Q&As | Home and Community Based Settings

April 2017

Question: What can Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and providers do to support real and meaningful community inclusion?

Answer: Be a community connector!

Natural relationships develop by coming together with others and sharing common interests and experiences. Help make it happen—one person at a time—with strong person-centered planning. Ideas to try:

1. Identify who the person already knows and how the relationship can be strengthened.

- Where in the community does the person go now?
- Who is friendly towards the person?
- What makes sense to ask him/her to do to get to know the person better (e.g., have coffee together)?

2. Identify who would appreciate this person's gifts and talents.

- What does the person do well?
- What do you and others receive from knowing this person?

3. Identify where you can find an interested person to get to know the person served.

- Brainstorm with others: Who would be interested in getting to know the person served, deepening their relationships, or reconnecting?
- Who do you know who would like the person served?
- Where to find connections? Formal volunteer programs, churches, former staff or family members of staff, etc.

Natural relationships develop by coming together with others and sharing common interests and experiences.

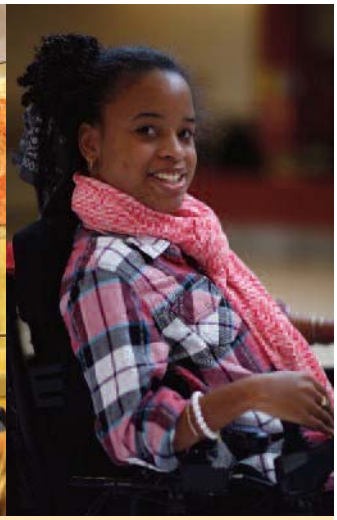
4. Identify associations and clubs—both formal and informal—where the person served can belong.

- Artistic organizations
- Health and fitness groups
- Outdoor groups—garden clubs, Audubon Society, sports groups

5. Identify places in the broader community where people engage in one of this person's interests and that is hospitable and welcoming.

- Who do staff or other stakeholders know that can help make connections?

Tip: Look for relationships on a one-to-one basis. If you work in a group home, don't look for someone to come over to visit EVERYONE. Just ask them to get to know one person.



Out of all the ideas you brainstormed, which are the best to pursue? Use this criteria:

- Does the person like the idea; is he/she willing to try it?
- Is it do-able? (e.g., does the date/time fit in with the person's life and desired schedule)?
- Ease of welcome—do you or someone you know have a good connection there already or can make one?

It is through the relationships that can develop in the greater community that people will truly become valued members of their community, whether their community is urban, suburban, or rural. Community inclusion will look different for each person and the frequency, type, and level of support needed will also be different.
BE AN ASKER! Look for "People" rather than activities. e.g., practice how you would invite a community member out to lunch.

Tips for Providers, Managers and Supervisors:

1. Make it a priority to do "different" not more. With community time already scheduled, how can it be arranged so that the person is more likely to connect to community members? How can the focus be shifted from activities to "who are we going to get to know there"?
2. Have each staff pick one person to focus on with these strategies.
3. Schedule brainstorming time during already scheduled meetings.

Documentation:

- Documentation of your efforts is important for HCBS Settings rule compliance including person-centered planning.
- Document the person's activities and interactions with community members. Make note of the persons role and response—was it satisfying to the person? Did it make him/her happy?

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

Adapted from a A. N. Amado's (2013). Friends: Connecting people with disabilities and community members. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living.

For more information email the Home and Community Living Unit of the Division of Person-Centered Supports: hcbssettings@opwdd.ny.gov