



Number 8

OCO FACT SHEET

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Using Person-centered Planning Values and Tools in Postsecondary Education Settings for Students with Significant Disabilities

This fact sheet is designed to assist personnel who serve and support students with significant disabilities and their families in postsecondary education settings. It defines terms, suggests tools, and identifies additional resources that may be used to assess, plan for, and support these students more effectively in postsecondary education settings.

What is Person-centered Planning?

Planning for students with disabilities is often conducted in a very formal manner. IEP meetings consist of teacher reports of standardized scores, filling out forms, and getting signatures from the team. The student does little talking and many parents feel that their concerns and questions are not heard. One way to provide students with disabilities and their families with a planning process that meets their needs is to employ person-centered planning techniques. These techniques focus the planning on the student, clarifying goals, planning for needed supports, and most importantly, allowing the student to become an integral partner in achieving his or her hopes and dreams.

What is the Philosophy of Person-centered Planning?

The term “person-centered” is used to describe an assortment of approaches for working with persons with disabilities that have been popularized over the past 20 years. Some of the better known approaches are *Essential Lifestyle Planning*, *Group Action Planning*, *MAPS*, *PATH*, and *Personal Futures Planning*, but there are also many lesser-known approaches. Regardless of the specific title, an approach may be considered person-centered if it values *visionary thinking*, *community building*, *self-determination*, and *inclusion*.

Likewise, it may be considered person-centered if it offers tools for thinking about, communicating with, assessing, planning for, and supporting persons with disabilities so that they may live more self-determined lives. The goal of all person-centered planning approaches is to put persons with disabilities and their families and friends – not organizations – in charge of the assessment, planning, and support process. People who use these approaches believe that students should have more control in setting their desired future goals. Using these approaches allow students more control over

choosing and managing the services and supports needed to meet their goals. Thus, the effectiveness of these approaches must be monitored and evaluated by the type and quality of outcomes achieved by individuals and the degree of satisfaction they feel with the process.

How Can Person-centered Planning be Used to Supports Students in Postsecondary Settings?

The goals of programs serving students ages 18-21 with significant disabilities in postsecondary settings are to give these students more inclusive, age-appropriate, and self-determined experiences. The values and tools of various person-centered approaches can be used to accomplish these goals in at least four ways.

To ease the transition for students and their families from familiar high school settings to unfamiliar postsecondary education settings and opportunities.

To support students who have completed their program in postsecondary settings who are transitioning into the even less familiar world of adult opportunities and challenges.

To design and implement highly individualized learning routines, choice-making opportunities, and natural supports for students in postsecondary settings.

To monitor and evaluate programs in postsecondary settings to ensure that they address the wants and needs of individual students and their families as well as to ensure that they meet the program’s organizational goals.



What are the Common Values and Tools Associated with Person-centered Planning?

Nearly all person-centered approaches ascribe to some common values, and although the names and format of tools may differ among the various approaches, nearly all of them also endorse the use of some common tools. The most common values associated with the approaches are:

- **VISIONARY THINKING** – the belief that one’s future life experiences and outcomes can be improved if one sets aside current realities and limitations and actively works towards desired hopes and dreams.
- **COMMUNITY BUILDING** - the belief that people will experience a higher quality of life when they are involved in a community of people and social organizations that offer mutual trust and reciprocity.
- **SELF-DETERMINATION** - the belief that if one has knowledge of one’s unique strengths, preferences, and challenges, and if one acts as the primary causal agent by making choices, setting goals, and making decisions, one’s hopes and dreams can be attained.
- **INCLUSION** – the belief that people have a right to live, work, be educated, worship, and otherwise participate in programs and places of their choosing.

The most common tools associated with the approaches are:

- **MAPPING** - an assessment and planning tool that brings together a group of people who know and care about someone in order to help everyone get to better know the person with a disability or focus person. A series of maps are created using color, words, pictures, and symbols to encourage everyone to ask questions, tell stories, share hopes and dreams, respond to fears, and prioritize preferences and dreams with the focus person.
- **ACTION-ORIENTED TEAMING** – a facilitator uses group process skills to guide a group of people through the creation of various map frameworks, development of an action plan, and on-going implementation of the action plan.
- **CIRCLE OF SUPPORT** – a circle of support is a team of people who meet frequently with a focus person to help him or her accomplish desired goals and dreams. Although circle members may provide disability-specific services and supports, they also assume more

action-oriented roles such as community building, resource development, and mentoring.

How can I Apply These Values and Tools in Postsecondary Education Settings?

1. Assess the appropriateness of using person-centered planning with the focus person. Person-centered planning is not appropriate for everyone. Before beginning person-centered planning activities, personnel should consider meeting with the focus person and family to describe the values and goals and assess the need for and appropriateness of using the tools. Some questions to consider include:

Are the focus person and family interested in thinking about and actively pursuing a different future for the focus person?

What barriers exist that may limit visionary thinking?

What resources exist to support visionary thinking?

Is community important to the focus person and family?

To what extent is the focus person already present and participating in the community?

What would they like to be different?

To what extent does the focus person have self-determination knowledge and skills?

What opportunities exist for the focus person to behave in a self-determined manner?

Is inclusion important to the focus person and family?

To what extent are the focus person, family, and other support persons willing and able to take more control of the assessment, planning, and service delivery process?

2. Lay a foundation for living the values within your program. During implementation of person-centered planning activities, personnel must ensure that the program’s policies and procedures adhere to the values and tools. Some questions to consider include:

Do we ask students and their families what they want and need *before* telling them what services our program offers?

Do we have the capacity to design individualized services and supports around their wants and needs?



Do we ask students and their families what *they* would like to discuss and learn about as part of the assessment and intake process?

Do we ask them *who* they would like to bring to the table to help answer these questions?

Do we work together as a team to develop the student's service plan *during* – not before or after meetings?

Do we hold meetings in locations and at times that are both convenient and comfortable for students and their families?

Do our planning processes and forms include opportunities to discuss students' strengths, assets, challenges, dreams, hopes, and fears?

Can we identify a clear relationship between a student's planning goals and activities and his or her dreams?

Do we make every effort to offer students *all* desired and necessary services and supports to attain their dreams? If not, do we attempt to modify or programs and/or refer students to other programs?

3. Use mapping strategies to enrich and individualize assessment procedures.

Mapping enables personnel to begin doing business in a more person-centered manner by enriching and individualizing the assessment process for students. As a group graphics approach, mapping

Juan's Hopes and Dreams



3 Years from now....

- Working part-time
- plants
- animals
- 4-5 hours a day
- using public bus
- male job coach
- Living in an apartment
- allows pets

brings to the table, everyone who knows and cares about the focus person. Thus, families, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and church members become as important as professionals in providing assessment data. The approaches suggest a number of map formats that personnel may find useful in getting to

know a focus person better and ultimately creating a truly individualize program that addresses his or her wants, needs, and dreams. Among these are " hopes and dreams maps", "preferences maps", "community maps", and "relationships maps".

(See resource list for more detail on each of these maps.) Briefly:

Hopes and Dreams Maps identify future hopes and dreams desired by the focus person and his or her family. The future may be thought of the upcoming school year, postschool, or even 3,5, or 10 years from the present.

To create a hopes and dreams map, identify an agreeable timeline and scope for the map. Next, begin asking questions related to the agreed-upon timeline and scope. For example, "Describe an ideal school day for Juan." "Ideally, where would Marga be working next school year? What job duties would she be learning and doing?" "What community activities would you like Arlene to experience next school year?" "What do you most hope Delvon will get from this program?" As people share responses, record words, pictures, and symbols on the chart paper to indicate dreams. Plan to spend about 30 minutes creating this map.

To conclude creation of this map, summarize themes emerging from the map and consider next steps. For example, "Juan would benefit from more opportunities to socialize with same-age peers. What do we need to do to make this happen?" "How many people support Arlene's dreams?" "Marga is interested in paid employment working with children next year. What steps do we need to take to make this happen for her?"

Arguably, this is the most important map to be created; the programming goal is to identify a rich, descriptive future vision for the focus person that may be used to identify the skills, supports, resources, and actions necessary to make the person's dreams a reality. This map serves as the foundation for the development of a focus person's individualized schedule and routine, programming goals and skill training, behavioral supports, and other support needs.

Preferences Maps uncover the unique likes and dislikes of a focus person in order to create individualized daily learning routines and choice-making opportunities. To create a preferences map, draw a vertical line, dividing a sheet of chart paper in half. Label one side of the map "likes" and the other side "dislikes". Begin asking open-ended questions to encourage people to tell stories and to share experiences about the person's likes and dislikes. For



example, "What are Arlene's favorite things to do when she has free time?" "How do you know when Delvon is happy?" "What makes Juan frustrated?" "What does Marga do when she wants a favorite object or food?" As people share responses, record words, pictures, and symbols on the chart paper to indicate likes and dislikes. Plan to spend about 20 minutes creating this map.

<u>Delvon's Preferences Map</u>	
 <u>Likes</u>	 <u>Dislikes</u>
-One-on-one	-Crowds-groups of 3 or more
-Car rides	-Being pushed or pulled
-Hip-hop music	-Early mornings
-Candy	-Being bored or frustrated
-Swimming	-Vegetables
-Puzzles	-Dogs (fearful)
-Fast food	

To conclude creation of this map, ask people to identify themes emerging from the map. For example, "How many of Juan's preferences does he get to choose at least once a day? Can we increase these opportunities?" "Does Delvon experience any of his dislikes every day? How can we reduce or eliminate them?" "Do you see any pattern between Marga's inappropriate behavior and her dislikes? What can we do to change this?" The programming goal is to increase the focus person's access to preferences while decreasing non-preferences.

Community Maps identify places where the focus person currently spends time or prefers to spend time, as well as opportunities for learning, choice-making, and support needs within those environments. To create a community map, draw two vertical lines, dividing a sheet of chart paper into three columns. Label one column "places", one column "contributions" and the remaining column "supports". Begin asking open-ended questions to encourage people to tell stories and to share experiences. For example, "Where does Arlene go in her community at least once a week?" "Can you think

of some place Delvon enjoys visiting, but seldom has the opportunity to do so?" "What supports would Marga need to participate in YWCA programs?" As people share responses, record words, pictures, and symbols on the chart paper to indicate community places, contributions, and support needs. Plan to spend about 20 minutes creating this map.

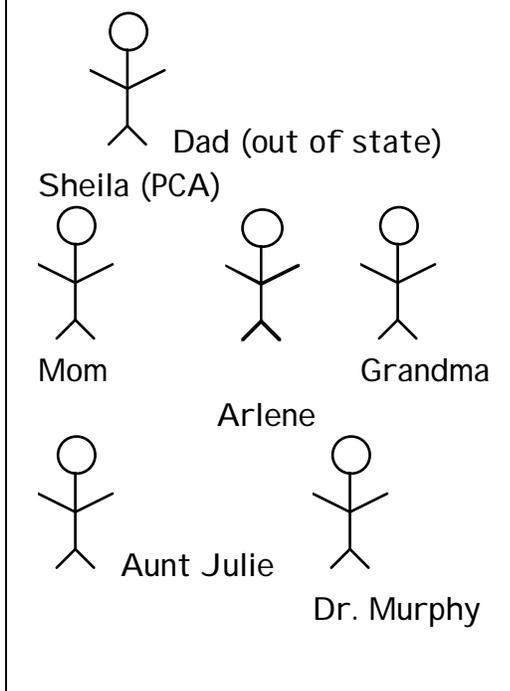
<u>Marga's Community Map</u>
<u>YMCA</u> 2X/week
-aerobics
-swimming
-peer support
<u>Restaurants</u> 2 x/week
-handling money (support needed) \$\$\$\$
<u>Mall</u> 1x/week
-money support \$\$\$\$
<u>Church</u>
-Transportation

To conclude creation of this map, ask people to identify themes emerging from the map. For example, "Are there places where Marga should get to visit at least once a week?" The programming goal is to increase the focus person's access to preferred community places on a regular basis while also increasing opportunities for making contributions and receiving necessary supports.

Relationship Maps identify the people and relationships important in a focus person's life. To create a relationships map, write the focus person's name in the middle of a piece of chart paper. Begin asking questions about the people who know the focus person best and who are most connected to him or her. For example, "Who are the people in Arlene's family?" "Who are Juan's co-workers?" "Who are Delvon's friends at church? Does he have a best friend?" "Who are the service providers who help Marga?" "Of all the people Juan knows, to whom does he feel the closest?" As people share responses, record names on the chart paper, using distance from the focus person's name to indicate their connection. That is, list people who are closest to the focus person closest to his or her name and list those who know the focus person least farthest from his or her name. Plan to spend about 20 minutes creating this map.



Arlene's Relationship Map



To conclude creation of this map, ask people to identify themes emerging from the map. For example, “Are there people in Marga’s life who can be more involved?” “Are there people in Juan’s life who can help him find new employment opportunities?” The programming goal is to increase the focus person’s relationships with people who can offer natural supports, resources for attaining dreams, and other opportunities for community building and inclusion.

4. Use action-oriented teaming processes to attain dreams. Action-oriented teaming encourages facilitators to bring together the skills and resources of numerous people in order to help realize the dreams of focus persons. For example, facilitators who are interested in designing supports for students with significant disabilities in postsecondary settings might first bring teams together for a meeting to get to know students and create maps such as those described in the previous section of this newsletter. Next, they might bring teams back together for one or more additional meetings to create an action plan to create individualized programs for students that match their dreams.

The goal of these meetings will be to encourage all team members – students, family, friends, professionals - to assume responsibility for some action associated with the focus person’s dreams. Everyone has a role to play and every meeting begins

and ends with a discussion of who will take what action and by what date. For example, some team members might provide skill instruction, some might provide transportation, and some might make telephone calls or complete application forms. Some members might share community outings or take classes with the focus person. Some members might provide instructional supports on a jobsite and some members might provide behavioral supports in community settings. Questions to consider during these meetings include:

“What steps do we need to take starting now to make Marga’s employment dreams a reality in three years?”

“What resources do we have available to us to design a program to accomplish Juan’s dreams? What additional resources do we need?”

“Are there additional agencies and people we need to design an employment opportunity to accomplish Marga’s dreams?”

“What barriers might we face in designing a postsecondary program for Delvon? What are some steps we can take now to overcome them?”

“Who will provide behavioral supports for Delvon?”

“How will we know if we are making progress toward Marga’s dreams?”

5. Build circles of support and other natural support teams. Person-centered planning asks teams to think about community and other natural supports from the very beginning of the process. An excellent place to begin is with a review of a focus person’s relationships map – who are the key people in this individual’s life? Who can we involve more or in a different way? Are we making the best and full use of family and friends? Do we rely too much on paid professionals and service providers for supports that might be provided by co-workers, classmates, church members, or neighbors?

Thus, person-centered planning asks teams to take time to identify these natural supports through the creation and review of a relationships map. Teams are also asked to build relationships by creating opportunities for community presence and participation. At the same time, team members should strive to strengthen and nurture relationships by modeling communication and activities with persons with significant disabilities. Finally, teams



should fade their reliance on paid and artificial supports such as teachers by reinforcing community people as they learn and take on additional supports.

Additional Information on Person-centered Planning Approaches

Anderson, E. L., Seaton, K., Dinas, P., & Satterfield, A. (1995). *Group action planning: An innovative manual for building a self-determined future*. Full Citizenship, Inc., 211 East 8th Street, Suite F, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Beerman, P. Ducharme, G., & Mount, B. (1989). *One candle power: Building bridges into community life for people with disabilities*. Manchester, CT: Communitas Communications.

Falvey, M., Forest, M., Pearpoint, J., & Rosenberg, R. (1994). *All my life's a circle-using the tools: Circles, MAPS, & PATH*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Inclusion Press.

Joyce, S. (Undated). *Planning on: A resource book for facilitators*. London, Ontario: Realization Training and Resources.

Mount, B., & Zwernik, K. (1988). *It's never too early, it's never too late: An overview of personal futures planning*. St. Paul, MN: Metropolitan Council.

O'Brien, C. L. & O'Brien, J. (1998). A little book about person-centered planning. Toronto, Ontario: Inclusion Press.

Pearpoint, J., O'Brien, J., & Forest, M. (1993). *PATH: A workbook for planning positive possible futures and planning alternative tomorrows wit hope for schools, organizations, businesses, and families*. (2nd edition). Toronto, Ontario: Inclusion Press.

Vandercook, T., York, J., & Forest, M. (1989). The McGill action planning system(MAPS): A strategy for building the vision. *Journal of the Association for People with Severe Handicaps*, 14(3), 205-215.

PCP Resources:

Whole Life Planning for People with Disabilities, Manual and video, \$109 for set Available from TRN Inc., www.tninc.com 1-866-823-9800.

A guide for implementing a person-centered planning approach to assist young adults in making the transition from school to adult life. Key aspects emphasize the involvement of family, friends, and community members, with the student driving the process. The video illustrates whole life planning in action by depicting key aspects of the process and the experiences of three students.

Websites on Person-Centered Planning:

<http://www.stateart.com/campaigns/myfuturemyplan/>

www.allenshea.com/resource.html

www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/tsal/pcp/

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