Chapter 3
Residential Service Guidelines

Competence

Competence is the capacity to do what you need and want to do. Competence inspires confidence, which is an essential component to personal development, well-being and contentment. Sometimes competence is developed through becoming more increasingly self-reliant and proficient. There are other areas where it is developed through the ability to seek and obtain assistance from others. For many of the individuals you will support, competence comes through a combination of both.

The more competencies and skills an individual possesses, the more choices an individual will have in improving his/her image and status. Learning skills should occur in the context of real situations. Adults with a disability have often spent their whole lives *getting ready* for a job or *getting ready* for living in the community. The best way to learn functional skills is through the experience of real jobs, homes, or communities and not in readiness programs. Each person and situation is unique: Some people with developmental disabilities need assistance to do what they need and want to do. Sometimes people will be able to learn, on their own, the things they need to know to be self-reliant. Sometimes they will need assistance to get what they need to get things done. Sometimes people will be able to direct their learning or direct the support they need. Sometimes people will need assistance to decide what to learn and how to direct their support system. People who receive services should have opportunities to be as self-reliant as possible and to determine the level, type, and provider of support they need. Effective programs ensure that an individual's lack of skills, or lack of ability to direct needed supports, are not barriers to choice, positive status, integration and relationships. To decide whether you support the building of competence, ask:

- Am I offering people opportunities to learn relevant skills they have indicated an interest in or a need to know?
- Am I supporting people in defining skills they would like to learn, and assessing the feasibility of mastering the skills in a reasonable period of time?
- Am I assisting people with activities in environments that are important to the person and relevant to the activities?
- Am I providing people with the opportunity to be self-reliant?
- Am I providing direct assistance when an individual needs it, including back-up support when an individual tries to be self- reliant and is unsuccessful?
- Am I providing opportunities for people to use the skills they have, including skills of defining, negotiating, and directing the assistance they need?

Health and Safety

Whether it's understanding the social and health impact of good hygiene, identifying when there is a need to call the doctor, taking daily medication properly, or making healthy food and exercise choices, most people are capable of successfully making the required decisions or navigating through the processes of doing so on their own. Likewise, recognizing our vulnerabilities and taking the necessary preventative steps to be safe is something that most adults are able to manage on their own. For many individuals with developmental disabilities, they require assistance with one or more of these areas to keep healthy and safe and be able to enjoy the fullness of life.

As a Direct Support Professional, this is one of your most crucial roles. It will be extremely important for you to monitor, guide, assist, encourage, teach and advocate for the individuals you support, all while respecting their personal right to chose and make decisions for themselves.

Integration

Integration and inclusion are important for everyone. Feeling as though we are positively contributing to the community and to the individuals around us, fuels our passion and allows us to lead a vibrant life. Our ability to work, play, worship and volunteer our time is something that most of us have the ability to pursue without significant limits, outside of what our time and money affords. The importance of participating similarly is just as crucial to those with developmental disabilities.

The individuals we support require our assistance, encouragement and coaching to lead a vibrant life of integration and inclusion. Not only is it important that we help them navigate through the resources available to them, it is equally important that we purposefully seek to engage them in activities that will introduce them to a wide variety of individuals and activities that exist in their community. Here are a few questions to consider as you provide integration and inclusion opportunities in the life of the individuals you support:

- What are his/her current interests? What activities are available to pursue and enhance these interests? How can I assist in involving them in these activities?
- What new interests might the individual I support enjoy? How can I introduce them to him/her to see if this is something they would like to pursue?
- When we are out, am I focused primarily on his/her interests, choices and enjoyment level, and not on my own?
- Am I encouraging and assisting the individual I support to get out daily to and participate in the normal activities of shopping, eating out, going to parks, farmers markets, community events, worship and clubs?
- Am I assisting them to use available transportation to get where they need and want to go?
- Are there volunteer opportunities that they might be interested in helping with? How can I involve them?
- Are there classes and learning opportunities that the individual would be interested in taking?

Relationships

More often than not, our quality of life rests heavily on the quality of our relationships with others. Our relationships provide meaning, the opportunity to give and to receive, personal value, support, continuity, adventure, love, laughter, memories, a sense of belonging, and personal growth. Unfortunately, for many of the individuals we support, their opportunities to pursue new and existing relationships has been significantly limited. For some, their relationships are primarily only with those who provide services for them.

As a DSP, one of your fundamental roles will be to assist in supporting existing family relationships and friendships, and to provide opportunities for the individual you support to establish new friendships through new opportunities to meet a wide variety of people. Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you follow through on this very important role:

- What are the existing relationships that are important to the individual I support?
- How do I provide opportunities for them to spend time with these family and/or friends? What more can I do?
- What opportunities within their neighborhood can I create or take advantage of to further existing relationships or inspire new ones?
- What opportunities for new relationship development might exist in clubs, associations, churches and volunteering? How can I assist to make those opportunities happen?

- How can I successfully model a healthy, respectful professional relationship with others and with the individual I support?

Power and Choice

One of the most profound benefits of our society is that it gives us the right and the ability to have power and choice over our own destiny. We strive to experience power, control, and choice in our personal affairs. These expressions of personal power are essential elements that help us gain autonomy, be self-governing, and pursue our own interests and goals. For many with developmental disabilities, their right and/or ability to make complex lifetime choices, and even simple daily choices has been hampered by circumstances, physical limitations and/or misjudgments about their abilities based on cognitive limitations.

As a Direct Support Professional, your role is to empower. Empowering the individual you support involves listening carefully to what each person is expressing in terms of desires, plans, and preferences and discern how each person is expressing those choices. Listening means paying attention and responding to the different ways people express themselves. It is important to constantly review how you are ensuring each person's right to have power over his or her life and whether the choices being made are theirs or yours. You can do this by looking at the following areas and asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I listen to the person and the person's friends and allies to discover individual goals and preferences?
- Do I demonstrate respect for individual choices, cultural and historical background and encourage the expression of each participant's individuality and personal power?
- Do I protect each person's personal and environmental privacy and legal rights?
- Do I assist participants learn about all their rights and responsibilities and to act on what they learn?
- Do I actively support each person's pursuit of opportunities which are important to them, i.e. employment, volunteering, recreation, relationships and personal goals?
- Am I able to separate the difference between what I believe the individual I support "should" choose and what I want them to choose?
- Do I <u>not</u> let things like being busy, the complexity of communicating, my judgments about poor decisions or behavior, or my own discomfort interfere with my willingness to listen and their right to make choices?

Status

Our status comes from how we are valued by ourselves and by others. Positive recognition and self-esteem are extremely important to all of us. Unfortunately, the self-esteem and positive recognition of many of the individuals we support have been obstructed by things such as cultural misperceptions and an absence of opportunities.

A DSP's interaction with the individual they support has a powerful influence on how the person feels about him/herself and how they are seen or perceived by others. Ask yourself the following questions to see if you are promoting their status:

- Am I encouraging opportunities for their personal and professional growth and development?
- Am I respecting them as an adult with the same equal rights and decision making power that I am privileged with?
- Am I helping to increase their ability to become more competent and independent in daily living tasks?
- Am I helping others to recognize the individual's abilities rather than their limitations?
- Am I promoting activities to develop current and new interests?
- Am I promoting activities to develop current and new relationships?
- Am I offering ways of enhancing personal appearance?
- Am I assisting in making their home a warm and inviting environment?

Qualities of a Meaningful Life

A meaningful day comes from participating in activities and functions in the home and community that are desired and chosen by each individual. This can include:

- Purposeful and meaningful work
- Support for optimal health
- Self-empowerment and personal relationships
- Skill development and maintenance
- Social, educational and community activities that are linked to the vision, goals and desired personal outcomes

Each individual's daily activities should result in self-empowerment, new relationships, work/volunteer experiences, memberships, valued roles, and skill-development, in addition to social, educational, and community inclusion that is consistent with the individual's desired outcomes. Most of these activities would be planned, purposeful, and reflected in daily schedules, however, meaningful activities also happen spontaneously. In order for an activity to be meaningful, it must be important to the individual and not an event to fill time. Activities that are meaningful to each individual might include opportunities for the following:

- Experiencing the routines of daily life that are important and non-negotiable (e.g., drinking coffee in the morning, reading the newspaper, walking to store)
- Exploring, securing, maintaining and/or changing supported or competitive jobs
- Exploring, securing, maintaining and/or changing post-secondary educational activities
- Exploring, securing, maintaining and/or changing volunteer activities
- Experiencing and participating in community exploration, companionship with friends and peers
- Developing, maintaining and regularly experiencing chosen hobbies
- Maintaining family contacts
- Engaging in community events, education experiences, and those activities and services where people without disabilities are involved
- Exploring, learning and developing new skills to support participation and independence in the community and at home
- Exploring healthy lifestyles to include physical, spiritual and emotional well-being

Your role is to offer opportunities and encourage activities that are meaningful to each individual. You can assist each individual in identifying what is meaningful to them, and you can offer and encourage meaningful activities throughout the day. Downtime is important, but if there is excessive downtime or time-fillers, the individual's quality of life is negatively affected.