

Person-Centered Planning

Self-Determination starts with person-centered planning. It's a process where you decide what's important to you, and you plan for what's important for you. Mostly, it's about your hopes and dreams! Some dreams we can do on our own and others require some help. Person-centered planning lets you think big! It lets you imagine a life for yourself like people without disabilities are able to do.

A person-centered plan is not only about services and funding. Firstly, it's about dreams and goals. Some will require funding and services and some will not.

It's not about what's available. It's about what's possible!

True person-centered planning has a set of values that are recognized by rules set out by the federal government that must also be followed in the Self- Determination Program. These include:

- Presume competence – Every person can direct his or her planning process. No matter how significantly a person is impacted by their disability, all individuals can express what they like and dislike in their own way and make choices
- Focus on strengths – Focus on what a person does well, not on their deficits or what they can't do
- Behavior is communication – Even if a person can't communicate by speaking, they have a right to make choices, whether it's by smiling, gesturing, typing, using pictures, or even getting angry.
- Every person can have a meaningful life in the community – Every person has a right to live and participate in their community and not be in programs just for people with disabilities
- Respect cultural diversity – A person's family, religious, ethnic, and racial cultures should be taken into account

To develop your person-centered plan, you want to have a meeting with people you trust who can help you. Those people are called your "circle of support." Before having this meeting, you will need to do some pre-planning.

Pre-Planning

A good person-centered plan must start with pre-planning, which includes the important decisions you need to make before your PCP meeting. You need to ask important questions like:

- When and where do you want the meeting to happen? Make sure it's a time and place where you feel comfortable, not what is convenient for others.
- What do you want to discuss and what do you not want to discuss? There may be subjects you don't want brought up at your meeting, and that's OK.

- Who do you want to invite? Your meeting should have people that you trust and who can help you think of and implement ideas to meet your goals.
- Who do you want to facilitate the meeting and who will take notes? Maybe you hired an independent facilitator or asked your service coordinator.
- Will anything be needed at the meeting to help you participate fully? You may need to use assistive technology, ask people to speak slowly and write in plain language, or use visual supports, like notes or pictures on a board. You might want to schedule in breaks or a meal. You might need special seating arrangements.
- Are there issues related to your culture or language for the meeting? You may need an interpreter or need to ask people to dress in a certain way to respect your culture.

The Planning Meeting

The planning meeting should be an exciting day for any person. Dr. Sally Burton-Hoyle, from Eastern Michigan University, one of the nation's experts on person-centered planning, calls the meeting a "party with a purpose." She believes the atmosphere at a PCP meeting should be positive and even fun. You are surrounded by your circle of support in a place where you are comfortable. It's all about you!

The Independent Facilitator lays out the rules you have decided at the beginning of the meeting. For example, all comments should be made to the participant, not about them as if they are not in the room. Note that this can be very hard, particularly for professionals who are used to talking to the parents and also for parents used to talking on behalf of their child.

Everyone you've invited listens to what your dreams are and works with you to make a plan to help you reach your goals. It should be focused on the person's strengths, hopes, and wishes, rather than their weaknesses, nightmares, and the preferences of others. The person with the disability leads the meeting to the best of their ability with support from the independent facilitator. For young children, the parents lead the meeting with the child participating as much as possible. The facilitator is there to coordinate the discussion, not to make decisions for the person or any other participant.

Many planning meetings start with asking the circle of support: "Introduce yourself and tell the person something you admire or surprises you about them." You will then go over the goals you have for your future. Through brainstorming with your circle, you will imagine ways to increase opportunities to meet your goals. You will think about what it will take to create that vision in the real world – who do you know, is there funding, are there health and safety issues to take into account?

Your meeting will then turn to thinking about the specific steps it will take to implement your vision. You will identify exactly what needs to be done, who will do it, and the timeline. The timeline can account for several years but should get very specific for the first year. Before the meeting ends, everyone goes over those steps and takes responsibility for helping you meet your goals. A follow-up meeting or even monthly meetings may need to be scheduled.

After your planning meeting, the independent facilitator turns the notes into a written plan. The written plan could be fancy with pictures but could also be a simple document. The important part is that there are clear goals, people who will help you achieve those goals, and timelines in the plan. A beautiful plan is just paper. Follow through is critical.

How to Use Your Person-Centered Plan

Your PCP is now a document that explains where you want to go and what you want to do in your life. Now you need to make it real!

Some parts of your plan can be achieved without any cost, whereas other parts will need funding. Some parts might be funded by your school district, your insurance or Medi-Cal, or other sources. The parts you want the SDP to fund go into your spending plan. Your independent facilitator and your financial management services can help you figure out how much things will cost and who might pay for them to create your spending plan. You will bring your PCP and spending plan to your IPP meeting.

In addition, you should also be showing your PCP to others, such as your school, support workers, service providers, doctors, and therapists. You will also want to look at your plan often to make sure that your circle of support is doing what they have promised.

Most importantly, you need to look at your plan and make sure it's what you still want. Make sure that the decisions are yours and that you are choosing who supports you and how you spend your days. You can change your mind about anything in the plan at any time. It's your life and your choice!

The Importance of the Circle of Support

Person-centered planning alone is not enough. Just like everyone else, it takes others to help you make that plan a reality. No one is truly independent; we are all interdependent. Your circle of support contains the people in your life who provide you advice, support, contacts, ideas, and feedback. Your circle will get larger and smaller over your life. People will move in and out of your circle; that's completely natural.

To think about creating your circle of support, you can ask yourself:

- Who are the people you trust in your family?
- Who are the people you trust at your school or work?
- Who are the people you enjoy spending time with?
- Who are the people you trust who support you?
- Who are the people who have connections in the community to help you meet your goals?
- Who knows you best?
- Are there people you do not want to be part of your circle of support?

Source:

<https://disabilityvoicesunited.org/interchange/self-determination/person-centered-planning/>