

It's My Choice...



Minnesota
Governor's Council on
Developmental Disabilities

It's My Choice

by

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Preface

It is hoped that the information in this guide is written in a way that is easy to understand. This was done for several reasons:

- so that people with developmental disabilities who read, can read it and use it;
- so that people who advocate for those who cannot read can explain it more easily;
- so that we can all understand.

The activities and checklists contained in this guide have been used in a variety of ways. Any of the materials can be copied or changed to meet the needs of people in your area.

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Introduction

Hard choices, big decisions.

Are these the things I want to learn?

Is this the kind of work I want to do? Is this where I want to live?

How should I spend my money? Should I get married?

Have a family? What will I do when I retire?

These are some of the big decisions that all of us must make at different times in our lives.

Then, there are those nagging little ones that become a part of our everyday life.

Should I sleep for 10 more minutes? What should I wear?

Should I drive to work or carpool?

Should I drink another cup of coffee?

How about dessert? What's on TV?

As hard as it may seem, none of us would give up the freedom to make decisions in our everyday lives.

The first step

Family members, friends, social workers, service coordinators, service providers and advocates can help people with developmental disabilities get the services and supports they need to:

- lead the lifestyles they prefer;
- be more independent; and
- be active members of the community.

They can do this by supporting people in their freedom of choice.

This resource guide will look at ways that you can help support freedom of choice for people with developmental disabilities:

- Looking at individual needs
- Planning for services
- Evaluating services
- Making things more understandable
- Supporting self advocacy

An example One of the first checklists you will find is the Individual Program Planning Guide. If you decide to use it, the agenda you would follow for the individual annual planning meeting might look like this:

- **Introductions** Everyone who is attending the meeting states who they are and how they can help support the individual.

- **Purpose of the meeting** It is explained that the purpose of the meeting is to share information about strengths, needs, hopes and dreams and to come up with some plans that will help the individual move towards a preferred lifestyle now and in the future.
- **Sharing information** This is a chance for the individual, family and friends, and those who work with him or her to talk about what is important to the individual and what it takes to successfully support him or her at home, at work and in the community. This is a time to review something like the Individual Program Planning Guide or Listen to Me, a PATH, or an Essential Lifestyle Plan, etc. In addition, the individual may have made an audio or videotape of his or her ideas about the future.
- **Making plans** This is the time to develop plans for the next year which will help the individual move towards his or her preferred lifestyle at home, at work and in the community. Everyone must agree on them and the individual has the last word.

Other considerations It is hoped that you decide to use these checklists and activities in your work. There are a few additional things to remember when adapting them to the needs of people with developmental disabilities in your area:

- **Language differences** You might want to have the materials translated into different languages.
- **Ethnic-cultural differences** You might want to consider where to hold the home interview, planning conference, etc. based on personal preferences.
- **Procedural differences** Agencies have different procedures regarding planning and evaluating services, etc. These materials can be cut and pasted to work around those differences.