

Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to deepen and broaden the service provider's understanding of the person. Assessment is a process, not something that occurs at one point in time. Assessments can be formal and structured (such as physical therapy or speech therapy assessments), or they can be informal and unstructured (such as discussions held between a support staff member and the person), or they may come from observations of a friend. Information obtained informally is often as critical and valuable as information from formal assessments.

Quality in Practice

- Ask the person what he or she wants in life and really listen to the response – both verbally (what the person said) and behaviorally (how the person acted).
- Ask often and listen for changes that have occurred in the person's goals and dreams. People change through experiences and learning and supports/services should change in response.
- Identify the person's skills and abilities.
- Do not generate a list of "problems" or "deficits".
- Assure that support staff members understand the importance of informal assessment and learn ways to capture and share the result of their learning. Recommendations may come later.
- Assure that formal assessments are completed only for the things the person has an interest in.
- Assure that assessment recommendations support the person's goals and dreams and are not implemented solely because the recommendation was made.
- Do not require people to implement assessment recommendations that they have no interest in or actively disagree with. (For example: A dentist recommends that someone wear false teeth, but the person does not like them, will not wear them, throws them away, and is able to eat and speak without them. Or, a person is happy being 25 pounds overweight and does not wish to diet, even though the dietitian recommends it.)
- Identify many ways to assist a person to meet a goal or desire rather than relying only on professional assessment recommendations. (For example: A person may begin speaking more clearly when he or she spends more time talking with community members, rather than having more years of speech therapy services.)
- Identify supports and adaptive equipment that will support the person in reaching goals.