

## **Community Inclusion Conference**

Creatively supporting each person's desire to live fully in the community

### **Purpose and content of the conferences**

The Division of Developmental Disabilities Roads to Community Living program sponsored one day conferences in each of the three regions for providers of services, state employees, individuals served by DDD and their families and advocates to listen to, discuss, and learn about ideas and strategies to support each person's desire to live a meaningful life in the community. These conferences promoted and discussed the values of DDD's Residential Services Guidelines of Power and Choice, Status, Relationships, Competence, Community Integration, and Health and Safety. These conferences were held as follows:

Region 1: November 7, 2011 in Moses Lake

Region 2: November 9, 2011 in Lynnwood

Region 3: November 8, 2011 in Olympia

These three day conferences brought together national and state presenters to inspire and provide useful ideas to promote this vision. By implementing person centered strategies, engaging in meaningful discussions, being creative, and working together this conference sought to address some of the current constraints, such as reduced budgets and changing workforce and current opportunities to provide customized supports for each person, such as assistive technology, environmental supports, informal networks, and community involvement (see attached conference agenda for topics and speakers).

### **World Café Discussion and Results**

After the presentations, conference participants joined in the World Café, a facilitated discussion which provided an opportunity to talk about ideas they had heard about in the previous sessions and to explore questions that matter about inclusion in their communities. Attendees were asked to start a conversation at their table focusing on three questions:

- What are your ideas/strategies that promote inclusion?
- Where are the welcoming places in my community?
- What can I do to promote inclusion?

After a lengthy conversation people were asked to get up and move to new tables and share their learning with other groups. This "cross fertilization" of information resulted in many good ideas about what makes inclusion work. The Inclusion Café facilitation team collected more than six hundred responses from participants. We developed a short list of **common themes from the discussion**:

- Provide people with disabilities information and experience so they can make their own choices by using:
  - Person-centered planning
  - Access to appropriate forms of assistive technology
  - Modifications to a person's physical environment

- Encourage families, providers and service professionals to develop their own personal networks to help them understand how inclusion works
- Have more information available about first steps to help service providers promote inclusion such as:
  - Identify neighborhood resources and relationships that fit within the persons interests and help them make connections
  - Access to public transportation
  - Develop neighborhood activities that are focused on a person’s interests and not a person’s disability
- Share stories/learning’s about the inclusion experience with co-workers and other service professionals to increase our individual capacity to understand how inclusion works for each person

### **Conference Survey Results**

Inclusion conference attendees were asked to fill out a short questionnaire at the end of each day.

- Of the 267 total attendees (318 had registered) 183 people (58% of total attendees) responded
- An average score of 4.39 out of 5.00 was given when asked, “Overall, the Community Inclusion Conference was beneficial to me”

### **Attendees Comments**

Here are a few comments offered by inclusion conference attendees. Please note these are a random sampling. A complete list can be found in the appendix section:

#### **“Things that I appreciated:”**

- “Very informative regarding self advocacy”
- “I loved the world café session. Great info was gained from other perspectives”
- “Speakers were motivating and positive but also laid back. I felt like I could ask questions and got new ideas and ways to help our community”
- “Group discussion - what can we do to change the current work that we do to better serve the individuals”
- “I’m glad we had the conference a one day conference should happen annually but more people need to be invited; more topics/presenters.”
- “Good interaction between participants and speakers. Good organization and flow to the conference.”

#### **“My experience could have been improved by:”**

- “More info on topics covered by presenters. Biographical info is great, but a brief summary of their presentation.”
- “I would have liked to invite more of our staff. Include some info about intended audience; ex designed for.”

- “More self-advocacy”
- “Outlines and question time with Linda Rolfe”
- “I wish that this conference was longer. The topics were great very inspiring. I appreciated having the self advocates present.”

**Recommendations**

The inclusion conference host team met after the event to debrief the conference and developed a few next steps for consideration.

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>How it could be done</b>
Develop opportunities to recognize direct staff, teachers and community leaders who are creating inclusive communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor community inclusion awards to honor actions taken.</li> <li>• Develop Community Inclusion award and opportunities to present it.</li> </ul>
Share the 2011 Inclusion Conference experience throughout the next year, including how people are developing community inclusion, informal supports, assistive technology, and environmental supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a one page bi-monthly “bulletin” to send to conference attendees with simple and focused steps people can do to promote inclusion.</li> <li>• Collect stories and actions from this “challenge” to share in the next bulletin.</li> <li>• Ask people to use video media to share brief stories.</li> </ul>
Strengthen neighborhood/community connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help people host neighborhood/community conversations about what matters most to the community.</li> </ul>
Continue to bring people together and involve all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize local and/or statewide conferences (as funding is available) to share videos, stories, and community conversations. Involve community stakeholders, build relationships, and take local action to build inclusion.</li> </ul>

**Acknowledgements:** We’d like to acknowledge Service Alternatives Training Institute which organized this three day conference through the Roads to Community Living Technical Assistance contract, Tim Corey of Colibri Facilitation for facilitating the World Café and helping to write the summary of the conference, and DDD Regional Staff for help with the conference in their area.