

Supporting Informed Decision Making:

Development and Implementation of an NADSP Curriculum for Direct Support Professionals



Making a world of difference
in people's lives

"Quality is defined at the point of interaction between the staff member and the individual with a disability".

- John F. Kennedy, Jr. 1996

NADSP envisions a world where people with intellectual and other disabilities live community-based lives of their choosing supported by a highly qualified direct support workforce with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to support them in achieving their life goals. www.NADSP.org

About the Curriculum:

Target Audience:

This curriculum is designed for organizational trainers to use in training with Direct Support Professionals; Frontline Supervisors; Administrators; Families; and interested others.

Purpose:

The purpose of this training is for participants to develop an understanding of why supporting people with disabilities to make their own choices is important, for participants to demonstrate an awareness of how their attitudes and values toward choice can enhance or suppress the decision-making capacity of those they serve, and for participants to build the skills needed to support decision making in a manner in that balances choice and risk.

This curriculum reflects an application of the recommendations of Shogren and Wehmeyer (2015) who offer that a social-ecological model be used as a framework for best practice in supporting decision-making, as well as the work of Campanella (2015), and Rose (2014) on the role of the direct support professional as a facilitator of choice and risk management in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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Code of Ethics on Choice

As a DSP, I will:

- Recognize that each person must direct his or her own life...
- Assist the individuals I support to understand their options and the possible consequences of these options ...
- Honor the individual's right to assume risk in an informed manner...
- Challenge others, including support team members (e.g. doctors, nurses, therapists, co-workers, family members) to recognize and support the rights of individuals to make informed decisions even when these decisions involve personal risk...
- Help the individuals I support understand and express their rights and responsibilities...
- Honor the choices and preferences of the people I support...
- Work in partnership with others to support individuals leading self-directed lives.

IDM Process:

1. Understand the decision/issue/situation
2. Gather information
3. Explore options & consider outcomes
4. Decide, act & empower
5. Evaluate the decision

Implementation:

From September 2015 through March 2016, the NADSP Informed Decision Making Curriculum was piloted across the New York state to over 1000 organizational trainers, DSPs, and Frontline Supervisors. Evaluation results are below (n=916): (Likert scaled: 1 Highly Disagree – 5 Highly Agree)

1. The objectives of the training were clearly defined = 4.711
2. The topics covered were relevant to me = 4.694
3. The content was organized and easy to follow = 4.671
4. The materials distributed were helpful = 4.542
5. This training experience will be useful in my work = 4.696
6. The trainer was knowledgeable about the training topics = 4.81
7. The training objectives were met = 4.67

Knowledge changes included:

1. Before this training, my knowledge of what informed decision making is was: 3.552
After this training, my knowledge of what informed decision making is: 4.482
2. Before this training, my knowledge of why it is important for the people I support to have choice was: 4.014
After this training, my knowledge of why it is important for the people I support to have choice is: 4.649
3. Before this training, my knowledge of how to support people to have choice using IDM was: 3.53
After this training, my knowledge of how to support people to have choice using IDM is: 4.53

Practice changes stated included (excerpt):

- Remind myself and others of the dignity of risk when assisting individuals to reach their goals
- Empower DSPs I work with to think/act using an IDM lens
- Listen to what a person wants more, with more consideration of options, not only risk.
- Teach more and allow mistakes to be made as natural consequences
- Take time to learn and understand the decision and build options.
- Find teachable moments, role model and implement 5 step process!

Implications:

The average scores given in the pilot indicate that the participants agree or highly agree that IDM curriculum was relevant, was organized and easy to follow, met the training objectives and will be useful in their work. Further, knowledge gains were indicated in what informed decision making is, why it is important, and how to support choice using informed decision making. In two areas average knowledge moved from moderate to between high and very high. Practice related changes noted support these gains.

As the role of the direct support professional shifts from caretaker to that of supporter of the civil rights of the people being served, there will be increased need for additional skill in supporting choice and balancing risk. The IDM curriculum has demonstrated ability to meet this challenge.