ideas or record them in some way. Having a plan that is used is more important than just writing a nice plan. Sometimes a formal planning process is used. Different tools and methods can be used depending upon your circumstances. Sometimes you might start a particular planning process and then it doesn't feel right. When this happens, you need to try another way.
- Person centered planning is unlike other planning you may have done before. It focuses on your interests and what you do well rather than on things you can't do or on your needs alone. A person centered plan is a plan for you, not for a

working in your life? What new strategies should be tried next? However, if you change your mind about the things in your plan, you do not have to wait until your next regular planning meeting. You can gather your planning group at any time to discuss your plan and make new plans for your future.

Will Having A Plan Make A Difference In My Life?

If your plan sits on a shelf not being used and not being shared with those who support you, then it is a waste. Your plan can only make a difference in your life when it is really used. People who support you need to write notes on your plan often so that when you and your planning team gather, new information can be discussed and added. Your plan needs to be modified as your needs change or you become aware of new things you would like to try to do.

You can download a copy of this FAQ pamphlet and any other FAQ by going to the Office of Mental Retardation Web site
www.dpw.state.pa.us

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system. You, along with your planning group, sometimes called a "circle of support," (described in *Who Will Plan With Me?* on page 7) will create a vision for your future and focus on how to get started on working towards your dream. Your person centered plan will be especially for you and will be different from anyone else's plan since it is based upon you and created with you. You choose the people you want to help you plan your life. Your plan is a working tool that puts your thoughts in order. Common everyday language is used rather than words and abbreviations that are used by government workers and agencies that support people with disabilities.

- The person centered planning process is all about you making choices about things that matter to you in your life. It gives you a chance to dream while it looks at things that matter to you in your life and who is responsible for carrying out different parts of your plan. It gives you a chance to dream while it looks at things such as the way you communicate and the supports and services you need. It involves describing a vision, goal or dream that is not limited to what exists in your life now, but what your life can be like in the future. Some planning tools include a timeline and who is responsible for carrying out the different parts of your plan. Your plan needs to be realistic even though it may take years to accomplish some parts of it. Follow-up meetings of your planning group are needed to determine if what is in your plan is actually happening. You want to create a living plan that you keep alive by changing it as you or your situation change.
- Person centered planning can be done without any government service and supports.

format, graphics and color are used with this planning tool. One person facilitates this process while a second person records what is said.

- **MAPS (Making Action Plans)** developed by Marsha Forest, Jack Pearpoint, Mary A. Falvey and Richard L. Rosenberg uses eight questions and graphics. The questions are: What's a MAP? What is your history or story? What are your dreams? What are your nightmares? Who are you? What are your strengths, gifts, and talents? What do you need to achieve your dream and avoid your nightmare? What is the plan of action? This planning process requires one person to facilitate the discussion and another person to record.

All of these planning tools can support the development of your Individual Support Plan. Putting the information from these tools into your Individual Support Plan will help you to record the things that you really want to see happen in your life.

(You can do an Internet search for more information on these planning tools. Search the web by inserting "person centered planning" and asking the search engine to find it. You can also insert "person centered planning" followed by a comma and then the name of one of the planning tools mentioned above to get more information on a particular tool.)

What Happens If I Change My Mind?

Your plan will be a living plan that is flexible and changes as you change. You will need to have meetings of your planning group perhaps every year or more often if things are changing in your life. You, along with your planning group, will decide how often you need to meet to assess how things are going with your plan. At these follow-up meetings you will want to look at what has happened since you last met. What's working and what's not

munication; Positive Rituals; Characteristics of People Who Work Best With You; What Others Need to Know or Do to Support You; What Others Need to Know or Do to Keep You Healthy and Safe; and Things to Figure Out. You, as the focus person, along with the other people you choose to participate present information about what you enjoy, want and need. A facilitator leads the process of gathering and organizing the information so it can be put into your plan.

- **Biographical Timeline Planning** developed by Dr. Beth Barol is an evolving process based on the work of Herb Lovett, William Bento, and Robert Post. It is a facilitated process that looks at life events and interventions. This tool is especially valuable if people are finding it challenging to support you and you want to develop a team that has a better understanding of how your life has influenced who you are today so that appropriate supports will be developed. A biographical timeline can be used as a preparation to other person centered planning processes.
- **Personal Futures Planning** was first used in Georgia in 1982 and was developed by Dr. Beth Mount. This method of planning identifies your interests, gifts and contributions you make to your community. The following are some of the parts of personal futures planning: Relationships, Places, Background, Preferences, Dreams, Choices, Health, Respect, and Community Building.
- **PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope)** developed by Jack Pearpoint, John O'Brien, and Marsha Forest contains eight steps. They are: Touching the Dream, Sensing the Goal, Now, Identifying People to Enroll, Ways to Build Strength, Actions for the Next Few Months, Next Month's Work, Committing to the First Step. A specific

Why Should I Plan?

Planning is something that all people do, not just people with disabilities. People usually plan for a major life event like a wedding or retirement. There are many reasons why you will benefit from person centered planning.

- Person centered planning is part of your Individual Support Plan (ISP) in the statewide mental retardation computer system called HCSIS for Home and Community Services Information System.
- Planning puts you in the position of guiding the changes in your life and empowers you.
- If you don't plan, things often stay the same and you may miss the opportunity to work toward reaching a goal you have in mind. Person centered planning can help you get more of the life you want since it helps you define your goals. A chaotic life can become more organized; a monotonous life can become more interesting.
- Person centered planning is done with and by you and is for you. It is not done to satisfy system requirements. It helps you to examine yourself and your life as it is now so you can move toward the life you want in the future. If you don't like your life the way it is, planning can help you work towards a better life. If your life is okay, planning can help you make your life even better.
- Since person centered planning has a positive focus and looks at the good things about you, it can help to change your self-image and make you feel more able to be in control of your life.
- Some person centered planning looks at the bad experiences

that might have been part of your life in the past so these things won't be repeated. Things that you fear might happen in the future are also looked at so they can be avoided.

- If you are living with your family and being supported by them, person centered planning can be tied to future planning when you will no longer have their support. Therefore, a future crisis situation may be avoided. Your plan would also give future support people important information about you.
- Your plan can help you find the right people to work with you. Some person centered planning tools may include a section on looking at the characteristics of people who support you best. Using this part of your plan can result in people who support you directly staying longer in their jobs. This saves you time and energy since you have less re-training to do and more time to spend on things you enjoy.
- Your person centered plan can be used together with your Individual Education Plan (IEP) and your Individual Habilitation Plan (IHP) or Individual Program Plan (IPP). These are service plan formats used in the educational and mental retardation systems. In the new Home and Community Services Information System (HCSIS), the statewide mental retardation computer system, you will have an Individual Service Plan (ISP). These plans are based on person centered planning principles and will contain parts of your plan. The Individual Support Plan in HCSIS can record as much information as you choose from your person centered plan. Person centered planning creates a more complete picture of you that helps people to better support you. You should request that your entire personal plan be put into your Individual Support Plan.

What Should My Plan Be Like In Order To Be Useful To Me?

- Simple format, organized with things that are important to you put in logical groups.
- Concise, using words, phrases and/or drawings. Planning tools such as PATH and MAPS use many pictures.
- Interesting to read so you and those you share it with want to keep coming back to read more.
- Everyday language, not system words.
- If you don't use words to communicate, gestures you use may need to be pictured or described in the communication section of your plan so that other people will understand what you are saying with your gestures. An example would be if you look the person asking a question in the eye to answer "yes" and look away to answer "no."

What Kinds of Planning Tools Might I Use?

All person centered planning methods have some basic things in common which are described on page 1 of this pamphlet in the section called *What Is Person Centered Planning?* Many different kinds of person centered planning tools have been created but most of them require extensive training for a person to be able to facilitate them. Your planning group can help you choose the tool that makes the best sense for you. Sometimes parts of several different formal planning tools can be used together. The people you choose to help you plan also can help you find a qualified facilitator. The following are a few of the most often used planning tools that you might use.

- **Essential Lifestyle Planning** developed by Michael Smull may contain all or several of the following parts in order to develop a first plan: People Map; Great Things About You; Good Day/Bad Day; Good Weekend/Bad Weekend; Com-

How Do I Find a Trained Facilitator?

People within Pennsylvania have been trained in Essential Lifestyle Planning and can help you plan. There are also Pennsylvanians who have been trained to facilitate PATHS, MAPS, Biographical Timeline Planning and other person centered planning methods. Your County Office of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR) should have a list of Mentors and other people who have been trained to facilitate person centered planning processes. Call the office in your county and ask for the Mental Retardation Coordinator to locate a person in your area. If you do not get the information you need there, then call the Pennsylvania Self Determination Consumer and Family Group at **1-800-459-1838**. If you cannot find a trained facilitator to work with you, do not let it keep you from planning. Just find someone who is interested in helping you.

Where Do I Plan and Will It Take Very Long?

Planning doesn't have to be done in a formal setting. You can set up planning gatherings anywhere you are comfortable. You might invite your planning group to your home or to a favorite diner or restaurant. You can include food and make planning fun for everyone involved.

The length of time planning takes will depend upon you and the type of planning tool that you use. There are ways to collect information, such as by mail or over the telephone, so you don't necessarily need to have people get together. However, you can have a meeting or planning party where you collect information in as little time as two hours. You want to spend enough time gathering information so you can create a plan that is complete.

- If you have a plan that is lengthy, you might need to have several versions of it for different people to use. Some people who support you will need different information than others. You can give certain people just the parts of your plan that will be most useful to them. (For example, your doctors and people who support you during the day).
- When your medical history is part of your plan, it can be used when you see doctors. Information in your person centered plan is presented in an organized positive way that saves time for your doctors so this may help you to develop a positive relationship with them. This would be especially helpful when you change from one doctor to another.
- When people you choose to support you are familiar with your plan, they can help you work towards your dreams and having the life you want.
- Your plan is one way to evaluate the quality of supports and services you receive. You decide if the services and supports described meet your expectations or not and then you can plan accordingly. Your Individual Service Plan (ISP) also contains sections entitled, *What Makes Sense/Doesn't Make Sense* and *Action Planning*. These sections will help you figure out what is and isn't working in your life and help you plan to make changes.
- Planning can be done at any time in your life. Although it is especially helpful before transitions, you don't have to wait until you are in a time of transition to plan. Some examples of transitions are completing school and going to work, moving from one place to another, and changing from a work routine to a senior lifestyle (how you want your life to be when you are older).

- If you are challenging to the people who support you, having a person centered plan will provide important information about how people can best support you. In the person centered planning process, people will listen to you; learn about your wants and needs; and better understand you as a result. Often having a person centered plan will help the people who support you treat you the way you would like to be treated.

What is My Responsibility?

You are responsible for letting your planning group know what you want. You also need to tell them what information you need about possible options available to you. Some examples are taking courses provided by a community agency or college, joining community service organizations, or living independently. Sometimes what you want for your life is different from what your family or other people want for you. It is important that you speak up for yourself and tell others what is important to you.

You need to explain what you want and also the things that you do not want in your life. Sometimes it is easier to know what you don't want, rather than what you do want, because you may not know what is available. One way you can learn about what is available is to ask a lot of questions. The questions you ask will depend upon your age, where you are in your life and your needs. The following are examples of some questions you might ask. "Where can I learn about things I can do in my community? Who can support me to do the things I want to do? How can I join a Scout troop? Who will help me get a job? Who will help me learn how to do a job? Are there organizations or people who can help me with transportation? Where can I learn to manage my money? Who will help me find a new place to live? How much will it cost to buy a house? Is financial help available for me?"

If you communicate in ways other than talking and other traditional ways of communicating, then you will need help from your planning group in expressing your interests and wants. People who know you best and love you will understand your actions and what you are communicating. They will have to make some assumptions about what they think you like and do not like from what they observe. In order for others to get a clear picture of how you feel about a particular activity, you need to have the opportunity to try something several times before they conclude whether you like it or not.

If you do not talk, use sign language or assistive communication, you can be an active participant in your planning process. You might answer "yes" or "no" to a question about something you might want by looking directly at the person asking the question for "yes" and looking away for "no." People in your planning group who know you well will know how to best communicate with you.

Who Will Plan With Me?

You will choose the people who will help you plan. They may be family members, friends, neighbors, people from school or work, advocates, your supports coordinator and other people who are paid to provide support to you. All of these people should be people who know you well and care about you. Some of the people you choose should also know the supports and services for which you might be eligible. You may also choose to include a qualified facilitator, a person who leads the process and has received training in use of a particular planning tool or tools. You also have the right to exclude people whom you don't like and don't want to be part of your planning group or any of your planning meetings.