

The Art of Authentic Person-Centred Planning

Engaging in authentic Person-centred Planning is fun, creative and synergistic work. This life planning process is rooted in what is most important to the person and involves the person directly with his or her community, network of connections, and close personal relationships in order to look at innovative ways to attain life goals and dreams.

The greatest reward in engaging in this process as a supporter is being able to witness a transformation occurring in a person's life when creative new directions and approaches are taken. To a person who has been supported in this process, there is nothing better than having a circle of collaborative supporters fully engaged with him or her as he or she moves towards the realisation of specific life dreams and into a world of greater possibility for new goals to emerge.

Quality in Practice

Authentic Person-Centred Planning — What it is:

Authentic Person-Centred Planning processes have a number of common elements:

- The focus is entirely on the person, never the system.
- Numerous mainstream resources are unearthed, considered, researched and used. These resources are the ones that would be tapped first and foremost.
For example, local community/neighbourhood linkages, social programmes, and assets; foundation grants; Community Development Block Grants; income generating ideas (jobs, micro-enterprise, self-employment); resources available from the person's place of worship; free cell/mobile phone programmes; state and local housing programmes; utility company discounts; extended family resources, if any; local business grants and collaboration; and many others.
- System resources are considered after the person's dreams, interests and gifts have been discovered and only in relationship to how those resources can be used to support people in achieving their dreams and contributing their gifts.
System resources are not used to determine if something is feasible or can be reimbursed or as an approval or denial process.

- The process asks "How can we do this?" rather than finding reasons why we can't.
- The process and participation in the process depends more on our heart connections with the person than on our professional connections to the person.
- People are invited (as opposed to required) to attend.
- Many of the people attending are not paid to be there and might include neighbours, co-workers, friends, family, and community members from various affiliations.
- The group usually meets on some kind of regular basis to connect and follow-up and keep the energy and momentum moving forward.
- The space is usually not a conference room. Living rooms, church social halls or private rooms in restaurants are good choices. There is usually food to share and gatherings often occur at times other than Monday-Friday between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm.
- Notes are usually taken on big pieces of paper with coloured markers, or pastels and chalks, often with images instead of words.
- Wacky ideas are often considered — and the rules of creative brainstorming are embraced.
- Not every dream and idea that is generated will become the ones that happen — the person's foremost priorities, dreams, and preferences become the focus of action.
- There is no checked-off documentation that has to be turned in somewhere.

The Art of Authentic Person-Centered Planning (continued)

- Lives are transformed through an authentic Person-centred Planning Process.
- When and if a second Person-centred Plan is completed, it will not look or feel anything like the first one, as the person's life will have changed and there will be new opportunities and challenges to explore.

Authentic Person-Centred Planning –

What it is not:

(These examples indicate “Systems-Centred” not Person-Centred Planning)

- A case manager, service coordinator, and/or another professional who called and facilitated the meeting and services are the main focus vs. the person.
- The majority of (or all) attendees are paid professionals with titles.
- The meeting takes place annually in a meeting or conference room.
- Assessments are done ahead of time by titled professionals with recommendations
- The meeting lasts for one or two hours, and forms and documentation are circulated and signed off on during that time.
- Programmes, services and hours are the primary discussion, not a person's life dreams.
- Everything “wrong” with the person is pointed out and discussed.
- The person is nervous, uncomfortable, doesn't participate or is not present
- Afterwards the documentation is filed away — every person served has one of these standard documents with their name on it in the official “case” file

Engaging in authentic Person-centred Planning vs. Systems-centred Planning can be truly transformational to the person and supporters involved. This type of process can create major positive life changes for an individual. It is an enjoyable and collaborative endeavour that can reap amazing rewards because it doesn't rely on a system in order to make change happen. Instead, it creates increasing opportunities for a person to be included in their local communities as a reciprocating member. The person's social capital, inclusion and capacity grows leaps and bounds when his or her identification is with community, neighbours, friends and loved ones vs. a system of services.