

Respect, Team Work, Collaboration

Good communication is vital in any positive relationship. It is important to communicate clearly and openly, focusing on the individual with the disability. This is not always easy when everyone has their personal opinions and people are working so closely together.

Many individuals, families, and community supports remain silent because they do not feel qualified to make choices and decisions. The professional vocabulary of acronyms seems confusing and endless. Remember, you have a lifetime of experience. Value it and put it to good use!

If an individual is living away from their family, the provider's job is not to be a mother substitute. Helping an individual become independent and included in the community is an incredible opportunity for a provider and support system. Collaboration, team work, and appropriate support can help dreams come true that seemed impossible just a few years ago.

Good Relationships

Operating from fear often causes us not to reach for the highest standards. Individuals and families fear relationships will be jeopardized if they complain or give constructive feedback to their provider. Honesty and respect for everyone involved, including the individual receiving the services, must be the highest priority. A simple example is that individuals and families continue to voice concern because the provider returns early from an outing yet charges the full time allowed (two hours vs. six hours). This simple act jeopardizes honesty and respect for everyone.

We must work hard to develop good relationships. Employing a service provider is similar to any product or service you purchase. If you took your car in for repair, you would expect it to be fixed. If the dry cleaner cleaned your new dress and did a great job, you would let them know how pleased you were with their service. You must work with your provider and communicate issues of concern as well as praise.

Relationships can become tense when individuals or family members find providers intrusive or disruptive to the household routine. Life revolves around schedules. Families have no privacy. Individuals living away from home may not be living up to family standards. An example could be hygiene. Poor choices about cleanliness can jeopardize achievement in community involvement, addressed in the Support Plan goals.

An individual's personal outcomes or goals should be well defined in the Annual Support Plan. The plan can be changed at any time and should be used as a tool to reinforce their chosen goals. Many times, an individual forgets the goals and needs a reminder to reinforce their vision for the future.

Circle of Support

Individuals with developmental disabilities need to be encouraged to develop a Circle of Support made up of paid and not paid people. This support includes providers, family, friends in the community, neighbors, etc. Health, safety, abuse, and exploitation are at risk without caring relationships.

Checks and balances are necessary for everyone in life. No individual should be without family or friends because then paid providers will have total control in managing their lives and choices. As an advocate and coordinator for the individual, the Support Coordinator should encourage and develop social community opportunities in the Support Plan.

You're the Driving Force

Success for an individual with a developmental disability happens when there is inclusion in the community, Support Plan goals are moving forward, and health and safety are present.

If progress is not happening and you believe it should, maybe changing the goal, approach, or sometimes the provider might help. Keeping a particular service or provider because you have developed friendships is not a goal. Everyone must stay alert and be willing to support the individual in recognizing the need for change.