

Introduction

For many years, services and supports for people with a developmental disability in Ontario have been undergoing a transformation away from institutional models of care, related attitudes and skill sets, towards a more individualized model, incorporating person-directed planning and community inclusion.

In May 2021, the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services published *Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion*, the government's plan for continued reform of developmental services. It outlines the next steps in meeting the many challenges in providing people with a developmental disability with appropriate support. The plan focuses on a vision where people with developmental disabilities are supported by their communities, support networks and government to live inclusive lives, and are empowered to make their own choices, living as independently as possible with supports that are person-directed, equitable and sustainable. A key principle is that supports are person-directed and flexible, meaning people have more control over directing and managing their funding and who provides that support.

Journey to Belonging envisions person-directed supports as part of a person-centred system. This means that at the individual level, the person is in charge of making important decisions for themselves about their supports and activities, based on what they want for their life - decisions are *person-directed*. Systems and services, such as agencies and government, are designed to focus on meeting people's needs and preferences - they are *person-centred*.

This is a shift not only in how services have been delivered, but how people have been trained to provide them. Generally, effective professionals in this field of work are trained and hired on the basis of technical knowledge – representing a basic skill set for understanding developmental disability, and related health, communication, and behavioural needs.

However, it is in the area of values and ethics – what are termed *behavioural competencies* – that the real shift in service provision will have the biggest impact. The move away from institutional frameworks towards individualized, community based, and innovative supports requires a focus on “*how*” service providers approach the people they serve. It will require a developmental services worker to look for innovation and partnerships outside the traditional walls and advocate for how communities can open their doors to people with a developmental disability.

The [Provincial Network on Developmental Services](#) and the [Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services](#) came together to form the *Developmental Services Workforce Initiative* with the focus to address one aspect of Journey to Belonging, namely, **Planning for a Skilled Workforce**. This part of the plan is about working collaboratively with the broader sector to support a skilled, diverse and professional workforce that will help people participate meaningfully in their communities and live good lives. It also recognizes that ‘an employer’ can be a transfer-payment agency, an independent agency, or a family member or support circle. Updating the Core Competencies supports this outcome.

In drafting these core behavioural competencies, committee members relied on collaboration with

families and personal support networks/circles, community agencies, alternative support providers and independent contractors, other Ministries and levels of government, as well as innovation to determine the *competencies* that will be required for direct support professionals to enter into the “*person-directed*” realm.

Journey to Belonging is a 10-year plan that requires a good infrastructure on which to meet the needs and aspirations of people with a developmental disability, their families and support networks. Building a strong, skilled and dedicated workforce with a foundation in values and ethics is one of those essential infrastructure pieces and is a key part of the quality framework respecting the rights of people with a developmental disability.

Guiding Lenses:

The framework and all materials created by the DSWIC were developed with consideration given to each of the lenses outlined below.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- Language and supporting material reflect a culturally diverse sector and EDI.
- Recognizes the diversity of the workforce and the people supported.
- All supporting materials reflect a current understanding of inclusive language – i.e. “they” vs “he/she” etc.
- The history of marginalization of people supported and of many people who work in the sector, receive support or family members is recognized.
- Supporting materials should recognize and reflect the intersectionality of people.
- This initiative pro-actively seeks the perspective of equity seeking groups.

Journey to Belonging

- Language in all supporting materials should reflect the culture, faith, language and regional considerations such as rural and remote communities.
- A variety of users should be assumed, so accessible language should be used wherever possible, and not assume a proficient HR background or agency support.
- All material should reflect a variety of support models, including agency, family and person-centred supports.
- The Guiding principles for reform are reflected in all supporting materials:
 1. Our vision for the future focuses on people and how they can belong in their communities and live meaningful lives. In addition to the vision, the following principles will help guide the work and the plan for reform:
 2. People receive support based on their needs - Greater equity through individualized funding and budgets tied to people’s assessed needs.
 3. Services build on the strengths of people and supports provided by families, support networks and communities - Supports complement services available in the community and are culturally appropriate to reflect the needs of Indigenous people, Francophones and diversity within our communities, while also reflecting regional differences across the province.
 4. Supports are person-directed and flexible - People have more control over directing and managing their funding and supports.
 5. Supports are proactive and responsive to people’s changing needs across the course of their lives - Greater focus on early intervention and prevention for people, with supports that are better integrated with other sectors.

6. Services are driven by evidence, outcomes and continuous improvement - More emphasis on outcomes and quality services that are responsive to feedback from people using them.
7. Services and supports promote health, well-being and safety - Services promote positive health and wellness outcomes and a high quality and meaningful life experience. Supports help address systemic barriers (for example, discrimination, racism, ableism) that prevent people from accessing supports and fully participating in their communities.
8. System is sustainable - Improving the ability of developmental services to help people now and into the future.

Person-Directed and Person-Centred Approaches

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Trauma Informed Lens

- The historical and current abuse and trauma to people supported is recognized.
- Recognizes that employees may have also experienced trauma.
- Ensures that behaviours specific to interacting with people reflect a trauma-informed lens.
- All other HR Practices should be reviewed with a trauma informed perspective.

Our thanks to all that provided input, guidance, knowledge and shared their incredible talents to support the modernizing of the Core Competencies.

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