

# SUPPORTING MEANINGFUL LIVES

## A GUIDE FOR AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

### SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN "HAVING A LIFE" NOT JUST "A PLACE TO GO"

A day program is not a destination in the community for people receiving supports and services. A day program, and the DSPs that staff it, are resources that should be connecting people to their greater community.



1

### KNOW THE PERSON

Learn what is important to each person, and what is important for each person. Learn what kind of life each wants to live. Use different tools to aide in the discovery process.  
Listen, Observe,  
Understand,  
Act



2

### KNOW THE COMMUNITY

Work with people receiving services to research the surrounding community to learn what resources and activities are available in their areas of interest. Use this information to plan networking and relationship building in the community.



5

### BUILD CONNECTION

Activities in the community are opportunities to create meaningful connections with others who may have similar interests. Support people in connecting with others and developing relationships beyond the service world.



4

### SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

Presence in the community is not enough. It is participation in the community that matters: being in the same places and doing the same things as everyone else. Individuals should have the support necessary to participate as fully as possible in activities of choice.



3

### SUPPORT INFORMED CHOICE

Exposure is the first step. Once people are exposed to opportunities in their community, each should be supported to evaluate their experiences. Next, develop schedules that reflect those interests and discovered opportunities. This should define how a person spends their time.

# MEANINGFUL DAYS = QUALITY OF LIFE

## MEANINGFUL DAY:

An individualized approach to securing a full life for each person; a life of choice, respect, contribution, purpose, and valued relationships. A life borne from the values, dreams, hopes and aspirations of the individual.



## FACTS:

- Meaningful Day programming increases positive interaction
- Persons participating in meaningful day programming are more likely to have a positive self identity
- Presence and participation in the community decreases negative behaviors and increases quality of life

## ACTIVITIES:

Activities are the things we do throughout our days that make our lives meaningful. When supporting people in their pursuit of meaningful lives, activities should be planned ahead of time and answer three questions:

### WHAT?

1

- Is there purpose for the activity—to live, work, play in typical spaces with typical people?
- Is this activity necessary (“If I don’t do it, someone else will have to do it.”)
- Is this activity valued – is it important to the person, a group, the community?

### WHY?

2

- Valuable experience for choice-making
- Skill development in the natural setting
- Relationship building
- A chance to contribute
- Dignity of valued social role

### HOW?

3

- Support needed from staff or others
- Accommodations necessary

## REFERENCES:

- Harvey, K. (2009). Positive Identity Development. NADD, New York.
- Held, M., & Tijerina, J. (2008). Living Life to the Fullest: How to Create and Implement Meaningful Lifestyles. (handout). Bloomington, IN.

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